

# *South Africa-Cuba Medical Doctor Program to Increase Output*

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Johannesburg, September 15 (RHC) -- The South Africa-Cuba program to train South Africans as doctors in Cuba, will expand nearly tenfold over the next five years, diplomatic sources reported in Johannesburg.

The program aims to avert the critical shortage of doctors, especially in rural areas of the African nation. The next group of students to head to the Caribbean island country will be a group from the North West.

South African graduates are posted to under-resourced medical facilities. Former Cuban medical student, Dr. Tshepo Lekone says, "I've experienced that more doctors are needed since I'm working in a level 2 hospital in Mahikeng. The Cuban program has produced a lot of doctors that are currently working with me here."

Students are recruited from disadvantaged communities. North West Health MEC, Dr. Magome Masike says: "Most of them come from rural areas where it is difficult to attract doctors, especially young ones. Most of the students, who are going to Cuba, come from those areas. They understand that it is their

uncles, their mothers; it is their relatives that need them most."

The partnership was initiated by former President Nelson Mandela and the leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro.

Cuba has 25 medical schools which produce 11,000 doctors annually.

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