

# PublicSector

## MANAGER

### Minister Nkabane

on expanding  
access to post-  
school education  
and training

### Prof Usisipho Feleni

a dream for an  
HIV cure sparks  
a bright career

### SoNA 2025

A nation that  
works for all







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# Empowering South Africa's future by expanding access and opportunities in post-school education and training

**T**he Ministry of Higher Education and Training plays a pivotal role in shaping South Africa's Post-School Education and Training (PSET) sector. This sector comprises community education and training colleges, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges, and higher education institutions, including universities, alongside private education providers. Our mission is to provide accessible, high-quality education and training opportunities to all South Africans, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

As we embark on the 2025 academic year, we welcome first-year students entering Higher Education institutions. This milestone marks the beginning of an exciting journey in pursuit of knowledge and skills that will contribute to the country's socio-economic development.

The department provides education and training for all students who have completed schooling and those who are not in education, employment

or training (NEET) through skills programmes offered by accredited providers. We also provide financial assistance to those in need, especially those from poor and working-class families.

## Financial aid

The bulk of funding for qualifying students is provided by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) as well as the National Skills Fund, which mainly provides funding for skills programmes and bursaries for scarce skills areas.

In order to meet the skills needs of the country and realise the objective of building a capable workforce to contribute to economic growth for South Africa, *The White Paper on PSET* recommends, amongst other things, the expansion of the college system. This we will do firstly through the massification of the college system to reach one million enrolments in the community colleges and 2.5 million in public and private TVET colleges by 2030, as outlined in

the National Development Plan (NDP) Vision 2030.

create a subhead above and title it:

## TVET colleges

We view the TVET sector as a catalyst for skills development across the various fields required to strengthen the skills profile required to grow our economy. TVET colleges should not be chosen as an option but as institutions of first choice. We are embarking on public campaigns to change myths and perceptions about TVET colleges. Colleges not only enhance employment opportunities but can also provide better chances for graduates to be self-employed. We have since identified 13 scarce skills areas needed in the labour force market. To this effect, we have identified some of our TVET colleges and dubbed them centres of specialisation.

The NDP 2030 for PSET also calls for the diversification of the public universities sector based on their strengths and the needs



Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Nobuhle Pamela Nkabane,

of the communities in which they are located. To achieve this plan, the department aims to achieve an enrolment target of 1.6 million by 2030

The plan and targets can only be achieved when we do not leave behind students who cannot afford PSET costs. It is the responsibility of the NSFAS to provide financial support to students at our public institutions.

## Progress

In the past 30 years of Democracy, funding for poor students and those from working-class families has grown significantly.



Since 1991, the NSFAS funding has grown from disbursing R21.4 million to almost R54 billion in 2024 to funding qualifying students seeking to further their studies in public universities and TVET colleges. With a budget 54 billion, the NSFAS supports more than 800 000 students annually.

Applications for the 2025 opened last year, and student applications are being processed for qualifying students who have been accepted by public institutions. Funding covers tuition, accommodation, stationery, transport and living expenses. We are aware of accommodation shortages and, in that regard, have put in place measures to accommodate our students in private accommodation accredited and paid for by the NSFAS. We encounter administrative glitches here and there, but they are often resolved.

## Students support

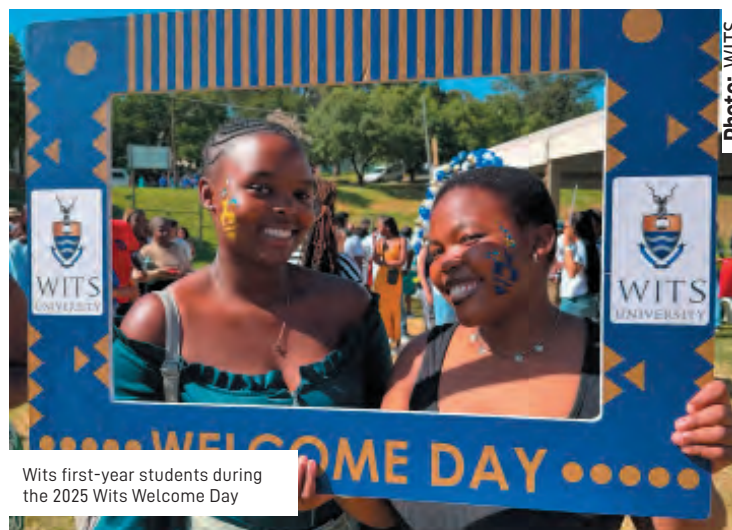
Our student population mirror the larger society and, therefore, encounters similar psycho-social challenges such as gender-based violence and femicide, safety, and mental and other health challenges such as HIV and AIDS. To address these issues, we have established the Higher Health organisation, which is dedicated solely to providing services such as advice on prevention, treatment and counselling. Mental health is a growing and

serious condition in society and among our youth; thus, we continue to run campaigns in our institutions.

Over the past 30 years, government has made significant strides in growing the PSET sector and advancing transformation. We have achieved transformation in the sector through deliberate programmes such as gender equity amongst our academic staff and initiated academic development programmes such as lecturer development aimed at addressing disparities created by the past system.

## leaving no one behind

We have also addressed the issue of language policy (especially with regard to the language of tuition) in higher education institutions to accommodate previously excluded students, thereby enabling access to certain institutions. The profile of the management of institutions of higher learning has also significantly changed, leading to more qualified blacks assuming man-



Wits first-year students during the 2025 Wits Welcome Day

Photo: WITS

agement positions.

We have expanded access through increasing the number of campuses and by building two new universities, namely Sol Plaatje in the Northern Cape and Mpumalanga University. We have expanded the TVET college sector to 50 colleges and over 250 campuses. We have established the Sector Education and Training Authority system of 21 entities to fund, accredit and manage skills development programmes and learnerships by independent providers.

I urge the class of 2024 and the NEET to take up opportunities available in our public TVET colleges, skills programmes and learnerships on offer. Those who have been accepted by institutions but struggle with funding should explore all our funding opportunities. More information is available on our website and through our call centre, or they can visit any of our public institutions for assistance with information and processes. ♦



Wits first-year students during the 2025 Wits Welcome Day

Photo: WITS

# Government's efforts in education yield results as matric class of 2024 breaks records

**A**s we reflect on the exceptional achievements of the matric class of 2024, we acknowledge the significant strides made in our education system, resulting in a historic pass rate of 87.3%, up from 82.95% in 2023. This milestone represents not only the hard work and determination of learners and educators, but also the impact of over three decades of government commitment to improving education in South Africa.

The Class of 2024 entered high school amid unprecedented disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, when hard lockdowns and school closures threatened to derail their educational journey. Yet, through the tireless efforts of both educators, and learners, this cohort has broken records, reaffirming our collective resilience.

At the heart of this success lies the continuous support



Nomonde Mnukwa,  
GCIS Acting  
Director-General.

provided by government through various programmes designed to ensure that all learners have access to quality education. The Department of Basic Education

implemented targeted interventions for the Class of 2024, including personalised learning initiatives, extended hours, Saturday catch-up sessions, and

extra lessons. These efforts were critical in ensuring that learners' right to education, as outlined in Section 29 of the Constitution, was safeguarded.

Since the advent of democracy in 1994, government has consistently prioritised education, implementing policies and programmes that promote equity, inclusivity, and access to high-quality learning opportunities.

The National Development Plan (NDP), in particular, provides a long-term framework for addressing the country's socio-economic challenges, with clear goals to halve unemployment, eradicate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030. In the context of education, the NDP sets out a vision for a world-class education system that equips learners with the skills necessary to thrive in a global economy.

The enactment of the Basic

Education Laws Amendment (BELA) Act of 2024 is one of the latest milestones in our ongoing efforts to strengthen the education system. The Act reinforces government's commitment to providing equitable and inclusive education, ensuring that no learner is excluded from accessing quality education at any stage of their schooling. As President Cyril Ramaphosa has stated, the BELA Act continues the work begun in 1994, ensuring that every child receives an education that lays the foundation for their future success.

In addition, initiatives such as the National School Nutrition Programme, the School Transport Programme, and the No-Fee Schools Initiative play a critical role in breaking down barriers that prevent disadvantaged learners from completing their education. The Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Delivery Initiative has also significantly improved school infrastructure, addressing the long-standing issue of inadequate facilities that hinder the learning experience for many learners.

The results of these initiatives are evident in the increasing number of learners writing the National Senior Certificate (NSC) exams, including those with special educational needs. In 2024, the number of learners with special education needs who wrote the NSC increased from 5 288 in 2023 to 6 470.



According to the 30-Year Review of South Africa's Democracy report, "the country has progressed in educational outcomes, with an increasing number of individuals aged 20 and older attaining Grade 12 as their highest level of education, rising from 16% in 1996 to 38% by 2022".

As we celebrate these achievements, we must also acknowledge the importance of collaboration in education. The partnerships between government, universities, the private sector and civil society have been instrumental in creating opportunities for learners and ensuring that education remains a priority. In her speech during the announcement of the 2024 matric results, Basic Education Minister Siviwe Gwarube emphasised the fact education should not only be a government responsibility, "when society invests collectively in educa-

tion, it fosters greater equity and inclusivity," she said.

Looking beyond matric, government has invested in various post-school education and training opportunities, including higher education, technical and vocational education colleges, and skills development programmes. The National Student Financial Aid Scheme continues to provide financial support to students, breaking down financial barriers to tertiary education. Additionally, the Central Application Clearing House initiative ensures that matriculants who did not initially gain admission to higher education have a second chance to pursue their academic goals.

With these efforts in place, it is pleasing to note that the 30-year review report states that the country is on track to meet its NDP target of enrolling 1.6 million students in higher education by 2030. As of 2024, when the

report was published, there were 1.3 million students enrolled, 82% in public and 18% in private institutions.

Government support extends beyond those who succeed. Initiatives like the Second Chance Matric Programme offer individuals the opportunity to improve their results or complete their matric qualification on a part-time basis. These programmes ensure that no learner is left behind, and that everyone has the opportunity to succeed in education, regardless of their circumstances.

Let us continue to build on these achievements, ensuring that all young South Africans have access to the quality education they deserve. Government will continue to work in partnership with all sectors of society to support this goal, ensuring that education remains at the forefront of South Africa's democratic agenda.





Free State Premier MaQueen Letsoha-Mathae.

# Premier Letsoha-Mathae

## vows to root out corruption in the Free State

**F**ree State Premier MaQueen Letsoha-Mathae is resolute in her commitment to holding corrupt officials accountable, vowing to ensure they face the full extent of the law during her tenure. This move underscores government's broader commitment to combating corruption and reinforcing

transparency and integrity in the public sector.

In an exclusive interview with *Public Sector Manager* magazine, the Premier said fighting corruption and ensuring good governance are critical in maintaining the integrity and functionality of government.

"We are going to ensure that in the 7th Administration, there is a high level of professionalism and (that) ethical standards are maintained," said Letsoha-Mathae.

Fighting corruption remains a top priority for government, as the scourge in both the public

and private sectors undermine efforts to deliver essential services effectively to the people.

### Service delivery

The Premier highlighted the vital link between service delivery and communities, stating that "there cannot be public



service without communities and there cannot be public servants without communities.”

She urged public servants to show compassion in their service to citizens and to go beyond the call of duty.

“Many of our people use public facilities because they cannot afford private facilities. When a patient attends a clinic or hospital, a true public servant must receive such patient with the necessary courtesy and warmth to the extent that the patient would subsequently feel a bit of relief from the pain or any distress,” she said.

Upon assuming the role of

Premier in June 2024, one of her priorities was to visit various healthcare facilities across the province.

“I interacted with many caring and true public servants even though I also had to reprimand a few who treated our people like second-class citizens. We are in our positions because of the people; we, therefore, owe them all the quality services they deserve,” she added.

She reiterated that delivering quality services remains a priority for the 7th Administration and that moving forward, the provincial government will implement a technologically

advanced integrated complaint management system and establish an inter-departmental service delivery rapid response management team to improve service delivery.

Letsoha-Mathae added that the provincial government will also improve the capacity of municipalities to effectively utilise their municipal infrastructure grants to improve service delivery.

“Through the Premier’s Coordinating Forum, we are going to agree on key service delivery issues, which are electricity, water, sanitation, roads, waste collection and good govern-

ance as standing items which municipalities must report on continuously,” she said.

She explained that at local government level, they have deployed community development workers who will monitor service delivery issues and refer them to relevant departments resolve.

Among the challenges the province has been grappling with are water shortages, sanitation issues and electricity supply problems. Government is, however, working hard to ensure that the challenges are addressed.

The Department of Water and Sanitation is, for instance, working around the clock to resolve water challenges in some of the municipalities.

## Addressing challenges

“The department has already invested multi-million Rands to assist the province with water and sanitation infrastructure,” she said.

To tackle the electricity challenges, the provincial government has partnered with Eskom to establish viable payment plans for municipalities that owe the power utility. The Department of Electricity has also intervened to address the challenge.

“Through intervention by



the Department of Electricity and Energy, we have received 11 power generators from the People's Republic of China which we will distribute to schools, health facilities and other government building with electricity challenges," she said.

## Youth empowerment

To create more employment opportunities, the Premier said her office has partnered with the National Skills Fund to facilitate comprehensive training interventions for young people.

"We recently launched the Youth Business Pitching Competition to provide youth start-up businesses with access to financial and non-financial support. We are collaborating with Maluti, Motheo and Goldfields Technical Vocational Education and Training colleges to give expression to this initiative," explained the Premier.

Additionally, over the next five years, the provincial government will introduce various innovative support programmes and incentives to expand access to finance, focusing on women, youth, people living with disabilities and military veterans.

She revealed that the provincial government has committed to several initiatives aimed



at boosting the Free State's economy, including leveraging infrastructure projects to create jobs.

"The Free State government will create an agro-manufacturing complex to leverage our centrality and access to markets. To enhance interprovincial cooperation on transport investment, discussions with Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal to develop the Harrismith Logistics Hub will soon be initiated."

## Fighting GBVF

The Premier described, gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) as a pandemic that destroys families, leaves souls battered and inflicts deep pain.

The provincial government will intensify the fight against the scourge "through education, community activism, empowerment, law enforcement, counselling and the provision of shelters across the province."

She added that more resources will be directed to Thuthuzela Care Centres, safe houses, and victim-friendly shelters.

Furthermore, she said more qualified personnel will be hired at these centres to provide professional support to survivors of GBV, adding that support will also be offered to members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

To demonstrate her commitment to combating the

scourge, the Premier has appointed the Free State's MEC for Finance, Tourism and Economic Development, Ketso Makume, as the province's political champion to fight against GBVF.

Among the key programmes overseen by Makume are men's dialogues, conversations between men and boys, a day dedicated to men taking on women's roles and Flower Day.

These initiatives aims to create a platform for men to share experiences, raise awareness, and encourage other men to join the fight against the abuse of women, children and people living with disabilities. ❖





## PHOTO STORY COMPETITION 2025

Join the South African National Committee for the UNESCO Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme (IHP) in celebrating the 50th anniversary of UNESCO IHP by entering the Photo Story Competition.

Photography turns abstract concepts into visual realities, tells inspiring stories instantly, and helps spread awareness of water issues through accessible means.

### THE BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATING

- Winning stories will be exhibited at a curated exhibition by UNISA
- Featuring in the South Africa Photo Story Book
- Free copy of Photo Story book for winners
- Recognition and visibility through the South African National Committee for UNESCO IHP channels and initiatives internationally.

### FIVE THEMES TO EXPLORE TO TELL YOUR STORY

- Water & Citizen Science
- Water & Education
- Water & Communities
- Water & Partnerships
- Water & Culture

Each photo story should speak to one of the five themes. You can submit a maximum of three Photo Story entries by a single photographer.

### HOW TO ENTER

Submit a minimum of three and a maximum of eight photographs that tell a cohesive story on one of the five themes along with a title. Your story should include a minimum of 200-500 words, names of the author(s), and photograph location in South Africa.

### PHOTO REQUIREMENTS

- Photographs should be .jpg or .png format.
- Minimum resolution of 1920 x 1080
- Minimum file size of 2MB for photographs taken using a cell phone camera.

### LINK TO WEBSITE:

<https://www.dws.gov.za/Projects/UNESCO/csps.aspx>

### SUBMISSION DEADLINE

**26 March 2025**

**Winners will be announced in April 2025**



Scan to enter:



WATER IS LIFE - SANITATION IS DIGNITY

South Africa is a water-scarce country, use water sparingly



# Gender and diversity management are crucial for inclusive workplace



**M**ampurane Caron Kgomo is a strong advocate for the importance of gender and diversity management in creating an inclusive workplace and society.

Currently working as a Deputy Director for Gender within the Gender and Diversity Management Unit at the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), she is dedicated to advancing these values in her role.

She spoke to *Public Sector Manager* magazine as South Africa joins the global community in marking World Day of Social Justice, which is commemorated annually on 20 February and recognises the need to promote efforts to tackle issues such as poverty, exclusion, employment, gender equity and access to social well-being and justice for all.

"Our primary goal is to promote gender equity and diversity management within the DIRCO. A diversified workplace is more representative of society, which is vital for effective governance," she said.

The directorate is also responsible for developing gender policies pertaining to women's rights, youth development, and persons living with disabilities.

The department continuously assesses its strategies and develops interventions that foster a more inclusive environment, ensuring that it truly embodies the values of equity and diversity that represents South Africa.



In her current role, Kgomo is responsible for overseeing the implementation of national gender policies, ensuring their integration into departmental strategic planning.

She is tasked with the development of policy evaluations to ensure that the department's gender and women's empowerment policies are consistent with national government policies.

Kgomo also leads efforts to develop education and training programmes and gender awareness, monitor departmental projects for alignment with gender policies and assist in the management of the unit's operations.

A substantial portion of her routine responsibilities involves evaluating the department's adherence to policies regarding diversity and inclusion.

"I collaborate closely with internal units to provide them with guidance on how to comply with employment equity objectives in areas such as deployment, training and appointments," she explained.

## Contributing to national development

Her work saw her being nominated as a member of a committee that was established by the Department of Public Service and Administration to aid in the drafting of the new Code of

Good Practice on the Prevention and Elimination of Harassment in the Workplace.

"This opportunity has afforded me invaluable insights, which have enabled me to more effectively evaluate and fortify our departmental policies. Assistance in the development of standard operating procedures for the management of sexual harassment has been one of my most significant contributions to the DIRCO," said Kgomo.

Consequently, she said, a revised policy will be implemented to improve workplace safety and accountability in 2025.

Among other duties, she is involved in the creation of awareness by facilitating induction workshops for new officials, especially to educate them on their rights to a safe working environment, and this also offers her a firsthand perspective on the challenges and privileges that her colleagues encounter.

## Reporting sexual harassment at work

Kgomo said she has noticed that addressing sexual harassment in the workplace can be a profoundly frustrating and painful experience, as the burden of proving one's case is often placed on the shoulders of the victim.

This, she said, has resulted in victims opting not to report incidents of sexual harassment

because of the tension and complications that are associated with the process.

"This leads to the prevalence of sexual harassment frequently being underscored in informal conversations; however, official data is scarce," she said.

Her job does not come without challenges, as she is sometimes faced with resistance to change regarding gender perceptions and the need for more comprehensive data to inform policy decisions.

Additionally, she said resources and funding for gender programmes can be limited, complicating efforts to implement meaningful change.

In 2023, she was among officials who were trained to become trainers on United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Gender Equality Seal, described by the UNDP as "a corporate standard for gender equality that organisations can qualify for and be benchmarked against to receive certification in accordance with best practices on gender equality inside an organisation".

## Inclusivity and equity

Kgomo urged decision-makers in the public sector to establish gender and diversity management units within their departments to ensure true inclusivity and equity in the workplace.

"We often witness the watering down of its relevance due to the assumption that all managers are aware, yet we are shocked when there is pushbacks. By embedding these principles into the government fabric, departments can drive solutions, enhance employee satisfaction, and reflect the diverse communities they serve.

"It is important that all Senior Management Service members are conscripted into a gender programme as an entry into leadership to ensure understanding and implementation of the National Gender Policy. This commitment to inclusivity not only strengthens the department's internal culture but also sets a powerful example for the broader society, showcasing government's dedication to equality and justice for all," she explained.

## Democracy in action

Kgomo is passionate about influencing positive change in and outside her workplace and believes that working at the intersection of human rights and gender advocacy allows her to contribute to addressing systemic inequalities.

She reflected on South Africa's celebration of 30 years of democracy, especially as a woman citizen, as a reminder of the sacrifices that were made for the country's freedom, but also high-



lights the ongoing challenges that citizens face in achieving true equality.

In recent years, government has fortified the legal framework by enacting critical laws including the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act, which is designed to combat gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF).

"These legislative have enabled numerous individuals, including

myself, to become active in the fight against injustices. My own spouse was accused of raping my niece in 2018, which was one of the most challenging moments of my life.

"I was confronted with a significant moral and emotional quandary as a professional gender activist who was profoundly knowledgeable about the laws of our country. Nevertheless, my dedication to the principles of

our democracy and justice left me with no other option than to act," she explained.

Kgomo initiated a case on behalf of her niece, resolutely relying on the legal system that she has consistently advocated for.

After years of legal proceedings, her spouse was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment on 4 August in 2024.

This experience has further solidified her conviction in the

critical significance of South Africa's legal framework and the role that each citizen plays in guaranteeing that no survivor of abuse is silenced.

"As we commemorate the 30th anniversary of democracy, let us renew our dedication to the pursuit of gender equality, thereby fortifying our endeavours to safeguard the most vulnerable members of our society," she said. ♦



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## PHOTO STORY COMPETITION ENTRIES OPEN

# TELL YOUR STORY AND STAND A CHANCE OF WINNING

5 themes to explore:

- Water & Citizen Science
- Water & Partnerships
- Water & Education
- Water & Culture
- Water & Communities

Submit a minimum of three and a maximum of eight photographs that tell a cohesive story on one of the five themes along with a title. Overall story of 200-500 words, names of the author(s), and photograph location in South Africa.

Submit by

**26 March 2025**

Link to website:

<https://www.dws.gov.za/Projects/UNESCO/cspi.aspx>

Scan to enter:



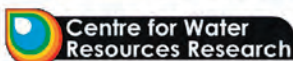
PHOTO STORY COMPETITION



**2024/2025**

TELL YOUR STORY:

**WATER &  
CITIZEN SCIENCE,  
PARTNERSHIPS,  
EDUCATION,  
CULTURE,  
COMMUNITIES**





# Young Electrochemist's search for an HIV cure opens a world of wonder



Photo: NRF

**G**rowing up in Cofimvaba, a rural town in the Eastern Cape, Professor Usisipho Feleni witnessed firsthand the devastating impact of the HIV and AIDS pandemic, which claimed millions of lives during its peak in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

The virus's toll became deeply personal for her when a close relative passed away during her high school years. This loss sparked a determination in the young Feleni to pursue pharmacy, driven by the dream of developing a cure for the virus.

With limited knowledge of the field, she applied for a pharmacy degree at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). However, her application was unsuccessful as the course was already full. Undeterred, she enrolled for a Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Chemical Sciences, hoping it would pave the way for her aspirations. Over time, her academic journey expanded to include a PhD in Chemistry, a Master of Science in Nanoscience, and a BSc Honours from the same university.

Nearly two decades later, the 35-year-old has fully embraced the field of chemical sciences, reaching heights many deem unattainable.

Today, Professor Feleni is a multi-award-winning scientist, recognised for her groundbreaking work as Associate Professor at the University of South Africa's (UNISA) Institute for Nanotechnology and Water Sustainability.

In a recent interview with *PSM* magazine, the Electrochemist shared that her passion for chemistry and mathematics in high school influenced her career choice.

"I thought being a Pharmacist would help me develop an antiretroviral drug because I had lost someone close to me to an HIV and AIDS-related illness," she recalled.

## Discovering Nanotechnology

Her academic journey took a significant turn during her Honours studies when her supervisor introduced her to the emerging field of nanotechnology. At the time, she was working on developing diagnostic tools to monitor antiretroviral, tuberculosis, and breast cancer drugs for her Master's degree.

"Nanotechnology became part of my journey during my Honours studies," she said.

Professor Usisipho Feleni.



patients require tailored dosages due to varying metabolic rates,” she explained.

Her current research focuses on electrochemical biosensors, electrocatalysis for monitoring disease biomarkers (such as SARS-CoV-2 pathogens), and pharmaceutical contaminants in water. She has authored over 80 research papers on nanomaterials and their applications in electrochemical sensors, electrocatalysis and photocatalysis.

Since joining UNISA, Feleni mentored four MSc graduates and is currently supervising or co-supervising eight MSc and eight PhD candidates.

## Career growth

She achieved the milestone of becoming an associate professor at the age of 33, a rare feat in academia.

“I was so surprised by the appointment. I used to think becoming a professor took decades of work. Growing up, I believed professors were old people. Of course, it did not happen by magic – I had to put in a lot of hard work,” she said, reflecting on the three years it took her to transition from senior lecturer to associate professor.

Her journey, however, was not without challenges.

“It is not easy, it is challenging. Moving up in academia requires overcoming many obstacles. As a professor, you are

expected to mentor the next generation of scholars while managing various responsibilities. It requires immense energy and dedication,” she said.

Feleni has secured numerous external research grants, including funding from the Technology Innovation Agency, the National Research Foundation (NRF) and Eskom’s Tertiary Education Support Programme.

Her accolades include the 2024 UNISA Women in Research Leadership Award, the 2022/23 TW Kambule NSTF Award for Emerging Researchers, the 2023 South African Women in Science Distinguished Young Women Researcher Award and the 2023 Standard Bank Top Women in STEM Award, among others.

Reacting to her NRF Research Excellence Award, which she said is closest to her heart, Feleni expressed her gratitude:

“I was humbled and excited. I had applied before in 2023 but did not make it. When I reapplied in 2024, I thought, ‘Let us try again.’ It is fulfilling to see my work recognised by the NRF, South Africa’s leading research body.”

The recognition affirmed her research’s impact in influencing younger researchers.

## Giving back to the community

Committed to inspiring the next generation, Feleni frequently

hosts research exhibitions in Cofimvaba to spark interest in science among young people.

“My research focuses on developing technologies to detect and remove contaminants, including pharmaceutical residues, from water. Wastewater treatment plants are not designed to eliminate all contaminants, so my work aims to improve these systems to ensure clean water for all,” she said.

Feleni urged young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to dream beyond their circumstances.

“Do not let limitations like language or a rural upbringing hold you back. Stay motivated, work hard and believe in yourself,” she advised.

Looking ahead, Feleni aims to become a full professor and secure a South African Research Chair Initiative (SARChI) position.

“Becoming a SARChI chair would open doors for researchers to train in my laboratory. I also hope to establish a company focused on water treatment technologies and diagnostic tools, aligning with the National Development Plan 2030 by creating jobs and training youth for the future,” she said. ♦

# A Journey of dedication:

overcoming  
challenges  
and driving  
innovation at  
SAQA



If government is to effectively continue providing services, the future of public sector financial management will have to be shaped by digital transformation, data-driven decision-making, and a growing emphasis on sustainability.

This is the view of Innocent Gumbochuma, the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). An entity of the Department of Higher Education and Training, SAQA is the oversight body of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the custodian of its values and quality character.

In November 2024, Gumbochuma won the Public Sector CFO of the Year Award at the 2024 CFO Awards in Johannesburg. His journey in the public sector started in 2009 at Umalusi, where he worked as the Assistant Finance Manager. He rose through the ranks until he left the quality assurance institution in 2013 to join the then newly formed Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO), where he worked as the Director of supply chain. In 2018, he was promoted to CFO. He held the position until November 2022 when he took up his current role at SAQA.

"In the nine years that I was at the QCTO, I am proud to say that I had eight clean audits," he said.

Confident in his capabilities, Gumbochuma was up for a new challenge



. A mammoth test in the form of a tattered and limping SAQA came knocking. At the time, the organisation had not had a CFO for over a year and had retrenched about 100 employees as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Rising to the occasion

"It is quite unheard of in the public sector but it had to happen...For lack of a better word, it was a mess when I joined.

There was no stability, which was a risky thing for me, coming from a place of comfort, but I needed a new challenge," he recalled.

He recalled that when he first arrived at the beleaguered organisation, his primary focus was to "clean up" the challenges created by the absence of a CFO.

"I joined in November and by financial year-end (31 March), the organisation almost got qualified to returning back to a clean audit," he said.

He attributes the success to the dedication of his team at the qualifications authority.

"I was joking with my team saying that in my career, I had never done so many corrective journals in six months. Here I did over 3 000 journals just to correct financials and make

sure that everything is proper," he added.

The achievement was followed by a "much better" clean audit.

## Digital transformation

Since his arrival, the organisation has implemented key financial strategies and innovations to strengthen its operations. These include digital transformation, resource optimisation and revenue diversification.

The qualification authority has invested in automation and data warehousing to improve service delivery and data management. Through resource optimisation, the authority has been able to identify areas to streamline costs while maintaining service quality. Revenue diversification has led the agency to explore

and implement sustainable revenue streams beyond traditional funding models.

"These efforts have enhanced both our operational efficiency and financial sustainability," said the CFO.

Following the retrenchments, SAQA employees were expected to take on additional responsibilities and the executive team was no exception. Today, its executive team consists of the Chief Executive Officer, the CFO and the Chief Operations Officer. Gumbochuma also doubles as the Chief Information Officer.

"We are doing a serious digital transformation journey because it makes sense for us as a now lean organisation to take on more work. You will not believe that I am in charge of seven

departments. That is what it is under the circumstances. I am in charge of information and communications technology, Human Resources, legal, finance and the Project Management Office," he said.

The digital transformation is expected to streamline qualification accreditation and evaluation processes.

"For example, if you study abroad, we have to give you a South African equivalent of your qualification. We get a lot of those. We can only do that through digitisation. One of the key projects that we are doing is automation, which we have just put into production in December (2024)," he explained.

## One-stop-shop

SAQA, he said, has set its sights



on building a one-stop shop qualification verification process. This will allow employers to verify credentials of prospective employees through a single system. Currently, the process is fragmented, requiring criminal records checks with the South African Police Service, identity verifications with the Department of Home Affairs, and a qualifications authentication with SAQA.

"We are building systems that will link Home Affairs and police so that when you verify your education, we do everything at once. One of the most exciting things that I want to achieve – and we have already started – is to utilise blockchain technology as part of a revenue generating strategy," said Gumbochuma.

Despite all the successes, he concedes that his job is not the easiest. He explained that the demands of his role often prevent him from sleeping, as he constantly strives to balance two key priorities: optimising available resources and securing additional funding for the organisation. He noted that the scars of retrenchments still linger among the employees who survived, and his goal is to provide them with the assurance that such an event will never happen again.

"How do you do that? We are one of the most underfunded organisations but we are a very



critical organisation in the education landscape."

### Addressing budget constraints

He highlighted that only 60% of SAQA's budget is funded by the fiscus, with the organisation having to raise the rest on its own. To bolster its fundraising efforts, the authority piloted a proof-of-concept with a major financial institution in 2023. The concept aimed to streamline the verification of qualifications for loan applicants.

"The financial institution wants to better vet applicants because some provide incorrect information. They want us to verify those credit applicants," he said.

The authority managed to verify 50 000 records for the institution and was able to get an additional R2 million.

"It was a classic case of getting additional revenue. The financial institution promised they would likely give us 400

000 applicants to vet per year," he said.

"That's just one financial institution, he said, adding that he plans to approach all institutions that follow the same process to ensure that SAQA's revenue generating efforts are stabilised.

He said the challenge was balancing operational needs with long-term sustainability goals, especially with the budgetary constraints. This, he said, requires innovative thinking to optimise resources without compromising service delivery.

He pointed to the entity's resource optimisation efforts, which resulted in savings of approximately R5 million over three years on Microsoft license fees, which were being provided by third party resellers.

"... one of the things that I am good at is negotiating. We managed to get Microsoft on board," he said.

In late 2024, the organisation moved to a smaller office space

after it sold its six-storey building in Hatfield, Pretoria.

"It was an old building and the maintenance was just too much. We got all the necessary approvals to sell and we sold it. In the meantime, before we buy another building, we will be renting for the next three years," said Gumbochuma.

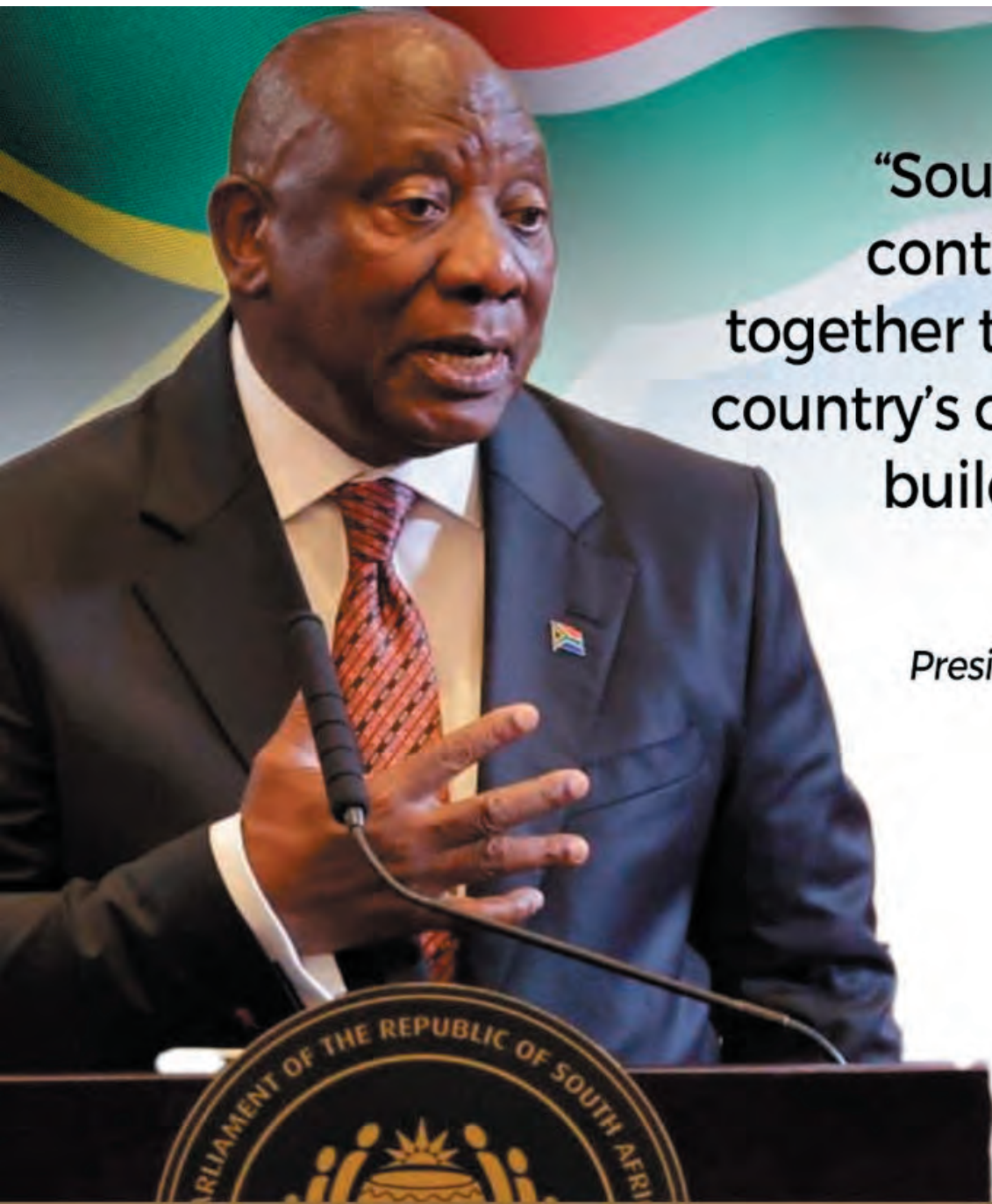
### Collective achievements

While more work lies ahead for the organisation, he said his CFO Award was testament to the sacrifices, long hours and passion he poured into his career over the years.

"Professionally, it is validation that strategic leadership, innovation and a focus on financial sustainability can make a tangible impact, particularly in the public sector where accountability and service delivery are critical," he said.

"This award underscores SAQA's commitment to innovation, transformation, efficiency and service delivery. It reflects the collaborative effort across leadership, governance and operations to streamline processes, embrace digital transformation and enhance the quality of education through the NQF. This recognition is a shared achievement that highlights SAQA's positive trajectory." ♦





“South Africans are continuing to work together to confront our country’s challenges and build a nation that works for all.”

*President Cyril Ramaphosa,  
SONA 2025*

[stateofthenation.gov.za](http://stateofthenation.gov.za) | [#SONA2025](https://twitter.com/SONA2025)



REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA





# Peace in the DRC

## requires leadership and collective will

In the last two weeks, 14 of our soldiers have been killed in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) after coming under attack. They were killed in violation of a ceasefire agreement between the DRC and Rwanda facilitated by President João Lourenço of Angola.

South African soldiers are in the DRC as part of the Southern African Development Community Mission in the DRC (SAMIDRC) and the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO). The UN Security Council has roundly condemned the attack, reiterating that attacks against peacekeepers may constitute war crimes.

As a nation, we pay tribute to our fallen soldiers. They are South African and African heroes. They lost their lives in defence of the defenceless: the



men, women and children who are the victims of one of the world's most protracted conflicts. Since 1996, the conflict in the DRC, and the hunger and disease it has caused, has claimed millions of lives. According to the UN, more than seven million

Congolese have been internally displaced.

The various state and non-state actors involved in the conflict have been implicated in grave human rights abuses, including large-scale attacks on civilians, abductions and extrajudicial

killings, torture, the recruitment of child soldiers, forced labour, human trafficking and mass rape.

South Africa has been a troop contributing country to MONUSCO since 1999 and we have lent our support to the SADC mission deployed to the region



in 2023. This is anchored in our commitment towards silencing the guns across Africa. Supporting peacebuilding and the resolution of conflict in Africa has been a cornerstone of our country's foreign policy since the advent of democracy, as we have sought to draw on our experience of political dialogue and national reconciliation.

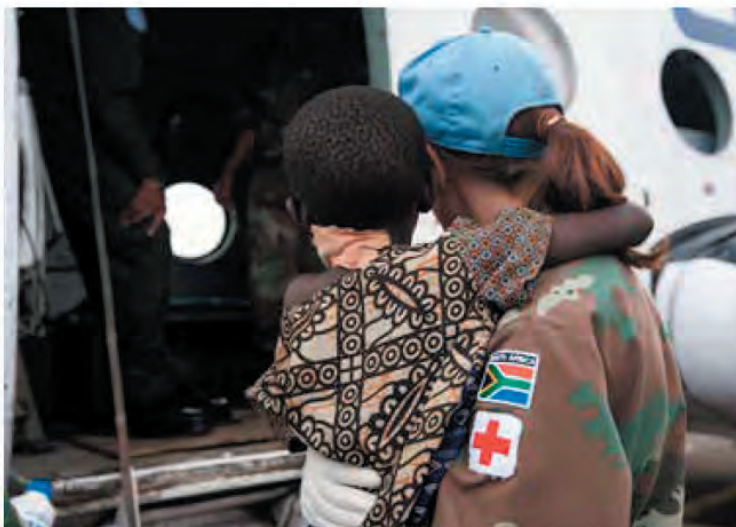
Since 1994, our country has contributed to UN peace operations in Burundi, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Liberia, Nepal and to the UN-AU Mission in Darfur. South Africa has been part of fostering peace in Lesotho, Burundi and South Sudan. In 2022, we hosted negotiations that brokered a ceasefire between the government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front.

Last year marked the end of the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) of which SANDF troops formed part. The mission was deployed for three years to combat extremist groups in the Cabo Delgado province. The government of Mozambique has praised SAMIM for its efforts to restore stability to the region and for contributing to a vastly improved security situation.

In the wake of the tragic killing of our soldiers, some have questioned South Africa's presence in the eastern DRC. Some have said that we have no business being there.

But violence and conflict in

## “Since 1994, our country has contributed to UN peace operations in Burundi, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Liberia, Nepal and to the UN-AU Mission in Darfur” .



Africa is the business of all Africans. The humanitarian, economic and social effects of these conflicts are felt across borders and regions. Instability in any part of the continent affects the prospects for growth and development across the continent.

For a lasting peace to be secured in the eastern DRC, there must be an immediate end to hostilities and a ceasefire that must be respected by all. South Africa's participation in the DRC is subject to the SAMIDRC mission, which has operational timeframes and an end date. The mission will wind down in accordance with the implemen-

tation of various confidence-building measures and when the ceasefire we have called for takes root.

As this happens, securing the safety of our troops remains paramount. The situation in the areas where our troops are stationed remains highly volatile. We are making every effort to ensure that our soldiers are well-equipped and sufficiently supported during the mission.

A ceasefire is a necessary precondition for peace talks that must include all parties to the conflict whether they are state or non-state actors, Congolese or non-Congolese. Diplomacy is the most sustainable pathway to

achieving a lasting peace for the DRC and its people.

We call on all parties to fully embrace the current diplomatic efforts that are aimed at finding a peaceful resolution, including honouring the Luanda Process. Strong political will and leadership will be required from all parties to the conflict, as well as respect for the territorial integrity of the DRC.

We endorse the call by the UN Security Council for the reversal of the territorial expansion by the M23 rebel group and for the exit of external forces from the DRC.

Achieving a lasting peace and security for the eastern DRC and the region requires the collective will of the community of nations.

As a country, we have a duty of support towards the nations of Africa whose solidarity and material support helped secure our liberation. South Africa will not let up in its support to the people of the DRC so that they may have the peace and security they rightfully deserve.

**\*This President's message was first published on 3 February 2025**



# Ministers welcome President's focus

## on economic growth, job creation

**G**overnment Ministers have thrown their weight behind President Cyril Ramaphosa's State of the Nation Address (SoNA), which focused on economic growth, job creation, infrastructure development and reducing household expenses.

"Our most urgent task is to grow our economy so that we can create jobs, reduce poverty, and improve the lives of all South Africans," the President told Members of Parliament (MPs) and guests on 7 February 2025.

The President emphasised that the nation urgently requires a robust economy that benefits everyone.

To achieve this virtuous cycle of investment, growth and job creation, the President said economic growth must surpass 3%.

Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen, has echoed the President's sentiments, stating that South Africa needs to transform its economy. "We have got to be able to show more jobs. We need to bring in the private sector so that we can get more agricultural products to the world a lot quicker and expand.



"The citrus industry told me that they could quadruple the production over the medium-term if they have reliable ports and can get their products to the market."

Steenhuisen believes that the Head of State and Government has demonstrated a clear focus.

"Now, we can [move with] the urgency that is required and I wish I could see more of those deadlines around when we are going to achieve these things.

"I think the President diag-

nosed the problem perfectly – it is about growth and jobs. That is why we are in the GNU [Government of National Unity]."

The Minister also expressed his satisfaction with the plans presented by the President.

He also welcomed the investment in infrastructure, the commitments made toward Early Childhood Development (ECD), and the transformation of Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grants into income protection for impoverished South Africans. The

President announced that this grant will serve as the foundation for introducing a sustainable income support system for the unemployed.

He also stated that the Funza Lushaka Bursary Scheme will continue to prioritise students who wish to pursue a career in teaching, particularly in the foundation phase.

In addition, government will work to expand access to ECD services for all children.

### Time for action

"We cannot be sitting within the 2029 election and going to the electorate with some of these projects languishing in the drawing board. I think now we have to unpack; take all of these things and move them with speed and urgency," Steenhuisen added.

Deputy Minister for Women, Youth, and Persons with Disabilities, Mmapaseka Steve Letsike, believes that the President has issued a clear call regarding the government's mid-term development plan, focusing on actions and priorities.

"Part of the non-negotiable...



is job creation and economic growth in all sectors. No sector must be left behind - whether it's infrastructure, construction, agriculture or finance.

"Our President has said our country is capable and we must make sure that the capability and the potential of young people that we often find neither in employment, education nor training must be brought to the table."

Letsike believes that the President is prioritising women, youth and persons with disabilities. She welcomed the Transformation Fund, which is worth R20 billion a year over the next five years, to support black-owned and small business enterprises.

"It is already telling us its action plan. This public purse must reach the relevant people."

Letsike also welcomed President Ramaphosa's commitment to reform the energy and water sectors, which are essential for service delivery to the people. "When he wrapped it up, he said our nation is capable and

we cannot leave anyone behind."

Health Minister, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, expressed his satisfaction that the President addressed the importance of building the economy to create jobs. "That has been a very big problem for about two decades in our country and he tried his best to tackle it," he said.

## Improving public health

Motsoaledi also welcomed the three significant announcements related to his department, which include advancing the National Health Insurance (NHI), enhancing public health infrastructure, and working towards the elimination of HIV and AIDS.

"I have been telling people that improving public health infrastructure and implementing the NHI are not mutually exclusive and do not have to follow one another, and that we can do it simultaneously."

"The President just announced a huge hospital bill programme

and so, we are forging ahead with NHI and we are going to put this massive infrastructure."

According to the Minister, the infrastructure will complement improvements in public health facilities.

"South Africans must not accept or get used to the idea that we are going to live with HIV/Aids forever and it is part of life. It is not. At some stage, we need to bring it to an end and we are targeting 2030."

While he acknowledged that the country may not be able to completely eradicate the disease, he stressed that government is working tirelessly to eliminate it as a public threat.

To achieve this goal, approximately 1.1 million more people need to be on antiretroviral therapy between now and November 2025.

"People have been asking me where are you going to get money (sic). But I tell them, when you want to save people, do not ask about money. Look at the

human beings you want to save first and money will follow when you have that determination."

Minister in The Presidency, Khumbudzo Ntshavheni, has echoed the President's sentiments of providing universal healthcare for all South Africans.

"We must do the basic things that need to be done. We must put the health infrastructure in place, so that there are hospitals and clinics that our people can access," Ntshavheni said.

## Adopting digital technology

Home Affairs Minister, Dr Leon Schreiber, stated that the President's adoption of digital technology in his department has been crucial. He told SAnews that this aligns with the vision of Home Affairs and how the department wishes to turn it into a digitally first department – the first component of this initiative will be delivered this year.

Schreiber also highlighted the part of the address where the Head of State discussed tourism and attracting skills for investment.

"One of the big issues is getting visas. That is why the electronic travel authorisation concept and the automated visa process are important. No more papers, no more space for human intervention and it is going to deal with corruption and it is going to deliver with efficiency. ♦



# Reorientating

## South Africa's education system

**T**he Department of Basic Education (DBE) has committed to embark on an urgent strategic reorientation of the education system with a focus on strengthening foundational learning.

During the release of the 2024 National Senior Certificate (NSC) results, Basic Education Minister Siviwe Gwarube urged provinces, districts and schools to develop strategies to reverse the decline in enrolments for critical subjects like mathematics and science.

"The systemic interventions that we will undertake in this regard include expanding access to quality Early Childhood Development (ECD) for learners before they enter the basic education system and improving the quality of teaching and learning in the foundation phase," she said.

Gwarube believes this strategic shift toward prioritising ECD and the foundation phase will significantly improve learning outcomes from Grade R through to Grade 12.

In doing so, the Minister said South Africa can expect to see



Basic Education Minister Siviwe Gwarube at the 2024 National Senior Certificate results announcement and awards ceremony

more learners moving through the schooling system with greater confidence to take on and succeed in subjects that set them on a path for personal and professional success.

### The Class of 2024

The Minister commended the Class of 2024 for their resilience and dedication over the

past four years. Having entered Grade 8 in 2020 at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, they navigated significant disruptions to teaching and learning both locally and globally.

The cohort also entered Grade 9 during the pandemic, a Grade that is key for subject selection for Grades 10 to 12, which ultimately shape their career

parts. It was also affected by the evolving budget pressures that affected provincial departments and schools, social ills including violence, gangsterism and the new trend of protection-fee rackets terrorising local schools.

"Despite these challenges, we have seen the highest rate of learners enrolled for Grade 12 in 2024 writing the NSC exams since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic," said the Minister.

Approximately 97% of learners enrolled for Grade 12 in 2024 ultimately wrote the NSC exams in 2024.

### Extra support

Initiatives driven by the DBE to support the Class of 2024 included personalised learning interventions, additional teaching support and socio-emotional care.

"To provide further support, provinces rolled out extra face-to-face tuition sessions, Saturday catch-up programmes and extended school hours to ensure adequate revision in key subjects," said the Minister.

These initiatives targeted learners who were struggling to cope



Some of South Africa's National Senior Certificate top achievers for 2024.

with the curriculum content due to earlier disruptions, focusing on key subjects.

In addition to classroom-based interventions, learners have also benefited from extensive support in the form of revision materials, past question papers, and online resources made available through public-private partnerships with stakeholders, including Vodacom, MTN, and the National Education Collaboration Trust among other corporate partners.

The number of full-time candidates who wrote the NSC examinations increased from 691 160 in 2023 to 705 291 in 2024. The number of learners with special education needs increased from 5 288 in 2023 to 6 470 in 2024.

Furthermore, a total of 556 726 learners who are beneficiaries of social grants wrote the NSC examinations in 2024, showing an increase of 12 938 when compared to 2023.

## The 2024 NSC results

Minister Gwarube said the

results show that the country's schooling system is maturing, although there is still much work to be done to improve the quality of education outcomes. She cleared the misunderstanding on the 30% pass rate that most critics of the education system often quote.

"To pass the NSC, learners are not required simply to get 30% across all subjects, which is often misconceived to be the only pass requirement for the NSC. Instead, they are required to get at least 40% in their home language and two other subjects and at least 30% for three other subjects and must pass at least 6 out of their 7 subjects," she explained.

She announced that 615 429 learners passed the NSC in 2024, the highest number in South African history. As a result, the national pass rate for the 2024 NSC rose from 82.9% in 2023 to 87.3%.

The Free State was the top-performing province, with a pass rate of 91.0%, up from 89.0% in 2023. KwaZulu-Natal followed closely, achieving a

pass rate of 89.5%, an increase of 3.2% from the previous year.

Gauteng ranked third, raising its pass rate from 85.4% in 2023 to 88.4% in 2024. North West followed with 87.5%, marking a 5.9% increase from 2023. The Western Cape came fifth with 86.6%, a 5% rise from 2023.

Limpopo ranked sixth with a pass rate of 85.01%, reflecting a 5.5% increase from 2023, followed by Mpumalanga at 84.99%, a notable 8% rise from the previous year. The Eastern Cape achieved a pass rate of 84.98%, up by 3.6%, while the Northern Cape rounded up the list with 84.2%.

## A healthy education system

"While we celebrate the achievements of the Class of 2024, we must also reflect on the health of our basic education system. A healthy schooling system is not measured solely by matric results but by a comprehensive set of indicators that reflect its quality and equity," she said.

The Minister explained that the

basic education sector serves 12.7 million learners, with over 740 000 enrolled in independent schools. It also employs over 460 000 educators, operates close to 24 850 schools, and managed about 889 circuit offices, 75 education districts and nine provincial education departments.

These figures underscore the scale of education as a critical and complex responsibility of a democratic government. However, the Minister added that this should not be solely the work of government.

"Education is fundamentally a social undertaking, shaping individuals and communities for a better future, and that can never be the task of government alone, when society invests collectively in education, it fosters greater equity and inclusivity," she said.

She highlighted that South Africa has made significant strides in improving access to basic education, with 98% of children between the ages of 7 and 15 now enrolled in schools.

While acknowledging the progress in expanding access, she emphasised the need to enhance the quality of education. The goal is for learners to leave school with the skills and qualifications that not only open doors to higher education but also enable them to enter the job market and lead lives of dignity. ❖



# Celebrating

## International Mother Language Day

**T**he past year has been pivotal for language issues in our nation, the Government of National Unity experienced significant contention regarding the Basic Education Laws Amendment (BELA) Act of 2024, specifically concerning clauses 4 and 5. These clauses raised the alarm for various interest groups about their potential implications for mother tongue-based education.

Historically, public engagement with language matters has been tepid, primarily only capturing the interest of professionals within the language sector, such as language practitioners and interpreters. However, the discourse surrounding the BELA Act of 2024, has illuminated essential language questions that warrant urgent attention from all facets of society.

### **Mother tongue-based education**

This year also marks the 25th

anniversary of International Mother Language Day, commemorated under the theme; "Make Languages Count for Sustainable Development." This theme aligns with the global initiative, the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, which seeks to promote and preserve indigenous languages worldwide. Empirical evidence suggests that learning in one's mother tongue significantly enhances cognitive development; nevertheless, many learners in developing nations, such as ours, are deprived of this fundamental right.

Consequently, the national implementation of Mother Tongue-based Bilingual Education by the Department of Basic Education represents a critical step not only toward the decolonisation of the educational landscape in the country but also for unleashing learners' potential



and optimising their academic success.

Collaborative support from relevant stakeholders is essential to ensure that indigenous languages are recognised and incorporated as viable mediums for learning, teaching and assessment in the country.

### The importance of preserving indigenous languages

The significance of language extends beyond an educational framework. South Africa's inherent multilingualism symbolises a rich tapestry of linguistic diversity. According to Statistics South Africa, isiZulu is spoken in 24.4% of households, followed by isiXhosa (16.3%) and Afrikaans (10.6%), with English ranking fifth at 8.6%, after Sepedi (9.8%). However, numerous South Africans are compelled to engage with government in English, a language not fully comprehended by a significant portion of the population.

In fact, it is unique within the African continent for citizens to communicate predominantly in a colonial language. While English continues to dominate as the medium for business and trade in the world, many nations beyond Africa prioritise their indigenous languages.

Instances abound of indi-

viduals who must interact with government in a language that is foreign to them, such as an elderly woman in Mount Frere, Eastern Cape, who must follow medical instructions written in English, or a resident in Malamulele, Limpopo, who is required to complete forms at the Department of Home Affairs in English. These scenarios highlight the profound effects of language barriers, often leaving individuals lacking full clarity on critical information.

Indigenous African languages serve as repositories of vital knowledge systems that have historically been marginalised. Sustainable development is intricately linked to leveraging existing resources and formulating strategies for longevity and sustainability. Despite this reality, numerous governmental departments and organs of state fail to integrate these considerations into their communication strategies.

**“The Act stipulates that national government departments and public entities must utilise at least three official languages for governmental affairs in accordance with Section 6(2) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.”**

### Non-compliance

The *2023/24 PanSALB Language Compliance Report* illustrates a concerning trend of non-compliance among government departments and state entities with constitutional mandates and legislative frameworks such as the Use of Official Languages Act of 2012. The Act stipulates that national government departments and public entities must utilise at least three official languages for governmental affairs in accordance with Section 6(2) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, which mandates proactive measures for the utilisation of previously marginalised languages, including indigenous African languages.

Moreover, Section 6(4) of the

Constitution emphasises the necessity for official languages to enjoy parity of esteem. It is crucial to recognise that each language's value is inherently tied to its speakers; failing to acknowledge a language equates to underestimating an individual's potential for success, as underscored in the preamble of our Constitution.

It is imperative that all governmental departments and state organs accord heightened seriousness to language matters, particularly regarding non-compliance with language-related regulations. Institutions such as the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) must receive the necessary support as mandated by the PanSALB Act of 1995. ♦





# President Ramaphosa outlines SA's G20 Presidency priorities at WEF



**P**resident Cyril Ramaphosa has highlighted the significance of South Africa's G20 Presidency and the economic priorities of the South African Government of National Unity during a special address to the 55th World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland.

The President told world leaders that South Africa will focus its G20 Presidency on three themes – solidarity, equality and sustainable development. He emphasised the country's commitment to advancing a just energy transition, fostering inclusive growth and addressing global inequalities.

"As a leading forum for international economic cooperation, the G20 plays an important role in shaping and strengthening global architecture and governance

on major international economic issues," the President said.

He pointed out that the G20 is being hosted on the African continent for the first time in history.

"This is a moment of great significance for South Africa, the African continent and the world in that it was in Africa where humans developed the capacity and the impulse for cooperation.

"Cooperation has been one of the key markers of human development touching on many aspects of life, from survival and social organisation to technological and cultural progress, which is what the G20 was established for – to foster cooperation to deal with the challenges the world faces. Cooperation is the bedrock of human civilisation," President Ramaphosa said.

He referred to former President

Nelson Mandela's speech at the WEF annual meeting 33 years ago, when he said: "Our interdependence, bringing us together into a common global home, across the oceans and the continents, demands that we all combine to launch a global offensive for development, prosperity and human survival."

President Ramaphosa said South Africa's G20 Presidency is aimed at pursuing the objective of fostering solidarity, equality and sustainable development.

"It is South Africa's firm view that these themes can best be taken forward through the collective actions of institutions like the G20 and various multilateral institutions of the world, especially the United Nations[UN], the WTO [World Trade Organisation] and global financial institu-

tions, which should be reformed and be more representative and responsive to the needs of the citizens of the world.

"We will seek to get the G20 to focus more on how we can enhance solidarity through collective efforts to ensure that in the pursuit of progress for all, no person and no country is left behind," the President said.

He emphasised that the rights and freedoms of one people cannot be separated from the rights and freedoms of all peoples. The President said that this is the foundation on which solidarity is built.

## Reducing inequality

He added that one of the greatest impediments to growth, development and stability is the persistence of inequality within

and between countries.

The pursuit of the UN Sustainable Development Goal on reducing inequality is as much of an economic imperative as it is a social imperative, President Ramaphosa said.

"As the G20, we need deliberate and coordinated efforts to focus on inclusive growth based on responsive trade and investment to grow the incomes of poor nations and the poorest in society and to ensure equal access to opportunities especially for women and young people.

"For nations to flourish, equality and prosperity must be available to everyone – regardless of gender, race, religious beliefs or economic status," he said.

## **Mobilising finance for a just energy transition**

Another of South Africa's priorities for its G20 Presidency is to mobilise finance for a just energy transition.

President Ramaphosa underscored the need for enhanced climate financing, urging global financial institutions to redirect unused special drawing rights to support developing economies, particularly in Africa and the Global South.

"It is simply not fair that over 60% of special drawing rights are concentrated in a handful of wealthy countries. These



resources should empower countries in Africa to invest in infrastructure, education, health care, and industrial development," the President said.

He called for innovative financing mechanisms and private capital to scale sustainable development, urging global institutions to derisk and support financing for emerging markets.

Highlighting South Africa's Just Energy Transition Partnership, the President said: "We must accelerate the transition to low-carbon economies in a manner that is just and inclusive, while recognising the damage that climate change has already caused."

## **Strengthening disaster resilience**

With the increasing frequency of climate-induced natural disas-

ters, President Ramaphosa said South Africa has, therefore, made the strengthening of disaster resilience as one of the priorities of its G20 Presidency.

He called for special financing and insurance mechanisms to support post-disaster reconstruction, particularly in vulnerable regions.

## **Harnessing critical minerals for inclusive growth**

President Ramaphosa said another priority is to harness critical minerals for inclusive growth and development.

"We need a G20 framework on green industrialisation and investments to ensure progress towards a grand bargain that promotes value addition to critical minerals close to the source of extraction.

"We also need the development of low-carbon manufacturing value chains, which can support decarbonisation and industrial development. As mineral extraction accelerates to match the needs of the energy transition, the countries and local communities endowed with these resources must be the ones to benefit the most," the President said.

## **Showcasing Africa's promise**

President Ramaphosa highlighted Africa as the next frontier of global growth, with its abundant natural resources, young population and expanding markets. He called for G20 support for the African Continental Free Trade Area Adjustment Fund, investments in infrastructure, youth skills development, and women's





economic empowerment.

"The digitisation of the continent to enhance trade and development is a key enabler. Through its G20 Presidency, South Africa is well-positioned to advance global cooperation and build partnerships for growth and development," he said.

## Advancing global cooperation

President Ramaphosa praised South Africa's inclusive governance under the GNU, which he credited with fostering stability and investor confidence.

"This cooperative culture and approach was taken to a higher level with the establishment of the Government of National Unity following the elections we held in May last year.

"The Government of National Unity, made up of 10 political parties, has been vital to stability and inclusive governance, and has contributed to greater interest among investors in South Africa's economic prospects," he said.

The President said over the last few years, the South African government has been working closely with social partners in business and in labour to address key national challenges and drive inclusive growth.

Concluding his address, President Ramaphosa extended an invitation to world leaders to attend the G20 Summit in Johannesburg later this year.

He said the seeds of human progress were sown in Africa, where the earliest forms of

cooperation were forged and developed.

"As the leaders of the G20 return to Africa, we make a call that we all harness these essential capabilities that will make us take action to build a better and fairer world. We intend that the G20 in Johannesburg this year should be a forum where cooperation and collaboration amongst the leading economies in the world will be taken to a higher level.

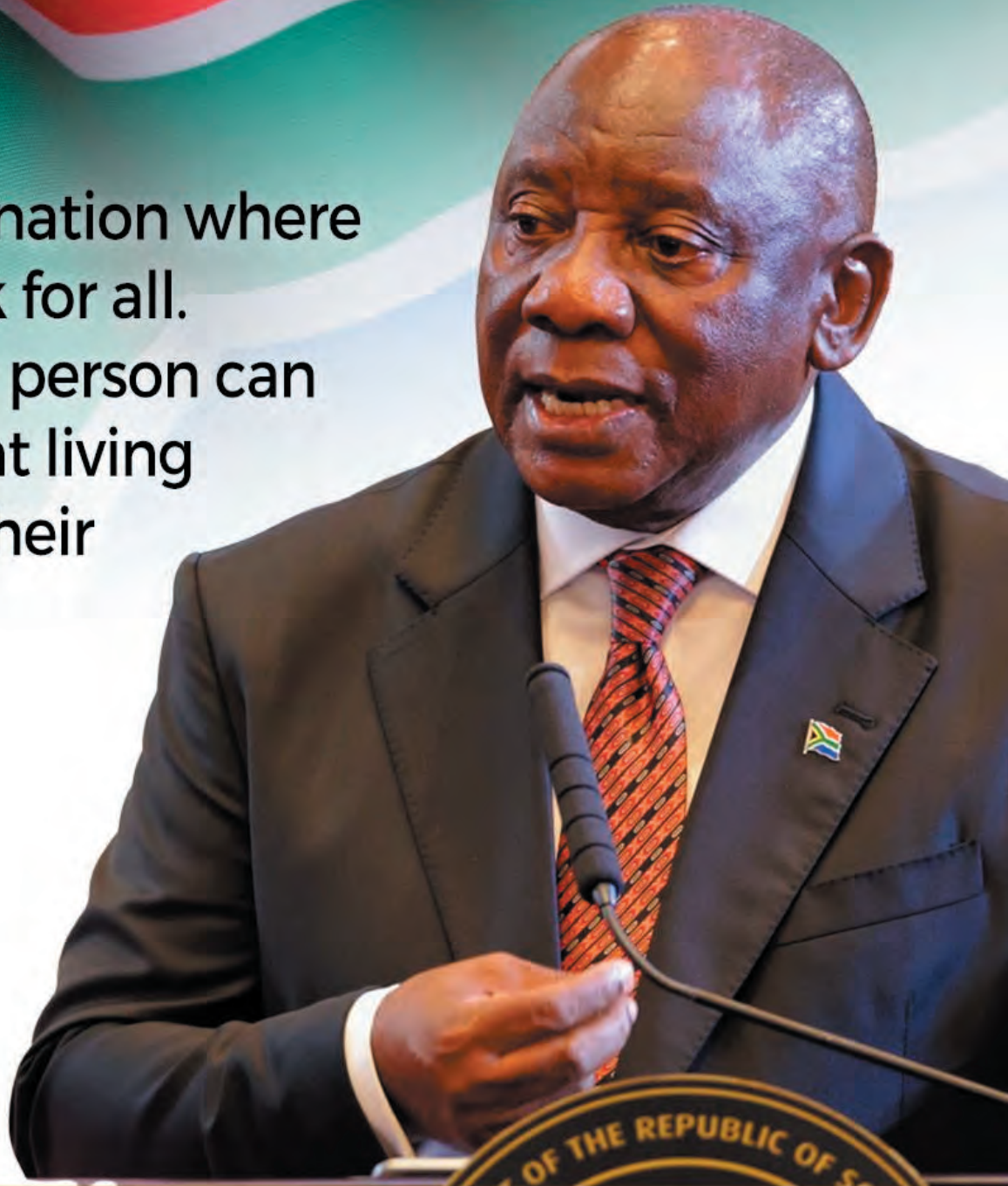
"Acting together, we should build an inclusive, just and equal world in which all may prosper, leaving no one and no country behind. I look forward to welcoming you to the G20 in Johannesburg later this year.

"Even if you do not participate in any of the 130 G20-related meetings, I invite you to come and see South Africa for yourself, the most beautiful country in the world," he said. ♦



“We want a nation where there is work for all. Where every person can earn a decent living and realise their potential.”

*President  
Cyril Ramaphosa,  
SONA 2025*



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# Good foundation laid for 7th Administration to improve on previous audit outcomes: AG Maluleke

**A**uditor-General (AG) Tsakani Maluleke has called on government to build on the improved audit outcomes delivered by the previous administration. Tabling the 2023/24 general report for national and provincial departments, their entities and legislatures to Parliament's Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Maluleke said the audit outcomes over the term of the previous administration showed "an improvement in the ability of national and provincial government to transparently report on their finances and performance".

However, she raised a concern regarding the high-impact auditees that have the biggest impact on the lives of South Africans and on government finances, as they have not yet demonstrated good performance against their planned targets, and institutionalised strict financial and compliance disciplines. These auditees contribute to the delivery of critical services

in the areas of education, skills development and employment; energy; environmental sustainability; financial sustainability; health services; human settlements; infrastructure development; roads and transport; safety and security; and water and sanitation. They also include state-owned enterprises and other key public entities.

These high-impact auditees were responsible for approximately 77% of the 2023/24 expenditure budget of national and provincial government. They continued to have the worst audit outcomes and improved at a slower pace than other auditees.

"It is worth reporting that the last administration dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic and various disasters, including the floods in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape. In our special reports, we highlighted the good work done by the 6th Administration in dealing with these disruptive events, but also reported on



AG Tsakani Maluleke.

Photo: AGSA

weaknesses in how auditees responded," said the AG.

## Engaging stakeholders

Maluleke added that through numerous engagements with different stakeholders in the accountability ecosystem, commitments and actions were solicited from key role players.

The ecosystem is made up of all role players in national and provincial government,

Parliament and the provincial legislatures that have a part to play in enabling a culture of performance, accountability, transparency and institutional integrity. This system includes the Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA) as the country's supreme audit institution as well as the citizens of South Africa.

"Improved service delivery and the responsible use of the limited funds available will only be possible when we have ca-



The Salvokop precinct project construction site in Tshwane.

pable, cooperative, accountable and responsive institutions that deliver on their mandates. I urge all role players in the accountability ecosystem, particularly those with direct control over service delivery, to work deliberately and with urgency towards a heightened level of accountability, transparency, integrity and improved service delivery for all South Africans.”

## Service delivery risks

AG Maluleke urged the new administration to continue using her office’s work as it provides critical insight into weaknesses in national and provincial government that will remain obstacles to the achievement of the National Development Plan 2030 and the Medium-Term Development Plan of the 7th Administration, if not decisively addressed.

### The risks:

- Basic services such as education, healthcare, housing, transport and water cannot be delivered without infrastructure. The country’s existing infrastructure must also be properly maintained to ensure

that it remains in a workable and safe condition throughout its lifespan.

“Our audit work over the 6th Administration’s term incorporated numerous site visits to inspect the progress on and quality of infrastructure projects. We identified and reported on significant deficiencies every year – in 2023/24, we reported findings on 86% of the 143 projects we visited. All too often, infrastructure delivery projects are delayed, the work done is of poor quality, and projects cost more than planned. There are also examples where newly built infrastructure is standing idle and not being put to use. Once again, we report on existing infrastructure that is deteriorating because it is not properly maintained.”

- The modernisation and integration of systems and the harnessing of the benefits of technology is a cornerstone in improving the capacity of state institutions and the effective delivery of services. However, the project management weaknesses and

gaps in intergovernmental coordination of infrastructure projects are also evident in the delivery of new systems and technologies. Projects are delayed and cost more than planned. Implemented systems are underutilised and often not integrated with existing systems in government. “The global emergence of hackers targeting government institutions requires increased control and vigilance around cybersecurity. We annually assess cybersecurity controls to alert auditees to vulnerabilities that can be exploited through a cyberattack. In 2023/24, we identified control weaknesses at 70% of the 77 auditees we tested in this regard. The impact of national and provincial government not adequately protecting their systems is evident from the recent, well publicised incidents of successful cyberattacks.”

- Departments and public entities are dependent on service providers and contractors to deliver on their projects and programmes and to support

their operations. Continued non-compliance with procurement legislation leads to unfair and uncompetitive processes, which often result in financial losses and contractors not delivering what they were contracted to do. Poor contract management and a reluctance to hold suppliers accountable for late and sub-quality delivery is one of the main root causes of project failures and financial loss. “Through the material irregularity (MI) process, we have identified multiple cases of financial loss and harm to the public due to procurement and contract management non-compliance and suspected fraud. In total, 63% of auditees had findings on non-compliance with procurement and contract management legislation in 2023/24; findings at 23% of these auditees were material.”

- Overspending and the poor quality of spending reduce the already limited funds available. The main reasons for the continuing financial losses and waste, especially





## AUDITOR - GENERAL SOUTH AFRICA

at high-impact auditees, were poor payment practices, uncompetitive and uneconomical procurement practices, limited value and benefit for money spent, and weaknesses in project management. The fruitless and wasteful expenditure over the 6th Administration's term totalled R10.34 billion.

"The funds government budgets for service delivery activities are reduced by claims made against departments, and by auditees overspending their budgets and being in poor financial health. The budget overspending over the administration's five years was R38.83 billion. By the end of 2023/24, the estimated settlement value of claims against departments totalled R105.57 billion and 41% of auditees had a combined deficit of R69,33 billion."

- The no-consequence culture in national and provincial government will continue to slow down progress towards improved service delivery and financial performance. When

officials face consequences for their actions, this helps auditees to both recover the losses caused by those officials and deter others from disregarding legislation and perpetuating a culture where officials are paid their salaries without fulfilling their responsibilities.

"The lack of consequences is most evident in the following areas: poor and slow response to investigating allegations of financial and supply chain management misconduct and fraud indicators; investigating and dealing with irregular expenditure and fruitless and wasteful expenditure; and material non-compliance with legislation on consequence management."

### State of national and provincial government

The AG reported that audit outcomes improved from 2018/19 – the last year of the 5th administration – and the number of clean audits increased from 93 to 142. More auditees improved their audit outcomes

than regressed every year over the term of the administration. By 2023/24, 139 auditees had improved their outcomes and 50 had regressed – an overall net improvement of 24%.

"Just over 40% of auditees obtained an unqualified audit opinion with findings. This is not a desirable outcome, and auditees should not remain comfortable in this category as they currently do," cautioned Maluleke.

The audit outcomes of the legislature sector improved significantly from 2018/19, showing a net improvement of 60%. Parliament and eight of the provincial legislatures now have clean audits, setting an example for other sectors.

Provincial outcomes showed an overall net improvement of 31% from 2018/19. The biggest net improvements were in North West (56%), followed by the Free State (44%), KwaZulu-Natal (33%) and Gauteng (30%). The Western Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape are the provinces with the highest number of clean audits.

### Recommendations

"Through the insights from our audits during the administrative period and the real-time audits we performed on the funding for COVID-19 and flood-relief initiatives, and our experience with the MI process, we identified three main shortcomings in national and provincial government

that hold back progress," said the AG. The root causes are:

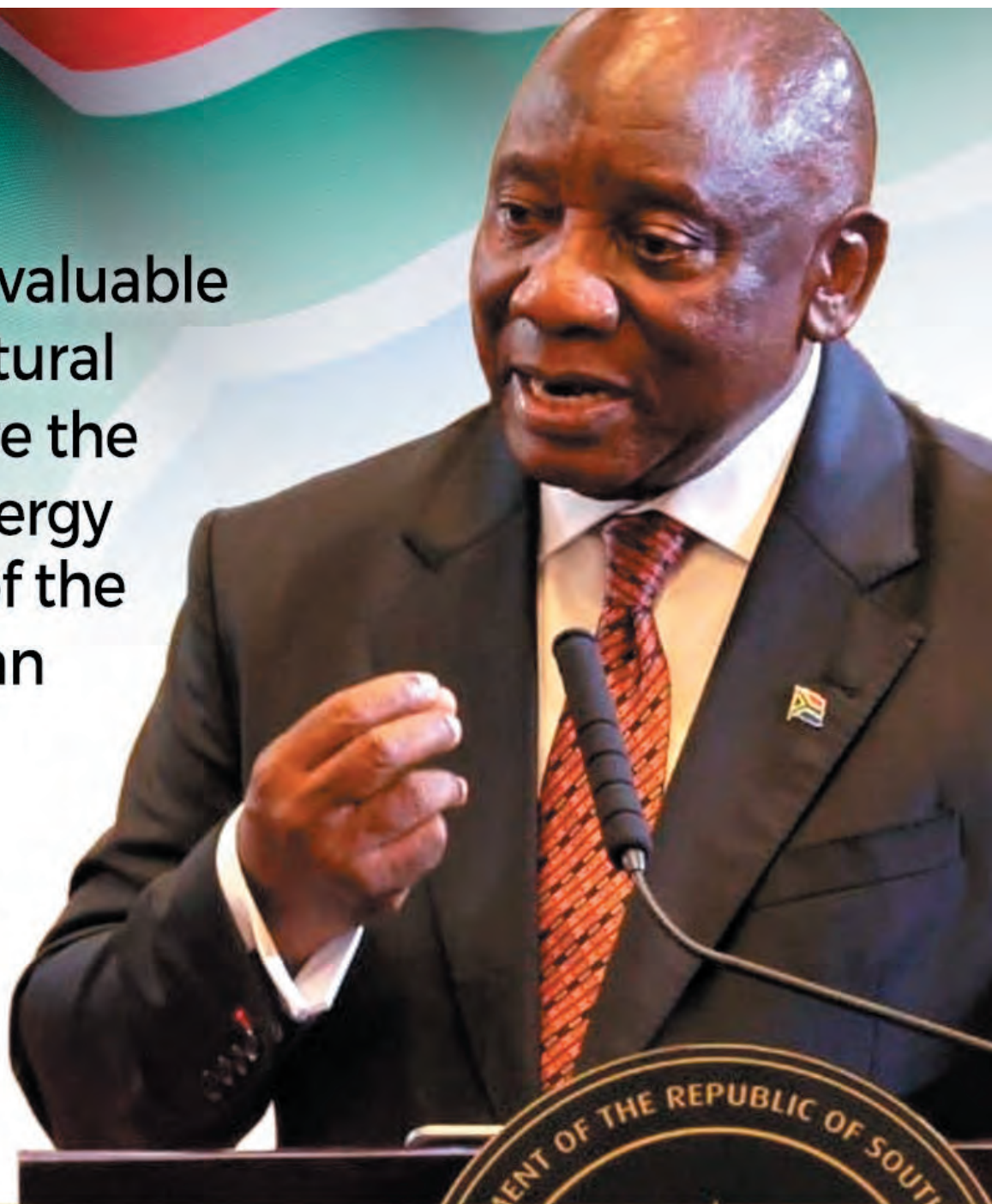
- Inadequate intergovernmental planning, coordination and support.
- Ineffective resource management.
- A culture of no accountability and consequences.

To address these root causes, improve service delivery and proactively manage the risks that can derail the progress made, Maluleke recommended prioritisation and oversight focus by the elected executive authorities, members and committees of Parliament and the provincial legislatures on five key matters namely;

- Intergovernmental and institutional planning for delivery on the Medium-Term Development Plan.
- Institutional capacity and effective governance for transparent reporting and accountability.
- Infrastructure, systems and professionalisation as key enablers.
- Managing the risks to service delivery created by the poor quality of spending and financial mismanagement, weaknesses in procurement and contract management, cybersecurity vulnerabilities, and a culture of no consequences.
- Optimising the MI process as an oversight tool. ♦

“Even more valuable than our natural resources are the diversity, energy and talent of the South African people.”

*President  
Cyril Ramaphosa,  
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# Traditional leadership in South Africa: A vision for 2025 and beyond



Photo: GCIS

Overcoming infrastructural challenges in rural areas is vital for the progress of rural communities

Over a hundred years ago, my ancestors settled our people, the Bakgatla-ba-Kgafela, at Mmasobudule on the Elands River, within what is known today as the Pilanesberg. It is an area rich in platinum and brim-full of potential.

Traditional leaders in South Africa are custodians of cultural traditions and practices, but it is also incumbent upon us to bridge the past and the future; to celebrate our history, while still providing the leadership, innovative thinking and commitment to

socio-economic transformation that will uplift every individual in our communities.

For too long, the role of South Africa's traditional communities have been overlooked, simply because they exist outside of the larger, built-up zones. It is easy to see how these urban areas are perceived as the sole areas of development, but one of the tasks of the traditional leader is to divorce both perception and practice from the prejudices of the past. We need to address the ignorance, educational dispari-

ties and socio-economic exclusion that has pushed us into the shadows and alert our countrymen to the enormous potential that lie within its rural areas.

## Improving education in rural areas

I recognise that it is my solemn duty as a leader to be a champion of progress – a trusted advocate for our people's aspirations. I take very seriously my moral obligation to address the challenges that hinder our community's growth, and one

of the first steps in this journey is to address the challenges we face in the field of education. Rural areas tend to be sidelined in the national conversation about education, and we need to bring our children not only into the present, but also make them future-ready, by fostering access to technology and introducing digital literacy programmes that will enable them to hold their own amongst their big city counterparts.

In the pursuit of these goals, socio-economic barriers – including those of gender – must be overcome, and this must involve initiatives that include the provision of menstrual health support and safe transportation to and from centres of learning. Gender equality and youth empowerment are not just moral imperatives; they are essential for building vibrant and resilient communities.

## Growing rural economies

Whilst we keep one eye on the future, it is also important to attend to the issue of adults in our community who are unable to find meaningful employment. We must develop initiatives to stimulate local economies and attract investment into our communities, and this is where infrastructure development comes into play. No community can hope to



Chief of the Bakgatla tribe Kgosi Nyalala Pilane

**“We need to address the ignorance, educational disparities and socio-economic exclusion that has pushed us into the shadows and alert our countrymen to the enormous potential that lie within its rural areas”**

thrive, let alone compete, without a backbone of good roads, clean water and reliable electricity. This means ongoing consultation with government, private sector partners and civil society.

Our communities must be disabused of that mindset that says that “government will provide everything.” Traditional leaders must champion a spirit of entrepreneurship that identifies and nurtures local talent and potential. Every able-bodied individual in our villages should be able to provide for his or her family with dignity, whether it is through securing gainful employ-

ment or creating his or her own business.

### **Improving rural healthcare**

Naturally, you can not pursue your goals unless you are in good health, so healthcare programmes must be aggressively pursued in rural areas which have limited access to clinics, medicines and healthcare professionals. Work also needs to be done with respect to de-stigmatising and supporting those with mental health challenges.

As we look toward 2025 and beyond, traditional leadership

must evolve to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world, whilst still embracing our cultural roots. These two mindsets are, after all, not mutually exclusive. We can challenge outdated practices, and replace them with new ideas, without throwing the baby out with the bath water, so to speak.

Of course, traditional leadership comes with titles and ceremonies, but underlying these tokens of office is our responsibility to the upliftment and prosperity of our people, which requires humility, courage and vision. And no one should

be left behind; be it the elderly, youth, women or people with disabilities. Every village must be transformed into a beacon of opportunity, every family should live in comfort and dignity, and every child should be able to dream without limits.❖



**Source:**  
Zettuu  
Lifestyle Hub  
**Photos:**  
Supplied  
by Zettuu

# The role of Ndebele art

## and culture in modern fashion

In the ever-evolving world of fashion, cultural influences play a vital role in shaping trends and styles. One such influence that has captured the imagination of designers globally is the Ndebele art and culture.

Ndebele art, renowned for its vibrant colours and intricate geometric patterns, has long been a symbol of cultural identity and expression among the Ndebele people of Southern Africa.

This rich artistic tradition has not only played a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage but has also significantly influenced contemporary fashion.

Prestigious events like New York Fashion Week are witnessing the rise of African influences, with designers proudly incorporating African fashion, allowing the world to rediscover Africa through its stories, cultures, and fabrics.

### Why Ndebele art is making waves in fashion

The convergence of art and fashion is beautifully showcased through the work of Dr Esther Mahlangu, whose Ndebele art has inspired both international runways and modern design.

Her bold geometric patterns and vibrant colours demonstrate how African art can seamlessly blend with fashion, creating pieces that not only celebrate cultural heritage but also push creative boundaries.

Through this fusion, art and fashion come together to tell Africa's story in bold, expressive ways.

Here are some reasons why the art is making waves in the fashion world:

- ◉ **A fresh take on tradition:**  
Fashion designers love

blending old and new, and Ndebele art is the perfect inspiration for this fusion. By integrating traditional elements with modern styles, designers create pieces that are not only modern but also celebrate cultural heritage. This approach not only helps to sustain the cultural heritage but also promotes slow fashion, emphasising quality and craftsmanship over mass production.

- ◉ **A story in every design:**  
Every Ndebele pattern tells a story. Whether it is about community, identity or tradition, these designs

carry significant meanings that reflect cultural values, social status and personal stories that resonate with people worldwide. Wearing Ndebele-inspired fashion is like wearing a piece of history and culture, making every outfit more meaningful.

- ◉ **Vibrant patterns and colours:** The stunning geometric patterns and bold colours of Ndebele art bring a unique flair to fashion pieces. These designs are perfect for anyone looking to add a pop of colour and a touch of cultural richness to their



wardrobe. From dresses to accessories, Ndebele-inspired designs make a bold statement.

### Tips on how to embrace Ndebele-inspired fashion

Ready to spice up your wardrobe with some Ndebele magic? Here are a few ideas:

- ◎ **Bold accessories:** Start small by adding Ndebele-inspired accessories like earrings, necklaces, or bags to your look. These pieces can instantly elevate any outfit.
- ◎ **Statement clothing:** Go big with a statement dress or top, featuring Ndebele patterns. Pair it with neutral accessories to let the design shine.
- ◎ **Mix and match:** Do not be afraid to mix Ndebele patterns with other styles. A

patterned skirt with a simple top can create a chic and balanced look.

### Why we love it

Our e-commerce store is all about celebrating Africa, diversity and creativity. Ndebele-inspired fashion not only looks fantastic but also supports local artisans and designers who bring these beautiful designs to life. By adding these pieces to your collection, you are not just buying fashion; you are supporting cultural artistry and storytelling.

### Shop the look

Ready to explore Ndebele-inspired fashion? Check out our Zyle Clothing range and find the perfect piece to add a splash of colour and culture to your style. Whether you are looking for a standout piece or a subtle nod to tradition.



### About Zettuu

Zettuu is an online store that was established in 2018 by Mbali Ndandani and Portia Nondo. It aims to build an ecosystem of support for African entrepreneurs, including empowering them to become drivers in manufacturing.

For more information, visit [www.zettuu.com](http://www.zettuu.com)

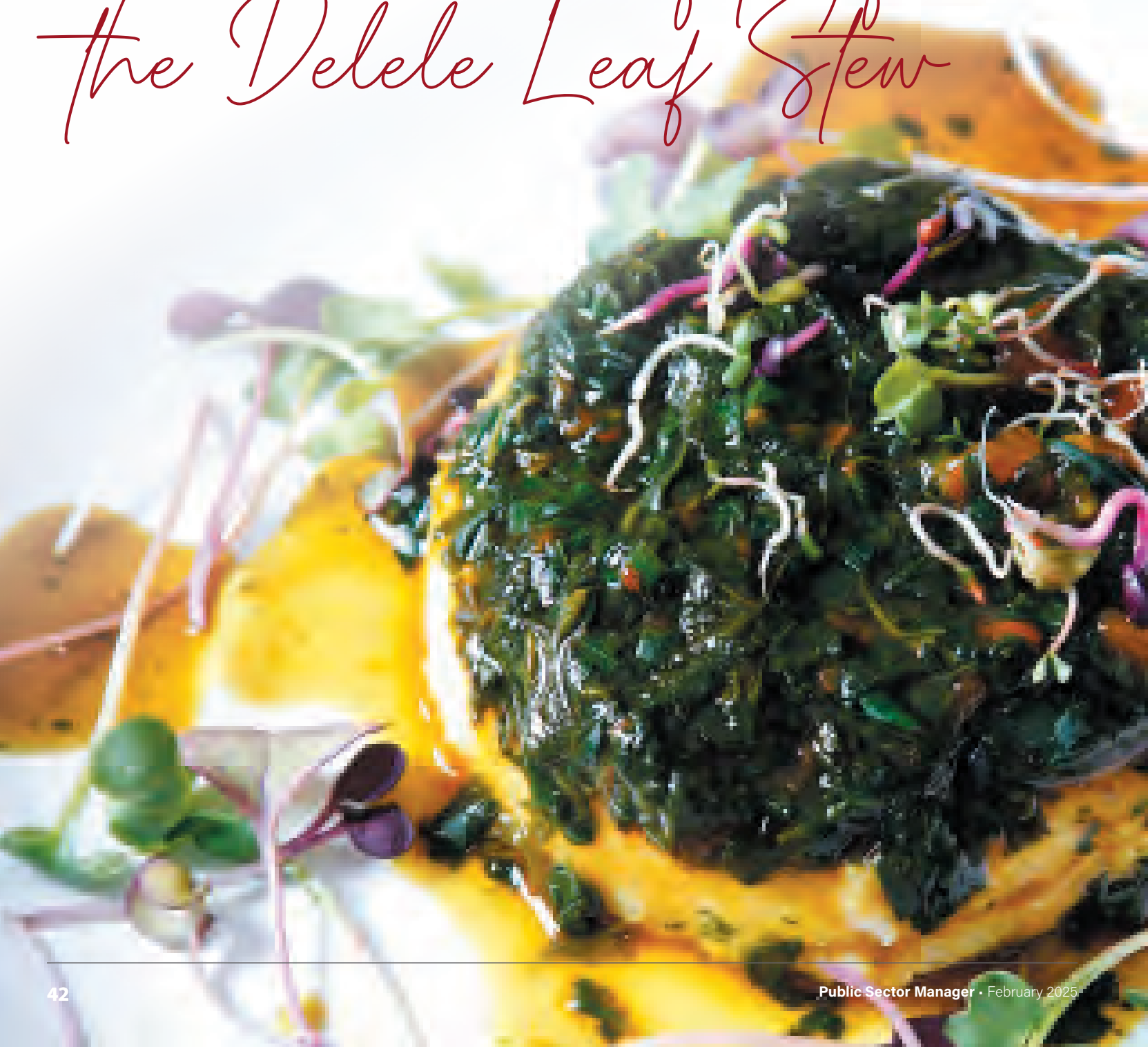
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# Enjoy the health benefits of the Delele Leaf Stew





In this edition, we feature Chef Lebo Phala's Delele (Okra/*Corchorus tridens*) Leaf Stew recipe. According to the Chef, in the Venda tradition, the meal is recommended to relieve the pain that childbirth leaves on the mother.

Delele (Tshivenda), is also called thelele in Sepedi and gushe in Xitsonga. Okra vegetable is said to contain beneficial antioxidants, fiber, vitamins and minerals.

## *Delele Leaf Stew*

### **Ingredients:**

- A big bowl of okra leaves.
- 1 tomato (chopped).
- 1 spring onion (chopped).
- 3 tablespoons cooking oil.
- Salt to taste.
- Pinch of bicarbonate soda.
- 2 Cups of water.



### **Method:**

- Boil water in a pot, add some salt and bicarbonate soda.
- Wash and roughly chop the okra leaves and add them to the boiling water.
- Cook, stirring for about 10 minutes – the water should mostly evaporate but drain off any excess after 10 minutes.
- In another pot or pan, heat the the cooking oil. Add the tomatoes, chopped chili (optional) and, spring onions.
- Add in the cooked leaves and cook together until it is all cooked through (for about 5 minutes).

\*You can serve this meal with any starch and beverage of choice.



**About the Chef:** Born and bred in Mohlaletse Village in Ga Sekhukhune, Limpopo, Phala holds a Diploma in Food Preparation and Cooking from Capsicum Culinary Studio.

Through her culinary experience, she tackles the root causes of persistent problems associated with unhealthy eating habits.

"Our ancestors had a thorough understanding of living in balance with the natural

world, and it is from this premise that we need to recognise and start celebrating indigenous foods," she said.

She is the founder and executive chef at HL Culinary, which specialises in fine dining indigenous epicurean experiences. She is also a professional photographer, videographer, and a visionary who is passionate about women empowerment and promoting African heritage and culture.

For more information about HL Culinary,  
email: [lebo@hlculinary.com](mailto:lebo@hlculinary.com)  
Instagram: [@hlculinary\\_experience](https://www.instagram.com/hlculinary_experience)

# Experience AfriSki

## *Mountain Resort this coming winter*



Afriski Mountain Resort is situated in the Maluti Mountains in Lesotho.

**T**raveling to Lesotho to explore its stunning tourist attractions and immerse myself in the rich culture of Basotho people has become one of my favourite activities.

The South African Rand is on par with Lesotho's currency, Maseru, making it easy to navigate financially. With its laid-back lifestyle and affordable offer-

ings, the Mountain Kingdom has become a destination I return to time and again – since my first trip to Maseru in 2023.

Growing up in the small town of Thaba Nchu in the Free State, just a four-hour drive from the Maseru Bridge, I always imagined myself catching a taxi to Lesotho, one day.

Taxis from my town to Maseru

were a common sight, and all I needed was a passport to make it a reality. Now, with passport in hand, I find myself crossing the border regularly, fulfilling that long-held dream.

Growing up at a town close to the border, I was naturally exposed to the Basotho people and their culture, which sparked a deep desire to visit Lesotho.

Through them, I learned Sesotho at an early age and developed a strong appreciation for the culture and traditions that continue to resonate with me today.

To fulfill my fantasy, I travelled to Lesotho with one of my friends, Mamokete Tseou, whom I met about 17 years ago in a South African Sign Language lecture hall. Together, we set out to experience the snow and thrilling activities at the Afriski Mountain Resort. We booked our trip for August 2023.

While accommodation is available at the resort, we opted for an Airbnb in Naledi, just outside Maseru, as it offered greater convenience and flexibility for our plans.

### The experience

There are many tour guides to choose from but we decided to go with a young and dynamic guide, Teboho Raphael Thuso.

Thuso picked us up in Maseru right after we had our passports stamped on a Friday evening.





Experience a snowy winter at Afriski Mountain Resort.



Visitors to Afriski Mountain Resort.

We ordered take aways before heading to the Airbnb. While on our way to the Airbnb, Thuso, told us more about his company and the country.

By the time we reached our destination, we were already familiar with some of the country's must-see attractions, such as Mokorotlong, Makoanyane Square, Maseru Circle and Mofumahali oa Tlholo LCYM, each with its own rich history and cultural significance.

Upon arrival at the major borders like the Maseru Bridge, visitors are expected pay a travel levy of M100.00.

After refreshing and having our dinner at the Airbnb, we headed to Kasi Kota a premier night club in Maseru. There, we mingled with locals to unwind and enjoy the vibrant atmosphere, before

calling it a night and gearing up for the adventures to come.

On Saturday morning, we were excited to set off for Afriski Mountain Resort, located about a four-hour drive from Naledi. Our journey took us through the picturesque regions of Berea, Leribe and Botha-Bothe, eventually leading us to the resort, nestled in the rural heart of the district. We travelled along the A1 main road, which passes the Liphofung Caves and Historical Site.

Thuso explained that accessing some attractions required assistance, as they were spread across different areas, like Berea, where you can find Kome Caves and Dwellings. He mentioned that there were plenty of attractions along the way, many of which could be reached through

hiking, such as the Sandunes near Butha-Buthe and Leribe. He also highlighted other key spots, including Maliba Lodge, Tshehlanyane National Park and Kimberlite Park, among others, as we navigated the steep road leading to the top of the mountain.

Upon arrival at the resort, we took some pictures to capture the moment before heading to the restaurant to order food and drinks. After settling in, we registered for the day's activities. It was the second-last weekend for skiing as winter season was drawing to an end.

"During winter, we experience snow, AfriSki is a good destination to visit during that season, there are skiing activities, bumboarding, tubing and quad bikes," explained Thuso.

My friends and I opted for few sessions of bumboarding. However, I quickly realise how cold it was, so we headed to the restaurant again for some warm food and wine to help us thaw out and stay cozy. ❖



Bumboarding is a popular activity for visitors of all ages.

If you want to explore Lesotho alongside a professional tour operator or to book shuttle services, you can contact Explorers Travel and Tours on Facebook, or WhatsApp +266 581333 66.

For more information about AfriSki Mountain Resort, email: [bookings@afriski.net](mailto:bookings@afriski.net) or call: +27 11 705 2814.





“South Africans are continuing to work together to confront our country’s challenges and build a nation that works for all.”

*President Cyril Ramaphosa,  
SONA 2025*

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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



G20  
SOUTH AFRICA 2025

A **NATION**   
THAT **WORKS** FOR ALL