



LIMPOPO

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

16 January 2026

MEDIA STATEMENT BY PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA ON THE RECENT FLOODS IN LIMPOPO

Good morning, esteemed members of the media, and thank you for being with us today during this critical time for our province.

We gather here today under a dark cloud that has unleashed astonishing rains, unprecedented in their intensity, measuring up to 400 millimetres in mere days. The devastation inflicted upon our communities, our infrastructure, and, tragically, the loss of lives cannot be overstated.

This calamity began swirling above our heads weeks ago, tracing back to December 25, 2025, in the Waterberg and Capricorn Districts and escalated dramatically with the heavy rains last week, affecting Vhembe, Mopani and Sekhukhune Districts.

The repercussions of these floods are profound. Roads have been swept away, bridges are no longer standing and communities are cut off from their economic lifelines and daily routines. Water and electricity infrastructure have been severely damaged causing consternation amongst communities because this is the basic that they rely on for survival. That is why it is important that assessment work done by municipalities includes these vital areas, actually it is our priority to restore electricity and water. Schools have been destroyed; health facilities crippled and families displaced, their homes reduced to memories.

I stand before you today not just as your Premier, but as a fellow citizen of Limpopo, sharing in the grief and distress felt across our province.

As of today, we regret to inform you that we have lost nine lives to these floods, with the latest heart-breaking case involving a five-year-old child who could not be saved as their parents fought desperately for safety in Mbaula village. I extend my deepest condolences to all families grieving during this tragic period. We mourn together and we will rise together.

Infrastructure Damage

We have convened an emergency meeting with the extended Executive Council, local and district municipalities and various stakeholders to commence the daunting task of quantifying the extent of the damage. There is now over R4 billion to cover work across infrastructure. However, I must emphasise that these figures remain provisional; we anticipate worse outcomes as assessments continue amidst ongoing weather challenges.

So far, the reports paint a harrowing picture: numerous national and provincial roads have been critically damaged.

We have so far received reports that the following national roads have been badly damaged: the R527 in the Hoedspruit area, R40 next to Maseke Game Reserve, R71 between Gravelotte and Phalaborwa, R36 between the Oaks and Ofcolaco, R578 (Selwana road) near Makhuya, R526 between R40 intersection and Gravelotte, R529 from Greater Letaba bridge to Eiland road.

The R71 towards Phalaborwa has also been closed off due to rain, similarly with the R40 around the Phalaborwa area having suffered the same fate. The R524 from Louis Trichardt to Punda Maria Gate (via Thohoyandou) has major portions destroyed.

The district and local municipalities have reported damaged streets within their localities which they shall include in the total costing.

The sheer damage on our roads is something that even a reserve fund put in place in our Provincial Treasury would not be able to handle. The sheer scale of the damage to the road network makes it impossible for the province and affected municipalities to have the ability to respond and the intervention of the National Government - in particular the Department of Transport through SANRAL must be extended to provincial and district roads and some internal streets in townships and villages.

As it is the around R1.7 billion on roads would be required for repairs whilst assessments are continuing.

We have asked for assistance from the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) temporary restoration of access roads. The DPWRI will in areas where rains have stopped start process of reconnecting bridged including the requested assistance to the SANDF. We have been inundated with requests by communities to fix their infrastructure to

reconnect them, we need additional capacity to do this, especially with schools,

I urge our communities to refrain from risking their lives by attempting to cross dangerous waters; your safety must come first.

Housing and Public Facilities

In terms of housing, countless families have been affected as over 1,600 homes have suffered damage, with many washed away entirely. Some remain submerged with water reaching alarming levels, jeopardising structural integrity. Let us recognise the solidarity among our communities, where neighbours have opened their homes to those in need during this challenging time.

The impact on public facilities is equally alarming. As of January 6, 2026, we have documented damage to 31 schools, with this figure likely to rise. We have had to halt reopening of about 1400 schools in affected areas.

Health Facilities

We have recorded significant impact in health facilities that was attributed to overflowing rivers, damaged bridges and impossible roads that have restricted access to multiple healthcare facilities and affecting both patient care and staff mobility. These were recorded in all our districts with Vhembe having Tswinga Clinic, De Hoop Clinic, Duvhuledza Clinic and Tshipise Clinic inaccessible. The most significant single facility in Vhembe to witness damage is the Elim hospital where serious roof leaks have occurred and significant damage to interior ceilings, fixtures and fittings have taken place.

In Mopani seven (7) hospitals and 19 Clinics have infrastructural challenges that have been caused by the floods.

In the Waterberg area Storm damage has been reported at the Warmbaths, Ellisras, FH Odendaal and Mokopane Hospitals.

So far, no report has been obtained from Sekhukhune district, safe to note that the Mutlane Clinic guardroom was destroyed by floods.

So far there is R7 million estimated damage to these health facilities that we shall have to work on to get fixed.

Agriculture

Since January 2026 the Department has intensified the extreme weather warnings to caution the provincial farmers about the high risk of flooding within the province at all the five provincial districts. Damages to crops have been encountered, especially vegetable crops such as cabbage, spinach, butternuts, cucumber, etc. Damages to on-farm roads and bridges have also been reported as well as damages to infrastructure such as farm buildings and storerooms. Unfortunately, quantification of the losses is not yet made due to inaccessibility to the flood affected areas.

Sport, Arts Culture

There have been damages in libraries across the districts as roofs leak affecting books, shelves and computers in the libraries which would amount R12 million.

The South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) has conducted its own assessment and provided food parcels to the qualifying victims.

Emergency shelters, blankets and sleeping mattresses have been provided by respective municipalities to the affected victims.

The long-term plan is to the provision of permanent structures (RDP) and the Reconstruction and rehabilitation of damaged public infrastructure.

Way Forward

The Provincial Treasury, in collaboration with relevant entities and municipalities, has initiated calculations to assess the financial cost of this disaster. Sadly, the South African Weather Service projects that we may face further rainfall and additional damage. I implore our communities living in low-lying areas or near flooded rivers to seek safety and move to secure locations as necessary.

Let me extend my heartfelt gratitude to our first responders - the municipal and provincial disaster management teams, the SAPS Airwing and the SANDF Airforce - for their unwavering commitment and rapid response under dire conditions. Your courage and dedication do not go unnoticed.

In conclusion, I urge vigilance and caution during this critical period. Together, we can overcome this calamity. We will rise stronger, united in our efforts to rebuild and restore hope.

As we continue to navigate these challenging waters, we remain committed to supporting our communities, ensuring that every voice is heard and every need addressed.

Thank you.

For media enquiries, please contact:

Ndavhe Ramakuel
Provincial Government Spokesperson
RamakuelaN@premier.limpopo.govza
Tel: 082 200 5357

Thilivhali Muavha
Premier's Spokesperson
MuavhaT@premier.limpopo.gov.za
Tel: 066 011 7034

Issued by the Limpopo Provincial Government