

It's time for South Africans to make a choice, says Mkhize as cases rise – The Citizen 12 December 2020

South Africans must commit to small gatherings, responsible drinking, frequent sanitising or washing of hands and surfaces, social distancing and consistent wearing of masks, says Mkhize.

Health Minister Zweli Mkhize has urged the public to be cautious of the Covid-19 second wave that has seen South Africa recording more than 8,000 daily cases.

In a webinar marking World Universal Health Coverage Day under the theme 'Protect Everyone' on Saturday, Mkhize appealed to the public, particularly youth, to be fully conscious of their agency and the role they must play to protect everyone from Covid-19.

“We, as government, have and will continue to mobilise all the state machinery we have at our disposal to fight Covid-19. But this virus can only be defeated by each and every South African’s sense of duty and compassion.

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“Only you have the power to stop Covid-19. The time has come for South Africans to make a choice- life or sickness and death. If we choose life, then we must realise that we have to make sacrifices during this festive season. It will not be possible to celebrate the holidays in the way we are accustomed to.”

South Africans must commit to small gatherings, responsible drinking, frequent sanitising or washing of hands and surfaces, social distancing and consistent wearing of masks, said Mkhize.

Mkhize said Universal Health Coverage recognises that the right to quality of life is sacrosanct and it acknowledges that everyone has to partner in their various capacities to ensure that no one is left behind.

Government hopes to achieve this by implementing the National Health Insurance (NHI), which will ensure that by 2030, at least 90% of South Africans “have access to needed health services (including prevention, promotion, treatment, rehabilitation and palliation) of sufficient quality to be effective while also ensuring that the use of these services does not expose the user to financial hardship.”

“As most of you know, in October I signed my performance agreement with His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa. This agreement places at the top of its agenda a target of progressively implementing NHI to achieve universal health coverage for at least 90% of all South Africans by 2030.”

The NHI Bill will achieve this by pooling public revenue in order to actively and strategically purchase health care services based on the principles of universality and social solidarity.

“We are therefore feeling highly encouraged by the progress that has been made towards UHC in this country, even as we faced significant pushback from the advent of Covid-19. Indeed, despite our gallant efforts not to be diverted from our path towards UHC, the pandemic has made its impact felt.

“However, as government, we remain resolute not to shift goalposts and to stick to the plan, for the sake of our people whose constitutional right to quality health care can never be compromised.”

Mkhize further paid tribute to health care workers for their bravery, commitment, passion, brilliance and service.

“We are all in this together. We will protect one another and we will prevail over Covid-19 and any other insult that may come to meet us in the future.

“We will do this by ensuring that we build resilient health care systems through the roll-out of universal health coverage across the globe.”