

# PublicSector

MANAGER



## Expanding access to

post-school  
education and  
training

## Awodwa Magingi

committed to  
solving SA's  
water woes

## A look into the Public Service:

30 years into democracy  
- Professor Busani  
Ngcaweni



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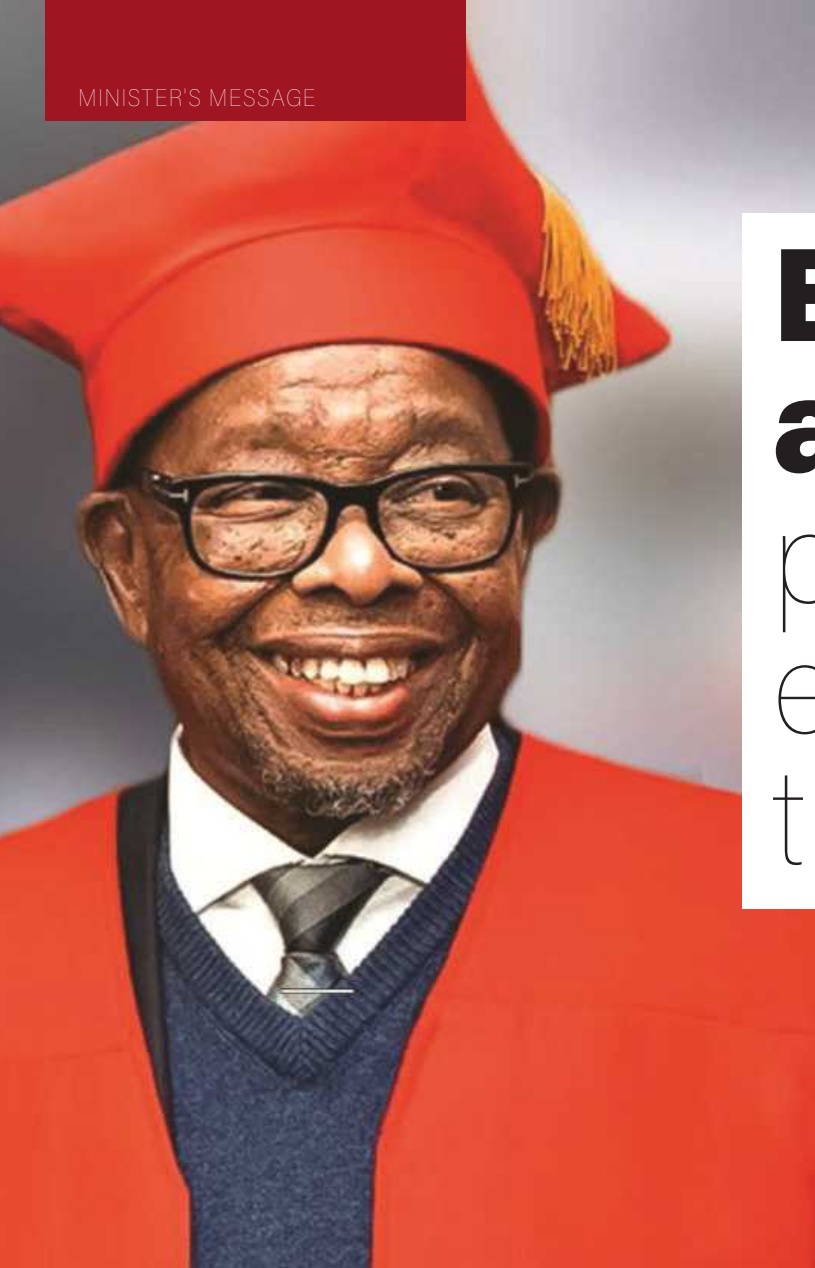
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# Expanding access to post-school education and training

**T**he year 2024 is particularly special as it marks the 30th anniversary of our democracy and 12 years since the adoption of the National Development Plan (NDP). Since the dawn of democracy, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has continued to expand access and improve the quality and size of our post-school education and training (PSET) system.

It, therefore, pleases me to state that our universities are

poised to meet their NDP enrolment target of 1.6 million by 2030. We have implemented measures to massify our technical, vocational education and training (TVET) college system towards the goal of 2.5 million enrolments in this sector.

Consistent with our commitment to transformation, we have increased the enrolments for both male and female students, and significantly increased the overall enrolment of black

African students in our public universities.

We, however, remain cognisant of the need to still eradicate the race, class and gender inequalities that continue to characterise some aspects of our PSET system. From 2016 to 2023, we increased the proportion of students living with disabilities to about 0.8%. With the assistance of our entity – Higher Health, universities have become increasingly efficient in managing the dropout rate of students by means of multiple psycho-social interventions.

Through the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), we continue to support students from poor and working-class backgrounds, with over 70% of university students, and over 90% of TVET college students,

benefiting from the scheme.

We pride ourselves in the fact that our spending on education as a proportion of overall government expenditure (22.7% in 2019/20) and gross domestic product (GDP) (7.2% in 2019/20) far exceeds the benchmarks set by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which recommends allocating 15 to 20% of public spending and 4 to 6% of the GDP to education.

To increase access for poor and working-class students, we will be building two new universities. The University of Science and Innovation, in Ekurhuleni, will focus on training young people in high-impact and cutting-edge technological innovation.

The University for Crime and Policing Studies, in Hamman-



skraal, will focus on producing highly skilled police officials for our country's policing and criminal justice services. The technical planning for the building of these new universities is expected to be completed in 2024.

These successes are an indication of government's commitment to serving the people of South Africa and creating a lasting legacy for future generations. However, to sustain these achievements and reach our 2030 enrolment targets, will require increased funding and investment in infrastructure.

To ensure a smooth start to the 2024 academic year, we have put in place a number of measures, including activating a war room and observatory. This enables us to have daily assessments of our institutions and take immediate action, where required.

To support our institutions during the registration period, we have set up a steering committee, which comprises representatives of the DHET, universities, TVET colleges and student formations.

I wish to encourage students who have not yet secured a place to study, to sign up on our CACH service on <https://cach.cas.ac.za>. This will be open until 31 March 2024. Over 20 000 students have already registered on the system.

The 2024 headcount enrolment

for our TVET colleges is 482 244 students in all programmes. The total of ministerially funded programme enrolments for 2024 will be 407 762, of which 166 634 will be new students.

Our TVET college budget for 2024 has increased by 3 to 4%. One of our top priorities as government is providing financial support for needy students. In spite of its challenges, the NSFAS funding has grown from disbursing R21.4 million in 1991 to almost R48 billion in 2023.

As of 21 January 2024, the scheme had received 1 545 822 applications for the 2024 academic year. This year the NSFAS will process up to R4.2 billion as an upfront payment to all our universities and TVET colleges, to ensure that all qualifying

students are registered without having to pay registration fees.

A total of R1 billion will go to TVET colleges and R3.2 billion to universities. The NSFAS has provisionally funded 657 703 applicants who are South African Social Security Agency grant recipients. In 2024, the TVET living allowance will increase from R6 000 to R10 000 per annum.

As Minister, I remain deeply concerned about the outstanding 2023 disbursements. I have urged NSFAS to ensure that all outstanding disbursement are resolved as a matter of priority and call on all our institutions not to deny NSFAS-funded students an opportunity to register because of outstanding payments.

We recently announced the new Comprehensive Student Funding Model – a fund-

ing scheme that will provide financial support for the 'missing middle' students, in the form of a loan.

This scheme aims to benefit students who come from families with a total income of more than R350 000 but not more than R600 000 per annum. Government has committed an initial R3.8 billion to support the loan scheme in 2024. The NSFAS will soon make a public announcement on the eligibility criteria and conditions for the scheme.

Finally, as Minister, I remain steadfast in my commitment to ensuring clean governance at the NSFAS. The NSFAS board is implementing recommendations of the Werksmans Attorneys and other measures – to ensure that the scheme's mandate is not compromised.○



Minister Ndimande interacting with students at the NSFAS head office.

# A renewed commitment to uphold government priorities in service delivery



Nomonde Mnukwa,  
Acting GCIS  
Director-General.

**O**n 8 February, President Cyril Ramaphosa will deliver the 2024 State

of the Nation Address (SoNA) to set out government's key policy objectives and deliverables for

the year ahead. The President uses the SoNA to also highlight achievements, flag challenges and outline interventions that government will undertake to unlock development interventions for the upcoming financial year. The SoNA marks the official start of the parliamentary programme for the year ahead. This year's address is very significant because, besides it being the last one for the sixth administration, it comes at a time when the country is marking 30 years of democracy.

It is our role as public servants to continue leading and ensuring that set priorities are achieved and quality service is delivered.

In his 2023 SoNA, President Ramaphosa stated that as government, we can change and overcome our difficult circumstances, thus placing our economy on a firm path to recovery.

It is with this clear mindset that we delve into the New Year by continuing our efforts to

grow the economy, create more jobs, build better lives, fight corruption, make communities safer and ultimately make government work more efficiently and effectively for all.

With our goals outlined, as leaders in the Public Service, we are able to set concrete and measurable actions to serve our country, including restoring the economy, ending load shedding, tackling crime, improving service delivery and rebuilding public institutions.

While some priorities are long term, government is making strides towards achieving the 2023 SoNA priorities. An immediate and critical priority is restoring our country's energy security. In a bid to keep the lights on, the Energy Action Plan aims to reduce the severity and frequency of load shedding while working to secure the country's future energy supply. Agreements have also been signed for 26 renewable energy projects with a five-key intervention plan highlighting



Unemployment among young South Africans is a national crisis that demands urgent, innovative and coordinated solutions. It is therefore essential that we implement a comprehensive plan to **create no fewer than 2 million jobs for young people within the next decade.**

– PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA

fixing Eskom's coal-fired power stations, improving existing supply, accelerating private investment, procuring renewable energy, and boosting solar power in households.

Tackling youth employment is also at the forefront with the Presidential Youth Employment Intervention, creating 50 000 new jobs through the National Youth Service to facilitate self-employment among young people while boosting in-demand skills. Around 1.5 million new jobs were created between the third quarters of 2021 and 2022. The Presidential Employment Stimulus has also provided work and livelihood opportunities for more than one million people, reaching every province and district in our country.

To further boost investment in

small businesses, government has also granted over R900 million in loans to small, medium and micro enterprises, offered business structure and support to cooperative township and rural enterprises, and accelerated the inclusion of women-owned businesses.

To tackle corruption, severe focus has been placed on addressing the 27 recommendations from the State Capture Commission with public tool tracking progress. More than R12.5 billion has been recovered through anti-corruption operations thus far.

Prioritising community safety and ensuring that our citizens, especially women and children are safe, more than R21 billion has been allocated for the National Strategic Plan on Gender-

based Violence and Femicide (GBVF), with the establishment of a GBVF Response Fund, legislation to increase protection of victims and prosecution of offenders, and increased support for Thuthuzela and Khuseleka care centres.

Government has also increased efforts to strengthen the South African Police Service to prevent crime and improve the capacity of the National Prosecuting Authority and courts to ensure that perpetrators are brought to book. This includes increasing police visibility and placing more police patrols on the streets. In 2022, a total of 12 000 new recruits graduated from police academies, with an additional 10 000 recruits trained in the past year.

It is up to us as diligent and ethical public servants to continue and uphold our commitments, to realise our key priorities and growing an increasingly inclusive economy. The National Framework towards the Professionalisation of the Public Sector serves as a foundation in rebuilding a qualified and competent public service with more than 70 departments having completed the review process.

I urge all public service to work together, to stay focused and committed to helping us create a better future for all.

Let us continue to do our best to ensure that the priorities set for the year ahead are achieved through embracing innovation and technology. And in doing all this, let us leave no one behind.○



# A look into the Public Service:

## 30 years into democracy

**D**espite regularly receiving some tongue-lashing in the court of public opinion, many public servants have made an indelible mark in moving the country forward.

They do this with the recognition that an effective public service is a key cog in delivering services that improve the lives of citizens.

In an interview with *Public Sector Manager* magazine, Principal of the National School of Government (NSG), Professor Busani Ngcaweni said despite the many challenges facing the Public Service, public administration “is on an upward trajectory”.

As the country moves towards 30 years of democracy, Ngcaweni noted that despite some negative public sentiment on

its efficacy, the Public Service has evolved a lot over the past 29-years.

In the early years of democracy, government had a mammoth task of putting in place an inclusive public service to serve all South Africans, including setting up democratic institutions.

### The journey

Ngcaweni described the first public service, under former President Nelson Mandela, as “characterised by phenomenal growth and achievement,” add-

ing that it was an intense period with rapid transformation.

“We had to transform the character of the Public Service, to serve more citizens. We had to transform and create one administration.”

He said the second generation (from 2008 to 2004) in public administration was that of both elected and appointed officials who worked to consolidate the gains of the first administration. Government, through public servants, worked hard to come up with programmes that con-

tinue to benefit South Africans

“So, for example, during that first 10 years of democracy, you see the consolidation and expansion of the social security system. They did not hire consulting firms to create that system, it was created by public administrators,” he added.

It was during this time that the country hosted major conferences, including like the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) conference that led to the transformation of



the then OAU into the African Union, and the World Racism Conference.

"This redefined South Africa in the eyes of the global community and of course there were laws that were legislated and implemented such as the Employment Equity Act, [1998 (Act 55 of 1998)] and the BEE [Black Economic Empowerment] and we were beginning to see a major growth as well in terms of black people who were working formally in the labour market," he said.

Highlights from the third administration, led by former President Thabo Mbeki, include preparations for the country to host the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup – backed by a growing economy.

Public servants continued to offer innovative ways of delivering service to South Africans.

"We even launched the indigent project where those who were residing in municipalities [and] could not pay could be placed on the indigent register," explained Ngcaweni.

The fourth administration, under former President Jacob Zuma's leadership, saw the world cup being hosted on African soil for the first time.

"This world cup was prepared for by public servants. They worked on it, set up new institutions like the [National] Planning Commission, set up departments like [The Department of Performance] Monitoring and Evaluation".

In 2009, government introduced a new approach to the treatment and management of HIV and AIDS, saving lives of many South Africans and paving way for better approaches in fighting the scourge. Today, HIV

positive South Africans have access to anti-retroviral drugs irrespective of their CD4 count.

## Stumbling block

The global financial crisis in 2008 had a negative impact on the country's economy. Ngcaweni noted that the country has still not fully recovered from the crisis.

"There was a major reversal we entered the period of care and maintenance for most of the problems of government," said the head of the NSG

The fifth administration continued with care and maintenance and there "was a kind of turmoil in public administration during that period. We ended up having state capture and we had instability in many institutions of state and that took away the ability of public administrators to perform diligently."

"But there was still some good things that were happening, like Operation Phakisa during that period but the focus just changed, there was major disruption in terms of people being focused and we didn't do as much to recover the lost ground in terms of the economy," he said.

An initiative of government, Operation Phakisa was designed to fast-track the implementation of solutions on critical development issues highlighted in the country's National Development Plan (NDP).

The NDP is the country's long-term plan for national development. It provides guidance for all Government policy formulation and implementation.

According to Ngcaweni the sixth administration is "more about rebuilding".

## Professionalisation of the public service

Ngcaweni's assessment of the Public Service comes on the heels of the NSG having celebrated a decade of existence in October 2023.

The milestone comes after the approval of the National Framework towards the Professionalisation of the Public Service. The institution is an essential part of the professionalisation of the Public Service.

"In 2020/21, the NSG was



training 12 000 people, today we are training 85 000 people and that change is because there is a national movement to build state capacity and everyone in the Public Service must return to school," said Ngcaweni.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the NSG built an e-learning platform to allow public servants to access training remotely.

Political principals are also benefiting from programmes offered by the NSG and according to Ngcaweni, Ministers are the school's "big clients" while the President and Deputy President attend their courses virtually. Training also extends across political parties and traditional leaders.

He reiterated the importance of continuous learning among public servants.

"Public servants must see themselves as pilots and cabin crew. For you to retain your license as a crew member or to be in the cockpit, you must constantly return to the simulator because flight conditions are changing all the time," he added.

Another project that the school is focusing on in order to strengthen the Public Service is the the Nyukela Public Service SMS Pre-entry Programme. Ngcaweni revealed that plans are under way to extend the programme to Deputy Directors



and Assistant Directors.

He noted that there were some aspects of the National Framework towards the Professionalisation of the Public Service that required the amendment of legislation.

"Three pieces of legislation are currently in Parliament for amendment to give effect to the framework – the Public Service Commission Bill, the Public Administration Management Amendment Bill and the Public Service Amendment Bill."

### **Ethics and good governance**

On what constitutes good governance, Ngcaweni said "It is about doing the right thing that serves the public even when no one is watching you. It must have an impact on those you are serving".

He added that it is unethical for public servants to fail to

deliver services when they have the means and resources. He is of the view that ethics can be taught and has emphasised the need for a national campaign.

"What teaching ethics means is that you make people aware of what is unethical. You give them the tools and the confidence of making decisions that are correct"

### **Time at the NSG**

Appointed to the top position in March 2020, Ngcaweni said his time in office has been a "roller-coaster with designing new programmes and implementing them". He is a hands-on leader.

"I made a decision that I am not going to demand from my colleagues what I am not going to be doing. I spend a lot of time in classrooms, boardrooms and in workshops leading from the front"

### **The future of the Public Service**

Almost 30 years into democracy, what does the future hold for the Public Service?

Ngcaweni believes the future is bright. He urged public servants to use available information like the Census 2022 results to reflect on what has been achieved since 1994 and what needs to be done.

"The bigger question is whether we will be able to sustain the momentum as public servants.

"We cannot continue to bask in the glory of those who have achieved what is contained in the Census [2022 report] and not think about what will we, as a generation of public administrators, achieve.

"If we mess up institutions and if we squander public administration, 30 years later we will be in a different shape," he concluded. ○



**NEW**

# *Citizens* CONNECT



Watch Citizens Connect Every Thursday at 20:30pm on SABC2  
Repeats on SABC2 Fridays from 12:00 – 12:30  
SABC+ (OTT)  
Repeats on Government YouTube Page Fridays from 2pm

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# A passion for healing little hearts

Seeing a child who came into a hospital critically ill, diagnosed and treated, and literally following up on patients until they reach adulthood is gratifying for Dr Duduzile Precious Msiza.

She is a paediatric cardiologist at the Job Shimankana Tabane (JST) Hospital in the Bojanala District in North West. This is the only hospital that provides paediatric cardiology services in the province.

Msiza sees her appointment as a step in the right direction, but is well aware that a lot of work still needs to be done with her being the only paediatric cardiologist in the hospital and the district.

"My aim is to build a functional and sustainable cardiology unit. It can never be a one-man job.

My main focus currently is JST hospital and other smaller referring primary care centers," she said.

In an interview with *Public Sector Manager* magazine, Msiza elaborated that conditions managed by paediatric cardiologists include congenital structural heart diseases, which are acquired at birth and indicate an issue with the structure or function of the walls of the heart, valves, chambers or great vessels.

"Acquired heart disease can develop at any time during a child's lifetime. Acquired heart disease may occur due to viral or bacterial infections, chronic conditions or long-term use of medications. Most children with congenital heart disease have a good outcome if treated appropriately," she explained.

Hers is one of the most unique fields of work. It requires her to be involved with every stage of management – from first consultation to non-invasive and

invasive diagnostic and therapeutic procedures.

Another condition managed by paediatric cardiologists is arrhythmia. It causes issues with the rate or rhythm at which a child's heart beats. As a result, the heart may beat rapidly or too slowly.

Msiza said medical management of heart diseases for outpatients, in-hospital patients and critical care units involves using standard medical approaches through statins, blood

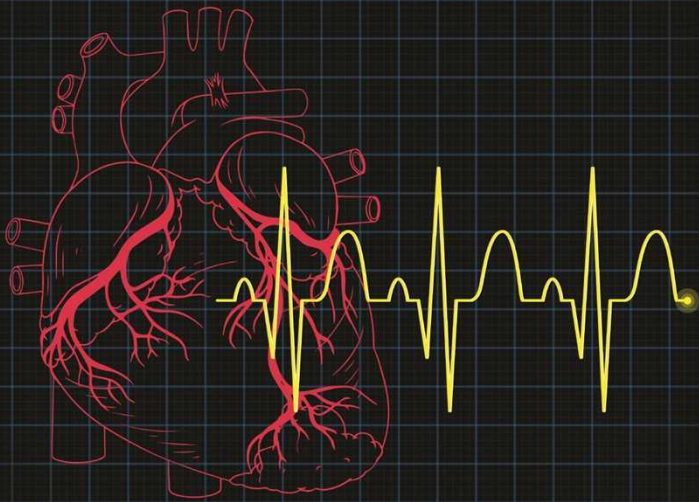


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thinners, beta-blockers and diuretics, to name a few, to stabilise heart conditions.

However, in some cases patients need surgical repair and they are referred to cardiothoracic surgeons.

At the time of the interview, the following services were still not being offered at JST hospital due to scarcity of resources, including human resources, cardiac technicians, infrastructure, equipment and funds:

- Cardiac catheterisation services currently for children (patients are still referred to hospitals in Pretoria and Johannesburg, which also have a long waiting list).
- Paediatric cardiac critical care unit.
- Paediatric cardiothoracic surgery.

Msiza's career journey is interesting, although her inspiration

to become a paediatric cardiologist was drawn from unfortunate circumstances.

"My mom was diagnosed with rheumatic mitral valve disease and she required surgery (prosthetic mitral valve replacement) soon after I qualified as a doctor. The more I read about cardiology my interest and love for it also grew," she explained.

She qualified for a Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery from the University of Limpopo in 2008 and went on to obtain Advanced Paediatric Life Support qualification in 2017 from the same institution. She also completed a Fellowship of the College of Paediatricians of South Africa examination in 2017 from the College of Medicine. In 2022, she completed a certificate in paediatric cardiology from the University of Pretoria.

After completing her medi-

cal internship and community service between 2009 and 2011, Msiza worked as a medical officer at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital in 2012. She also worked as a registrar under the paediatrics unit at Rahima Moosa Mother and Child Hospital from 2012 to 2016, and thereafter she was appointed as Medical Officer at the same hospital until 2017.

Between 2017 and 2019, she was the head of the paediatric department at Bertha Gxowa Hospital, and later became a fellow paediatric cardiologist at Steve Biko Academic Hospital from 2020 to 2022. She then worked as a paediatric cardiology consultant at Nelson Mandela Children Hospital until her recent appointment.

## Addressing challenges in the field

Despite being a much-needed special skill, her job does not come without challenges, and the major one is funding because in order to build a team that is fully capacitated, she needs funds for that.

"Paediatric cardiology is a very specialised entity, meaning we are always in need of people who have additional qualifications or experience in this

field, including critical care and theater staff, cardiac technicians, radiologist, anesthetic doctors, cardiothoracic surgeons the list is endless. Everything is a team effort. I work very closely with the management of the hospital, paediatric head of department at JST hospital and the adult cardiology team," she said.

She added that she is also supported by facility management from other hospitals, including Steve Biko Academic Hospital and Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital.

"In general, there are not enough cardiac facilities in South Africa. Working together is the only way to close this wide gap. We have a long way to go and there is no quick fix. Our children deserve the best medical care regardless of where they live; this is my drive," she said.

Msiza's wish is to see growth in cardiology services in the province, and having a cardiac catheterisation theater, where her team can do diagnostic and therapeutic procedures. This includes a cardiac lab or specialised clinic and critical care unit with all the necessary equipment in place. She also wishes for the province to have a certified cardiac training and research center. ○

# Young Geohydrologist set to solve SA's water challenges

**W**ith South Africa recognised as a water scarce country and rated the 30th driest in the world, Awodwa Magingi, a Geohydrologist from the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) is doing her bit to preserve the treasured resource.

The country's predicament was her reality when she was growing up in eNtentu village in Mthatha, in the Eastern Cape, spurring her to pursue a career in the sector.

Today, the 30-year-old holds a Master's Degree in Geohydrology, a Bachelor of Science (BSc) (Honours) in Geology, and a BSc Geology from the University of the Free State.

In 2021, the United Nations (UN) reported that South Africa is ranked 72nd in terms of risk, with water scarcity, soil and water pollution having a particular impact on children affected by poverty and poor nutrition.

It noted that climate change and extreme weather events like droughts and floods can deplete or contaminate water supplies and similarly, unsafe water and sanitation can lead to or worsen malnutrition.

In an interview with *Public Sector Manager* magazine, Magingi recalled growing up in a village with limited resources.

"I grew up in a village with little





access to information on the scope of career possibilities, and the common careers that were presented to me due to my academic performance were not quite the right fit."

Her inclination to science started when she realised her love for chemistry and geography.

"I just wanted to understand how nature operates; how rivers flow from one side to the other, where they start flowing, and who or what created them. I was also deeply preoccupied with questions about how it was possible that my village had a spring while other villages did not have – that curiosity is what ultimately led me to pursuing a career in earth sciences, specifically geology, which I considered also due to my passion for outdoor work," she added.

Her prospects in her career were enhanced when she was awarded a bursary by the DWS in 2014.

"I then started looking into geohydrology – another part of earth sciences that is directly linked to geology that I had not paid attention to before. What I love the most about groundwater (hydrogeology) is being part of a group that comes up with solutions to challenges faced by the groundwater sector; one of which is the attention this water resource gets as an emergency solution during drought periods," she detailed.

She noted the need to raise

awareness on this water source, "as some people in the country do not know what groundwater is, its importance, management and how we can use science to influence policies to ensure that groundwater is developed, used and managed sustainably, taking climate change into consideration".

## Family support

As third out of six children, Magingi said growing up in a big



family made her love people and understand those from different backgrounds.

"I grew up in a very warm, lov-



ing and supportive family. My family did not understand what I wanted to do but they entrusted my teachers with every career decision I made, especially my teachers from foundation phase. I got support from home and from my teachers," she said.

Having joined the DWS in 2015, Magingi's responsibilities include developing tools and guidelines for assessment, planning and managing groundwater resources in South Africa.

"Groundwater is very broad but what I love the most about my work is fieldwork, from sampling, monitoring water levels, drilling supervision and geophysical assessments.

"This is the core of geohydro-

logy. In order to interpret, advise, develop any policy or guidelines, one needs to fully understand the core of geohydrology and this is the part that gives me satisfaction even when looking at a random report. I can then conceptualise what is really happening in the complex geohydrology world," she added.

Asked about her career aspirations, she said: "I want to be remembered as part of the group that 'made the invisible visible'; I would like my agetmates from the other fields to look at a borehole and see me in it, I want to be part of a group that makes groundwater a very important water resource and not an emergency water resource." ○

# Ntusi to lead the advancement of medical research

**T**he South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) says it is thrilled to announce the appointment of Professor Ntobeko Ntusi as its new president and chief executive officer, effective 1 July 2024.

Ntusi will succeed the esteemed Professor Glenda Gray, who has been the SAMRC president for the past 10 years. Her term concludes on 30 June 2024.

The medical research institute has described the incoming president as a distinguished and highly respected figure in the medical community and said he brings a wealth of expertise and leadership to his new role.



"His lifelong passion for evidence-based healthcare, health systems research, and

universal health coverage has positioned him as a trailblazer in medical research," said the SAMRC in a statement.

"Prof Ntusi's commitment to advancing medical research and his passion for improving healthcare outcomes align perfectly with the SAMRC's mission to advance the nation's

health and quality of life and to address inequity by conducting and funding relevant and responsive health research, capacity development, innovation and research translation."

Ntusi's leadership spans various national, regional and international platforms, where he has played pivotal roles in



shaping academic agendas and postgraduate medical education standards and advancing key strategic priorities.

His commitment to mentoring young professionals and supervising postgraduate students underscores his passion for nurturing the next generation of medical leaders.

The incoming president is currently a cardiologist, the Head of the Department of Medicine, and the Clinical Lead for cardiovascular magnetic resonance and cardiovascular computed tomography at Groote Schuur Hospital in the Western Cape.

He is also the Professorial Chair of the Department of Medicine, in the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Cape Town (UCT). He serves as the Director of the SAMRC/UCT Extramural Unit on the Intersection of Noncommunicable Diseases and Infectious Diseases.

## Research

The Professor of Medicine's primary research interests comprise inflammatory heart disease, cardiovascular infections, cardiovascular multimorbidity, cardiomyopathy and heart failure, resistant hypertension, cardiovascular genetics, cardiovascular immunology, and non-invasive cardiovascu-

lar imaging.

More recently, his group developed a research interest in the clinical epidemiology and clinical immunology of COVID-19 from SARS-CoV-2 infection. He leads numerous single- and multi-centre epidemiological and mechanistic clinical studies and clinical trials. Through his research, he has built strong links with colleagues in clinical cardiology, molecular cardiology and cell biology, physics and biomedical engineering, infectious diseases, tuberculosis and HIV medicine, microbiology, COVID-19 biology, rheumatology, immunology, molecular genetics, and biomedical statistics; and has demonstrated proven capacity for performance in scientific investigational teams.

His scholarship has been recognised through multiple scholastic awards of scientific excellence, including fellowships by election and peer review into the Royal College of Physicians (London), Royal Society of South Africa, Academy of Sciences of South Africa, the UCT College of Fellows, and the SAMRC Gold Medal Award.

Ntusi holds numerous qualifications, including a Doctor of Philosophy in Cardiovascular

Medicine and a Doctor of Medicine in Cardiology from the University of Oxford, St Cross College and UCT respectively, making him a prominent figure in the medical field.

His vision for the SAMRC aligns with its commitment to advancing medical research and improving health outcomes for all.

Ntusi said he was honoured and excited to lead the SAMRC.

"I look forward to collaborating with the talented team at SAMRC to further our impact on healthcare and research, driving positive change in South Africa and beyond."

The institute said Ntusi's tenure promises to uphold and build upon the SAMRC's legacy of excellence and

dedication to advancing medical research and healthcare in South Africa. ○





# South Africa will continue to fight for Justice for all



**A**s a nation that fought and defeated apartheid, we have a particular obligation to stand up for justice and fundamental human rights for all people, everywhere. It is this obligation that informed our application to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to halt the violence unleashed by Israel on the Gaza Strip.

The Genocide Convention was unanimously adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust, one of the worst crimes in modern history. Having witnessed the mass extermination

of six million Jews and millions of other victims of the Nazis, the world came together to prevent such atrocities from occurring again.

As a signatory to that convention, South Africa carries a responsibility, like other states that are signatory to the convention, to prevent acts of genocide wherever they occur. It was in fulfilment of this responsibility and to prevent further civilian deaths and destruction that South Africa took this case to the court.

The ICJ listened to the South

African case and in turn also listened to the Israeli case. In its order, the ICJ found that it is plausible that Israel has committed acts that are in violation of the Genocide Convention to which South Africa, Israel and many other countries are signatories.

The ICJ ruled that the State of Israel shall, in accordance with its obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, in relation to Palestinians in Gaza, take all measures within its power to prevent the

commission of all acts within the scope of Article II of this convention, in particular: killing members of Palestinians group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to Palestinians; deliberately inflicting on Palestinians conditions of life calculated to bring about their physical destruction in whole or in part; and imposing measures intended to prevent births of Palestinian children.

The court further ruled that the State of Israel shall ensure with immediate effect that its military does not commit any acts set out above. The State of Israel

shall take all measures within its power to prevent and punish the direct and public incitement to commit genocide in relation to members of the Palestinian group in the Gaza Strip. In effect, the court said that the steps Israel claims to be taking in respect of international law are insufficient.

On the issue of humanitarian assistance, the court ruled that the State of Israel shall take immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the adverse conditions of life faced by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

The court further directed the State of Israel to take effective measures to prevent the destruction and ensure the preservation of evidence related to allegations of acts within the scope of the Convention on the Crime of Genocide against members of the Palestinian group in the Gaza Strip. The court also ruled that Israel should submit a report within a month on all measures taken to give effect to the court's order.

Criticism of the atrocities committed by the Israeli military is not directed at any religious or ethnic group, and cannot simply be dismissed as antisemitism. Nor can our case before the ICJ be said to diminish the enormity of the Holocaust. On the

contrary, it is the experience by humanity of the Holocaust and other acts of genocide that motivates our efforts to prevent anything of this nature from happening again.

As government, we have been consistent about the application of international law. We have been equally consistent in condemning the atrocities committed by Hamas against Israeli civilians on 7 October 2023, and in calling for the release of hostages still being held in Gaza. Yet, as we argued in our case before the ICJ, this attack on civilians in Israel cannot justify the subsequent acts committed by the Israeli military against the residents of Gaza.

This court application is about the Palestinian people; their suffering, the deprivation of their rights, and the denial of their right to self-determination. Yet, in bringing this application we are seeking to reinforce, protect and advance the rights of all people at all times.

The unprecedented onslaught against the people of the Gaza Strip by the Israeli military is an assault on all those who believe in justice, human rights and respect for international law.

As South Africa, we have called these genocidal acts that the international community has a duty to halt and hold Israel accountable for. As South Africans who are committed to peace,



justice and human rights, we are proud to stand on the right side of history.

The eminent novelist Primo Levi, himself a Holocaust survivor, wrote: "As long as there is suffering in the world, our duty to remember is not fulfilled."

If the slogan 'Never Again' is to offer hope for humankind, the lessons of not just the Nazi Holocaust, but all forms of genocide, must be practically and consistently applied.

At the time they were committed, and despite glaring evidence, there were those who claimed they were unaware of the extent of the horrors committed by the Nazis or others like the Bosnian Serb armed forces or the Interahamwe in

Rwanda. In our own country there were also those who feigned ignorance about apartheid and its true impact on our people.

A genocide is unfolding in the Gaza Strip and we have a moral duty to act.

Let it be recorded in the history books that the democratic South Africa was not among those who shut their eyes or claimed they did not know.

I call on all South Africans to rally behind our call for justice for the Palestinian people, and for a negotiated settlement that will bring about a just peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

This cause is a reminder to us all that justice for only some is justice for none. ○

# Promoting access to basic education

Over the past 30 years, government has continuously and consistently implemented policies, programmes and interventions that promote access to education for all citizens.

Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga said this when she released the 2023 National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination results. She also revealed that access to educational institutions has expanded steadily over the years.

"Not only do more young people attend and complete schooling than ever before, access to early learning opportunities has expanded dramatically. Recent Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) surveys reveal that early childhood development (ECD) opportunities have also surged," the Minister explained.

For instance, she said enrolments in ECD for five-year-olds have surged from 40% in 2002 to 90% in 2021.



Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga.

"Over 98% of learners, who are seven to 15 years of age, have been attending educational institutions since 2009, signaling a near universal attendance rates for compulsory education in South Africa," the Minister added.

According to the Stats SA's 2020/21 General Household Sur-

vey (GHS), nearly 60% of young black South Africans complete 12 years of their basic education.

Minister Motshekga added that the number of NSC candidates who obtain Bachelor passes, has nearly tripled since 2008, with the strongest growth coming from "no fee" schools.

In addition, she said significant strides have been made in eradicating adult illiteracy in the past 30 years, which affected an estimated 25 to 37.5% of adults at the dawn of democracy in 1994.

Stats SA's 2020/21 GHS also indicates an adult literacy rate of



86.4%, which was achieved after the successful implementation of the Kha Ri Gude Mass Literacy Campaign from 2009 to 2017, reaching about 4.1 million adults all over the country.

"The next phase in the basic education landscape is to continue to ramp up ECD programmes, and focus on foundational skills of reading, writing and counting, as well as diversifying the curriculum for the skills and competencies of a changing world to continue to address the factors leading to the high failure and drop-out rates in the further education and training phase.

"ECD is with us (DBE) now. Therefore, the foundations for learning must be strengthened from ECD, right through the foundation and intermediate phases. With the imminent approval of the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill by President Cyril Ramaphosa,, Grade R will be compulsory; thus, giving us an opportunity to strengthen the foundations for learning," said the Minister.

She reminded the nation that for the past 10 years, the NSC pass rate has consistently increased from 60% in 2009 to above 80% pass rates in recent years.

## Congratulations to the class of 2023

Minister Motshekga commended the class of 2023 for maintaining this trend despite the astronomical challenges they faced.

The 2023 NSC overall pass rate is 82.9%, an improvement of 2.8%, and 6.5% from the pass rates achieved by the Classes of 2022 and 2021, respectively.

"This represents 572 983 candidates who passed the 2023 NSC exams. It should be noted that, while the pass rate of the 2023 NSC exams in number is the second highest in the history of the NSC exams; when expressed as a percent-

age, the pass rate of the 2023 NSC exams, is the highest in the history of the NSC so far," said the Minister.

Similarly, she said Bachelor passes as well as passes with distinction produced by the Class of 2023 stand out as the highest in the history of the NSC exams.

"Some of the other features of the 2023 NSC exams included a high degree of stability in the system. There was much improved data collection, data analysis, and data feedback processes within the DBE; and more importantly, the class of 2023 showed the greatest determination, fortitude and resolve

to overcome all odds, similarly to the class of 2022," the Minister said.

She also highlighted that the matric class of 2023 had a unique profile, as it was the 10 cohort exposed to the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement-based NSC examinations.

"The age profile of candidates enrolling for the NSC exams, has been improving over the years. Most poignantly, in 2023, 88.2% of the fulltime candidates, and 47.8% of the part-time candidates were 16 to 20 years of age when they enrolled for the 2023 NSC examinations," the Minister said. ○



Some of the top performing matriculants of class of 2023.

# Government empowers citizens through TV programme

**G**overnment has packaged a television programme to empower, inform and educate citizens regarding initiatives that can improve their lives by profiling its programmes.

"We are giving voices to communities. We are sharing our content with the broader communities in this country. We are giving ordinary citizens an opportunity to talk about their daily experiences," said GCIS Communication Service Agency Chief Director Neli Shuping.

Shuping was addressing a special screening for the 13-episode Advertiser Funded Programme titled *Citizens Connect*, which is flighted on SABC 2 on Thursdays at 20:30.

Repeats are played on Fridays from 12:00 – 12:30. The programme is also available on the SABC+ streaming platform.

The GCIS has noted that the collaboration with SABC 2 is testament to government's commitment to reaching a diverse audience and delivering impactful content.

"This is a massive milestone for the GCIS and it is a significant project that will be flighted

on one of the biggest platforms, which is the SABC. The latest research on television advertisements shows that the engagement on adverts from viewers has decreased, so having a programme like this is monumental as it provides an opportunity to communicate government messages," added Shuping.

*Citizens Connect* is a social reality programme, featuring government content, re-enactments and discussions on matters relating to gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF), anti-corruption and the Economic Recovery and Reconstruction Plan (ERRP).

The programme is aimed at encouraging active citizenry, inspiring change while informing and profiling government programmes. The choice of SABC 2 as a channel was informed by government's efforts to engage and inform the public through a platform that has a wide audience and reaches many households across South Africa.

"We call on all South Africans across all spheres of life to follow and tune into SABC 2 from Thursday, 18 January – 22

March 2024 at 20:30, to follow and engage on the 13 episodes of *Citizens Connect*, which will significantly touch on various interventions and experiences of citizens with government on issues that are essential to their lives. Through storytelling and engaging content, we aspire to inspire a collective shift towards an informed and engaged society," said Acting GCIS Director-General Nomonde Mnukwa.

One of the episodes focuses on entrepreneurship and government programmes that are intended to assist business owners with funding and business development. The episode features two entrepreneurs who share their journeys in business and how they have navigated challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the

ongoing load shedding.

National Youth Development Agency Communications Manager Lwazilwaphesheya Khoza informed viewers about the Voucher Programme, which range from R6 600 to R19 800. The voucher is used to purchase business support services from approved service providers.

She suggested that entrepreneurs could use the vouchers to buy inverters or generators to help keep the lights on during load shedding. There is no contribution fee required for young entrepreneurs to participate in the Voucher Programme. Each registered entity is entitled to a maximum of two vouchers as per business development phase. [O - SANews.gov.za](https://www.sanews.gov.za)



Citizens Connect presenter is Busisiwe Gumede-Chizhanje.





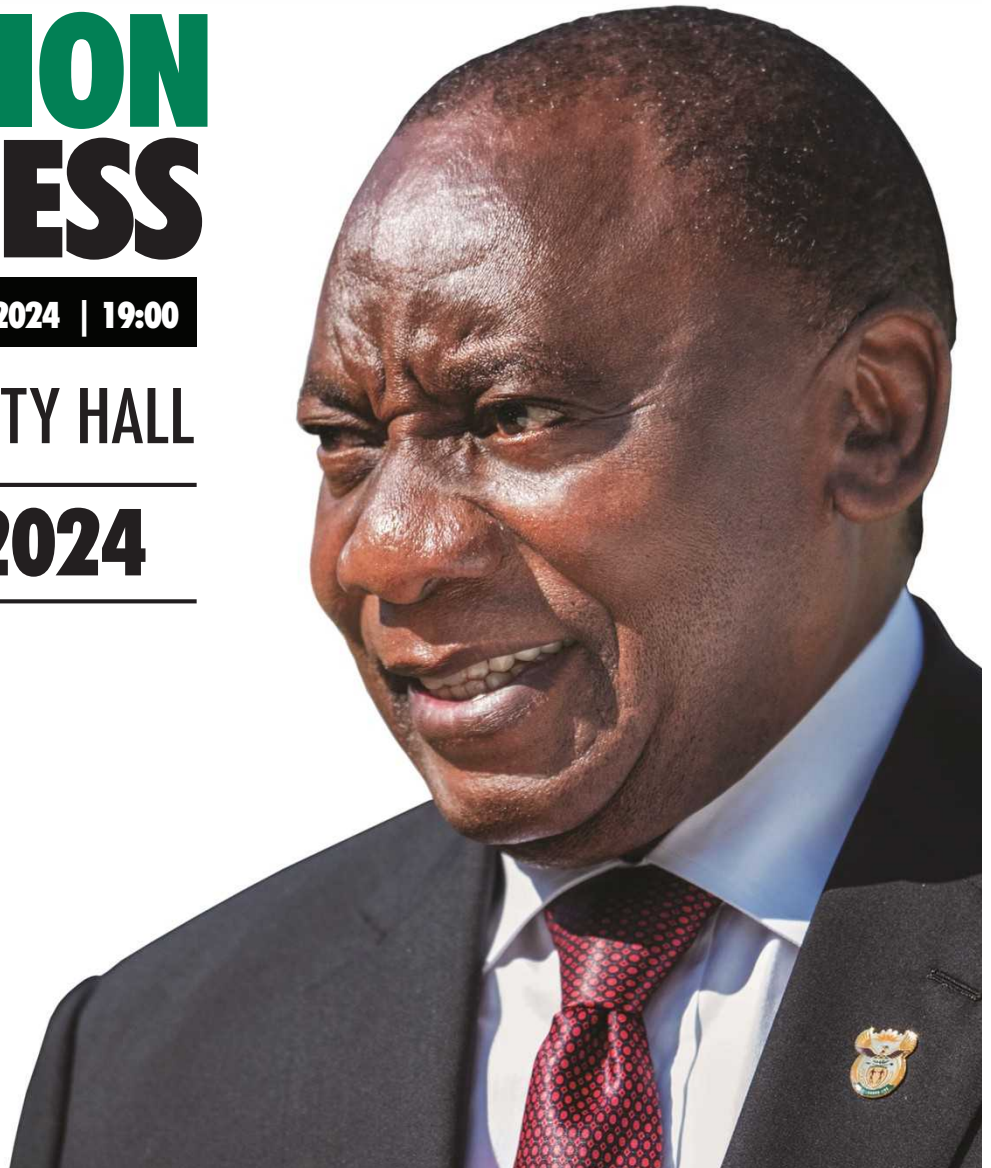
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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

# BELA Bill passed

## into law to improve the basic education sector



**B**asic Education Minister Angie Motshekga says the Basic Education Laws Amendment (BELA) Bill, which was recently passed by the National Assembly, aims to improve the basic education sector.

Providing an update on key developments in the basic education sector, Minister Motshekga said some clauses of the Bill are about providing access to education and providing a child-friendly environment as per the dictates of international treaties.

In October 2023, the National Assembly passed the Bill into law, and the amendments address some of the key challenges that have, for years, hindered the progress of the country's education ecosystem.

"The Bill has 56 clauses, ranging from the introduction of Grade R to learner attendance, a code of conduct for learners, home schooling, rationalisation of schools, abolishment of corporal punishment and initiations, language policy, admission policy and criminalisation of disruptions of school," the Minister said.

At its core, the Bill reflects South Africa's aspiration for a more inclusive, equitable and efficient basic education system.

### The strategic focus of the BELA Bill is to:

- make Grade R compulsory;
- capture the essence of court judgments to ensure that it gives effect to the Bill of

Rights and, in particular, the right to procedurally fair administrative action;

- provide for financial and public accountability frameworks for governing bodies and provincial departments;
- Improve systems and administration in terms of admissions policy, in particular pertaining to undocumented learners; and
- clarify certain existing provisions, insert provisions which are not provided for in existing legislation and strengthen enforcement mechanisms for offences and penalties for technical and substantive adjustments.

"It is a Bill that responds to the current needs in terms of the changing demographics of our communities, findings by the courts and our own observations as we monitor schools. The country cannot fold its arms and watch parents using children at traffic light as beggars instead of

sending them to school.

"The country cannot afford to have children working in farms or roam the streets nor allow adults to use children as pawns for their service delivery protests at the expense of the children's education," added the Minister.

Minister Motshekga reiterated that the Bill does not take away the powers of the school governing bodies (SGBs).

However, she acknowledged the fact that language and admission policies were solely determined and adjudicated by SGBs with veto powers, and without checks and balances led to the abuse of powers. This includes excluding learners using discriminatory practices such as admitting learners according to race, ability of parents to pay school fees, academic performance and sporting abilities.

In reality, she said, the BELA Bill aspires to harmonise the powers of the SGB with the di-

rectives of the relevant provincial head of department (HOD).

"While the SGB is initially tasked with setting a school's language policy, the Bill emphasises that this authority is not unequivocal. It ascertains that such policies are adaptable, inclusive and congruent with the constitutional right to basic education," she said.

## Early childhood development

Updating the nation on the progress regarding the department's work in early childhood development (ECD), Minister Motshekga said since the department officially received the ECD function in April 2022, it has placed a strong focus on increasing the quality of early learning programmes.

## Some of the new developments include:

- More than 17 250 early learning practitioners have been trained in the implementation of the National Curriculum Framework for children from birth to four years.
- More than 6 960 early learning practitioners trained through the PLAY SA online training.
- More than 6 520 parents and caregivers have been

utilising the ECD Mobi application regularly.

- More than 2 000 early learning programmes have been monitored and supported across all provinces.

The Minister said that in 2023, the DBE trained 18 200 parents on the National Parenting Programme, in collaboration with various partners, and 2 265 early learning practitioners were being trained on the NQF Level 4 qualification.

She said the DBE is in the process of developing very clear quality early learning programme standards that are linked to improved child outcomes.

She added that the quality

standards will be implemented by taking a developmental approach to supporting current early learning programmes to meet the required expectations.

According to Census 2022, 2.8 million children are accessing early learning programmes, but it is estimated that a further 1.3 million children aged three to five still require access to programmes.

Currently, the Minister said about 760 000 children are benefitting from the ECD subsidy.

"To address the access gap, and to improve the quality of early learning programmes, the DBE developed a vision and strategy for achieving universal access to early learning

programmes by 2030," she explained.

The strategy proposes a new ECD compact with all role-players, including national, provincial and local government, business, donors, civil society, large implementing partners, parents and the whole of South African society to rally around the vision of setting up children to thrive by the age of five.

Minister Motshekga said the department will engage stakeholders to explore the part that they can play in realising this vision.

"If the children of South Africa thrive, all of South Africa will thrive," the Minister said. ○





# Early-grade reading skills benchmarks for African languages

**T**he Department of Basic Education (DBE) has taken a significant step forward in accelerating the development of the Early Grade Reading Skills Benchmarks for African Languages in the Foundation Phase and beyond. The DBE, together with partners and donors, recently launched reports specifying newly established benchmarks for the Xitsonga and Tshivenda languages.

Reading benchmarks specify

the levels of proficiency in foundational literacy and reading skills needed to be reached along the journey to reading with comprehension. These foundational skills include phonemic awareness, vocabulary, letter sound recognition, word reading, oral reading fluency and comprehension. Such benchmarks may exist internationally or in English, but up until now did not exist in all South African languages.

Over the last five years, the DBE has led the development of reading benchmarks for the 11 official languages (excluding South African Sign Language), paying special attention to the linguistic and orthographic features of each language, and using data from thousands of children who read in these languages.

Benchmarks were launched for the Nguni languages (isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiNdebele

and Siswati) in 2020, for the Sesotho-Setswana language group (Setswana, Sesotho and Sepedi) in 2022, for Afrikaans and English First Additional Language in 2022, and now also for Tshivenda and Xitsonga.

Key partners in the project include the Zenex Foundation, the Allan Gray Orbis Foundation, Old Mutual, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, Khulisa, the

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STRONG SAFE



Dr Mbude-Mehana and Dr Taylor.

Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit and the United States Agency for International Development.

Dr Stephen Taylor, Director of Research, Monitoring and Evaluation at the DBE, said the benchmarks will bolster language teaching efforts and energy invested in promoting language across the curriculum.

"The African languages reading benchmarks project is part of a larger umbrella of support for early grade reading being led by the DBE, which includes the extension of Mother Tongue-based Bilingual Education, and the newly drafted Reading Literacy Strategy.

"Benchmarks, in themselves, are not a magic bullet to improve reading outcomes, but

they can help teachers better understand the development trajectories their learners are on, and they can assist the system to track progress in early reading skills. To date, English benchmarks have been applied to African languages, but this is inappropriate due to significant differences between languages," said Taylor.

During the launch, various education experts shared their views on the quality of the benchmarks with most of them endorsing the benchmarks for the African languages as part of the ways to strengthen reading and literacy in the General Education and Training (GET) band. Participants agreed that studies like the Progress in International Reading Literacy and the Southern and Eastern

Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality, in which South Africa actively participates, offer valuable insights into learners' reading comprehension levels in primary school. They however, cautioned that these studies do not pinpoint the specific foundational reading skills that build towards the ultimate skill of written reading comprehension.

As a result, the DBE is working with various stakeholders to find ways of exploring how to track these foundational skills necessary for achieving basic reading comprehension.

Presentations from the Western Cape Education Department and the Gauteng Department of Education illustrated how the use of these

benchmarks is already being used in provinces to strengthen their monitoring and support to schools. It was also emphasised that the benchmarks should be used constructively by teachers at the classroom level for them to adopt targeted instructional practices that meet learners' needs holistically.

Evaluations from the pilot project, where the new reading benchmarks were used found that the benchmarks helped teachers gain a more accurate and informed understanding of the reading proficiencies of their learners.

In her official address, DBE Special Projects Deputy Director-General, Dr Naledi Mbude-Mehana, said developing the benchmarks will pave way for the sector to promote African Languages in South Africa.

"Notably, African languages have been marginalised for years and as a result the very same languages remained less important as compared to English and Afrikaans. We must embrace these benchmarks since they will enhance effective learning and teaching at the GET level...our core business is to ensure that African languages are fully developed and that our children are able to read for meaning," she concluded. ○



**PanSALB**  
 PAN SOUTH AFRICAN LANGUAGE BOARD

# Mother language education roll-out for South African public schools

**S**outh Africa has 12 official languages, with the South African Sign Language being the most recent addition. Unfortunately, nine of these languages have suffered from systematic marginalisation for nearly 30 years. Economic activities within the country have continued to exclude them as if they were

never officially recognised.

The marginalisation of African languages in modern South Africa is even more sophisticated and systematic compared to that of previous colonial regimes. Sadly, speakers of these languages have understood, accepted and supported their continued marginalisation,

directly and indirectly. There is an unspoken consensus that is accepted that these languages are not fit for economic activities, teaching, learning or assessment. Instead, they are viewed as first additional languages in schools where they are home languages and not mediums of instruction. Limit-

ing their literature to only novels and poetry among others has become a culture that is even perpetuated by those tasked with the development of these languages. Some indigenous language-speaking elites even believe that their languages are vulgar or have vulgar words, failing to recognise that words



are just words until you assign meaning to them.

Through this distorted internalised perception of indigenous languages, these languages have been deemed unfit to teach science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects and remain marginalised. Their agenda could not be advanced when deciding on a language of learning, teaching, and assessment. To this end, foreign languages have been favoured as languages of civilisation for an African child, in an African agenda for an African country.

These general observations are made fully cognisant that many have fought day and night, bone-to-marrow, to combat the marginalisation of our languages. However, these progressive voices have, for so long, been overshadowed by dominant voices with no interest in advancing the language mandate in the country.

Despite the recent success of our 2023 matriculants, worryingly, our learners are still required to achieve a significant mark in English to matriculate. It seems that English continues to be overvalued and prioritised above content knowledge. Whereas, in reality, content knowledge is essential for effective participation in both education and the

economy, more so than language proficiency. Numerous research studies have demonstrated that mother language education is the most effective system to positively impact cognitive development.

### Good news

It is a welcome reprieve, therefore, that after a long process of advocacy and consultation, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) will be launching a national roll-out of the mother language-based education system on 21 February 2024 (International Mother Language Day).

This comes after more than 10 years since the programme was piloted by the Eastern Cape Department of Education, where epistemological access was facilitated through the medium isiXhosa and Sesotho along English for all subjects in schools.

According to the DBE, a mother language-based education system is to be incrementally

implemented from 2025, starting with Grade 4 upwards.

In light of this, the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) has redirected the 2024 International Mother Language Day commemoration to support this historic moment. This year's International Mother Language Day, which commemorates the bloodshed and lives lost in the fight for recognition of one's mother tongue, will be dedicated to the launch of the national roll-out of mother language education in South Africa.

At last, a milestone has been set, come the year 2033, a South African child will no longer suffer the injustice of being taught in a foreign language in her land.

It has always been PanSALB's view that mother language education was the best model for the education of a South African child. It is our hope, therefore, that the DBE will support this to see it through, not to see it fail.

For those who still doubt the effectiveness of mother lan-

guage education, we urge you to examine the matric results in the Eastern Cape since 2020. This was the year that the mother language education pilot group reached matric, with trial exams translated into their respective languages. These results offer a glimmer of hope for what the future of our children might look like. We hope that this might persuade you to add your voice to advocate for the use of the mother tongue not only in education but also in ensuring that all South Africans can participate in public life using their languages.

It is crucial to mitigate the risk caused by the over-reliance on language practices that do not support the ideals espoused in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 for a sustainable multilingual society. This critical step taken by the DBE is but one of many interventions required to emancipate indigenous languages from the clutches of irrelevance. ○

**“Through this distorted internalised perception of indigenous languages, these languages have been deemed unfit to teach science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects and remain marginalised”**

# Structural reforms remain key for SA economy



**F**inance Minister Enoch Godongwana has reaffirmed South Africa's commitment to engaging in structural reforms that will foster an environment fertile to economic growth and competitiveness.

The Minister was speaking during a panel discussion at the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting held in Davos, Switzerland. He led the South African delegation to the critical meeting.

Structural reforms in South Africa are targeted at – among other things – electricity, infrastructure, water and logistics and are driven by Operation Vulindlela – a joint initiative of The Presidency and National Treasury to accelerate the imple-

mentation of structural reforms and support economic recovery. It aims to modernise and transform network industries, including electricity, water, transport and digital communications.

The reforms are aimed at stabilising the electricity supply, reducing the cost and increasing the quality of digital communications, providing sustainable water supply to meet demand, providing competitive and efficient freight transport, and fostering a visa regime that attracts skills and grows tourism.

"There are a number of things we are doing to deal with structural reforms. One of the perennial problems we have had has been on the energy front. Massive structural reforms are

dealing with that question.

"A new challenge has been the logistics sector, where we are investing a lot in it. We have been trying to change the skills composition to the extent that we do not have and we have provided an environment where we can import skills with ease.

"So there are lot of structural reforms that we have engaged in order to make sure that we can grow the economy and be competitive," Godongwana told the panel.

## Historical commitment

During the pre-WEF media breakfast briefing held before the meeting, Godongwana emphasised that structural reforms remain crucial.

"Structural reforms remain crucial to revive medium-term growth prospects amid a constrained policy space. We remain steadfast in carrying out structural reforms to support and accelerate economic recovery.

"As government, we remain

resolved to deal with the energy and logistics challenges that are adversely impacting our economy," he said.

In his Medium Term Budget Policy Statement delivered in November 2023, Godongwana presented the reforms specifically targeted at Eskom and Transnet.

On Transnet, he said: "Rail underperformance is estimated to have cost up to 5% of GDP [gross domestic product] in 2022, with losses in the region of R50 billion in the minerals sector alone.

"Given the scale of the challenges, the National Logistics Crisis Committee was instituted to broaden reforms in the sector and prioritise reforms aimed at resolving the immediate crisis, while also addressing the structural aspects hampering the sector".

On electricity, Godongwana said: "[We] recognise the potential loss of revenue due to private electricity generation, and the fact that traditional revenue models relied on by public entities like Eskom, face serious disruption.

"It is for these reasons that our electricity reforms are holistic, evidenced-based and geared to find a balanced solution to our electricity supply challenges. They take into account not just a particular entity but the transformation of the sector as a whole." ○

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# Safeguarding the future of those who teach



**W**hile one may no longer remember the name of the classroom teacher's pet, chances are that one will never forget the name of that

special teacher who changed the course of one's life.

While we grow up to leave our school tomfooleries behind, teachers continue to leave an in-

delible mark in the lives of pupils.

"Passionate teachers often inspire and motivate their students. Passion for the subject matter and a genuine interest

in the well-being of students can greatly impact the effectiveness of teaching," said acting Basic Education Chief Director of Education Human Resource

Development Lala Maje.

While teachers work hard to shape learners into the adults of tomorrow, who is helping newly qualified teachers to transition into the classroom environment?

This is where the Department of Basic Education's (DBE) New Teacher Induction Programme (NTIP) comes in.

The programme is intended to support new teachers who are placed in schools within their first two years of permanent employment.

"NTIP is a programme that introduces the new teacher to the teaching profession, to the resources available, to the support that the DBE and all stakeholders avail to the teachers," explained Maje.

Teachers have to register on the learning management system for the one-year programme, comprising seven modules that are linked to the Professional Teaching Standards.

The Professional Teaching Standards and the Ethical Teaching Standards form the basis of teaching being a profession and that is managed and guided by the South African Council of Educators (SACE).

The programme also supports SACE in ensuring that Profes-

sional Teaching Standards and the code of ethics are infused in the daily life of teachers," added Maje.

The induction is based on four pillars – mentoring, training, professional development and peer support.

The programme was set up after the Teacher Education Summit held by the DBE and the Department of Higher Education and Training in 2009.

The DBE and the Flemish Association for Development Cooperation and Technical Assistance have developed material and programmes, resulting to the 2020 school calendar year pilot of the programme.

The DBE has also worked with provincial education departments and partnered with the SACE, JET Education Services, the North-West University and the University of the Witwatersrand to develop the programme for all new teachers that join the teaching profession.

## Support

New teachers are also provided with mentors that are identified by their respective schools. Feedback received is that teachers are appreciative of the support provided by the programme.

"The teachers find that the top-

Basic Education Chief  
Director of Education  
Human Resource  
Development Lala Maje.



ics covered assist them to deal with a number of issues, classroom management, discipline in school and classrooms, diversity management, inclusive teaching, as well as work-life balance, to mention but a few," said Maje.

## Progress

The programme is being implemented in phases.

"There was a round table in March 2023, where a decision was [taken] that the programme be phased in in four provinces [namely the] Free State, North West, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape.

"The other five provinces are implementing it, however, not under the tight monitoring of DBE," she explained.

She added that the provincial education departments are part of the interprovincial meetings that DBE holds with the nine provinces on a monthly basis.

"It should also be noted that all provinces are supporting new teachers. The difference with the model brought by the DBE is [a] common standard across all provincial education departments, as well as the fact that the NTIP model has four pillars."

**O - SAnews.gov.za**

# Unique African-centric litter reduction campaign aims for continental impact

**M**arine conservation non-profit Sustainable Seas Trust (SST) has launched a unique African-centric litter reduction campaign, which is being piloted in South Africa and will – once trialled and tested – be scaled and used throughout the continent.

The organisation's flagship litter-reduction campaign, Operation Clean Spot (OCS), aims to reduce land-based litter by up to 90%. With its mandate to support a blue economy by helping Africa's oceans become litter-free, the organisation wants to use OCS to combat pollution in the environment before it reaches the sea.

Trials of OCS have kicked off in Nelson Mandela Bay and Jeffreys Bay, where SST is working with ward councillors, schools, households and informal waste collectors.



It aims to achieve its drastic litter reduction targets by creating a waste management model for African contexts and communities, and spanning all income groups while opening up revenue streams for waste collectors in the informal sector. It also aims at keeping recyclable

materials within the economy and out of landfills.

"In addition to working towards SST's long-term goal of zero waste to the seas of Africa, this project aims to identify easy-to-implement project design principles within a proof-of-concept model that can be used in

other South African and African contexts.

"This is an authentically African model, with scalability and positive implications for our African partners and stakeholders," explained SST CEO Janine Osborne.

The organisation is implementing trials at various levels and platforms, including:

- offering waste minimisation support and guidance to local authorities, based on its scientific research in the sector and its Africa-wide partner network;
- educating pupils on how to identify and separate recyclable waste generated in their households from general waste headed for landfills – termed separation at source. This empowers them to become recycling champions in their households, motivating





schools and to selected adult audiences are being shared, to build an understanding of issues and dispel misperceptions about recycling.

- Economic and enterprise development towards a circular economy: upskilling and developing capacity is taking place with waste collectors involved in the trials. Interventions are ensuring that recyclables collected are kept within the circular economy and non-recyclables are diverted out of the environment where they do not belong.

"About 80% of what is recycled in South Africa is collected by waste collectors. This makes waste collectors an integral and fundamental part of our broader African recycling economy that should not only be recognised but celebrated.

"OCS not only helps reduce waste-to-landfill and litter in the environment, it can also support waste collectors by assisting to unlock the value of recyclable materials and create much-needed income opportunities," explained Osborne. ○

***\*Individuals or businesses can be involved in the OCS adopt-a-spot campaign by registering their clean-up area on the SST website: [sst.org.za/operation-clean-spot](https://sst.org.za/operation-clean-spot)***

their parents or caregivers to join in;

- educating households about the importance of often-maligned and misunderstood waste collectors. This is being achieved through a combination of neighbourhood education drives, workshops and by sourcing personal protective equipment and clothing for the waste collectors so that they can be easily identified by households; and
- using its website and social media channels to encourage individuals and businesses to adopt-a-spot in their respective communities and commit to keep it clean on a consistent basis, logging the clean-ups of their spots – and the amount of litter collected – on the OCS website

to measure progress for the everyone to see.

Cheri Scholtz, CEO of South Africa's longest-standing producer responsibility organisation, Petco, described projects like OCS as helpful in unlocking the supply of recyclable materials to drive South Africa's circular economy. Petco has partnered with the OCS programme, through sponsoring PPE and offering training to participating waste collectors.

"Recyclable materials have real value for everyone in the collection and recycling value chain – from the collectors who earn an income from selling these materials to the producers who ultimately use the recycled content in their products and packaging," said Scholtz.

"Supporting OCS is one of the ways we are building capacity

in the informal collection sector and helping to integrate it into the formal value chain," she added.

The OCS trials comprise the following activities:

- Scientific research: using standardised methods to measure the volume of pollution at selected sites – referred to as baselines – and monitoring changes following interventions to clean the trial sites.
- Consumer research and community outreach: consumer questionnaires are measuring changes in perceptions towards waste management, recycling and the informal collection sector.
- Education, knowledge sharing and capacity building: educational interventions, materials and communications in

# A need for local government beat reporters in SA newsrooms

**L**ocal government is regarded as the most important sphere of government as it is closest to the people. It delivers basic services that people require daily, such as water, electricity, good roads, refuse removal and cutting grass on the verges of roads. It is also at the local government level that people experience the work of government directly. A citizen or resident may never see a Minister until the end of a government term, but they are likely to know the local mayor or councillor.

The local government sphere also bears responsibility for promoting local economic development and to provide a conducive environment for the private sector to thrive and create jobs in the respective municipalities. A dysfunctional or distressed municipality becomes a threat to social cohesion and to economic growth and development. It also becomes an obstacle to the achievement of the apex goal of building a better life for all, especially the poor and the



working class, as promised by former President Nelson Mandela in 1994.

There are 257 municipalities in South Africa, made up of eight metropolitan, 44 districts and 205 local municipalities. Essentially, given the country's wall-to-wall local government system, everyone stays in a ward and every business enterprise is located in a ward. Due to the importance of

local government, its work should be reported on consistently and continuously by the media. This should not be done only when there is a crisis, a scandal or major reports of corruption or maladministration in a particular municipality.

Consistent reporting on municipal council meetings, analysing council budgets and expenditure, scrutinising and monitoring the

delivery of services and infrastructure and covering ward committee meetings contributes to deepening democracy in the country as it promotes oversight and accountability and enhances the media's watchdog role.

I undertook a research study of the role of mainstream commercial newspapers in deepening democracy in local government, for my public affairs doctoral thesis at Tshwane University of Technology. The study investigated the editorial policies and practices of newspapers and the model used for the coverage of local government, especially whether they had employed fulltime reporters or beat reporters to cover the sphere on an ongoing basis. Beat reporting is the practice of assigning special subjects to reporters for them to exclusively focus on, for example crime, sports, business, politics or environmental affairs.

The study established that the press contributed meaningfully to deepening democracy through performing a watchdog role exposing corruption, maladministration or service delivery failures. However, this contribution was limited by the fact that local government was not prioritised as a special subject like politics, business or sports. Most newspapers do not have reporters that cover local government exclusively and assign general or

political reporters on an ad-hoc basis. The study recommended a new model, the Media Watchdog and Development Model, which elevates local government to a special subject with fulltime reporters. The model also integrates the commercial liberal ideological outlook with the development communication paradigm. This means that the media would not ignore developmental stories such as the need for a bridge or road that would improve the lives of the people in a certain community. They would run such a story alongside a breaking news story which would boost newspaper sales and suit the commercial imperatives.

## Benefits of beat reporting

The beat reporting system is advantageous as it enables follow ups and staying with the story monitoring developments. When a building goes on fire in central Johannesburg every media house descends on the premises. After a few days or even less, the media would have relocated to other stories. A municipal reporter will stay with the story and provide updates on what has happened to the victims and survivors and whether all the deceased were identified as well as their names. They would scrutinise the discussions in council

and subcommittees and keep track of the work being done by relevant municipal departments to eliminate the problem of dangerous and hijacked buildings in the city. The media would, therefore, play the watchdog and oversight role in a more systematic and institutionalised manner.

The study was also encouraged by the difficulties facing the local government sphere. Marked progress has been made in the transformation of local government and the delivery of services since the dawn of democracy in 1994. This has been outlined in the various studies, including the 2022 Census. It indicated that access to basic services had generally shown an upward trend from 2001 to 2022. Over 80% of households in the country had access to piped water, either inside their dwellings or inside their yards. The results also recorded an improvement in refuse removal. There was an increase in households whose refuse was removed at least once a week by a local authority or private service from 52.1% in 1996 to 66.3% in 2022. Electricity access has also expanded with more than 90% of households having access to electricity for lighting. This is a marked increase from the 58% recorded in 1996.

However, the Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA) releases annual audit reports which indi-

cate poor governance, financial management and administration by municipalities, the point at which the services must be delivered. In the 2019/20 local government audit report, the AGSA announced that only 27 municipalities obtained clean audit outcomes, with only 28% being able to submit quality financial statements for audit purposes. The 2021/22 Municipal Audit Report described the local government sphere as characterised by accountability and service delivery failures, poor governance, weak institutional capacity and instability.

## Balanced reporting

Municipal beat reporting is not only about bad news. It is also about reporting on positive developments in communities such as sporting and education achievements, entrepreneurial activities or work that build communities and which encourages community participation in improving the quality of life. In this way, the poor would not only feature in newspapers when there are violent protests in their residential areas or when they are victims of disasters. A key benefit for journalism is that local government beat reporting would develop a corps of expert reporters who understand the intricacies of local government, which is a highly legislated and

regulated sphere.

An obstacle to beat journalism for local government could be the commercial constraints facing print media. The business model has changed. Scores of readers are migrating online and obtain their stories and updates from social media sources. Online giants such as Facebook or Google also provide stiff competition and grab the advertising spend. The effect of COVID-19 on the print media was also severe as newspapers faced both an advertising and circulation decrease which led to the closure of some newspapers and magazines as well as job losses. The South African National Editors Forum produced a report on the impact of COVID-19 on the media which outlines the devastation.

Commercial constraints notwithstanding, nothing can take the place of having informed journalists who focus on a particular beat and develop sources and expertise in a particular field. This is currently the case for the sports, politics and business beats. Local government should be elevated to the same level. ○

***\*Dr Kaunda is a former newspaper editor and government communication executive and is currently a deputy director-general in a national government department.***



# Conference reinvigorates SA's primary health care approach



**W**ith only five to six years before the end-point of the National Development Plan and the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2030, the recently held Primary Health Care (PHC) Conference served as a significant catalyst towards

reinvigorating PHC services in the interest of citizens and a further stepping stone towards propelling South Africa towards Universal Healthcare Coverage (UHC).

The PHC Conference, the second to be held in South Africa since 2008, was hosted by the National Department

of Health, the Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), World Health Organisation and Health Systems Trust, over two days in East London.

The objective was to strengthen South Africa's commitment to the PHC approach as a

strategic component of comprehensive health services in a unified health system within a National Health Insurance (NHI) dispensation. It also recommitted government, citizens and social partners to the PHC principles as being central to health promotion,

disease prevention and building a people-centred and resilient health system that can adapt and respond to emerging health challenges in a rapidly changing world.

The PHC conference marked 45 years since the historic Alma Ata Conference on Primary Health Care in Kazakhstan, while October 2023, marked five years since the International Primary Health Care Conference in Astana. Worldwide nations have also committed to the attainment of UHC and enshrined this in the UN SDGs to be achieved by 2030. South Africa is a signatory to the SDGs.

The DPME has a long history of involvement in PHC, having monitored progress made by government in enhancing access to quality PHC services since 2010. The department has also tracked and reported on progress, challenges, and lessons learnt in this area of service delivery.

For example, in 2014, the DPME co-convened an Operation Phakisa six-week workshop with the National Department of Health. The workshop focused on scaling up quality PHC services across the country through the Ideal Clinic Realisation and Maintenance

Programme. The DPME has also monitored the growth of ideal clinics in the country and conducted visits to verify and validate the reported progress.

The participation of other government departments such as Basic Education; Human Settlements, and Water and Sanitation at the 2023 PHC Conference was also significant because it proved that health outcomes can only be achieved through a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.

Several thought-provoking topics were discussed at length during the conference.

First, a scene-setting address by the Health Minister Joe

Phaahla demonstrated government's continued commitment to PHC both as an approach to health care delivery, and as the first level of care in a health system. This commitment was buttressed by the presence of several Health MECs at the conference.

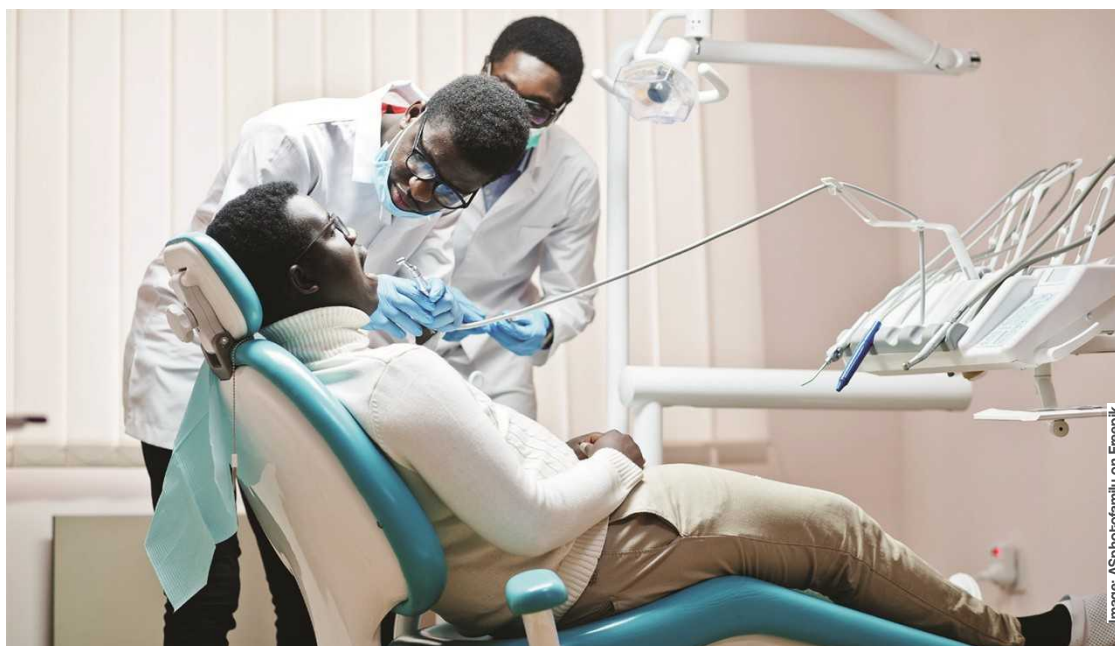
### 30 years of democracy

The conference commemorated the country's 30 years of democracy, including the enhancement of physical access to health care through an expansive infrastructure programme; which saw a total of 1 600 facilities being built by

government between 1994/95 and 2014/15, and a further 149 PHC facilities delivered between 2014/15 and 2022/23.

Resulting from this, access to PHC services measured in PHC headcounts increased from 68 million in 1998 to 105 million in 2022. The health service delivery platform was also modified in 2014 to include the Central Chronic Medicine Distribution (CCMDD) programme. Beneficiaries of the CCMDD programme increased exponentially from 26 284 in December 2014 to 5 629 681 in October 2023.

Key milestones were also noted in efforts to improve the quality of health care services



in the growth of the Ideal Clinic Realisation and Maintenance (ICRM) programme, from only 10 pilot facilities in 2014 to 2 046 in 2023. Public sector PHC services also contributed immensely to the improvement of health outcome indicators responsive to this level of care, including decreased maternal, infant and child mortality rates.

The conference also acknowledged South Africa's mosaic of health challenges like the inequitable access to health care, with only 15.8% of the country's population being covered by some form of medical aid scheme, while 84.2% is dependent on the public health sector.

The DPME will expand on these key milestones, remaining challenges and the road ahead when The Presidency releases the country's 30-year review report, in the coming few months.

The array of insights at the conference was further enriched by lessons drawn in the implementation of the PHC from international partners in the global south with socio-economic conditions that are comparable to our country, such as Thailand, Vietnam, Cuba and Mauritius.

The conference also provided a good opportunity to discuss the pivotal role of PHC and

its vital significance for the achievement of UHC in South Africa by 2030, especially since the country is eagerly awaiting the finalisation and promulgation of the NHI.

The highly valuable conference was also timely since it coincided with the development of the Annual Performance Plan for 2024/25; Strategic Plans for 2024 – 2025 and the national Medium-term Strategic Framework 2024 – 2029. Commitments made at the conference will, therefore, manifest in various types of government and social partners' plans.

The conference proved to be

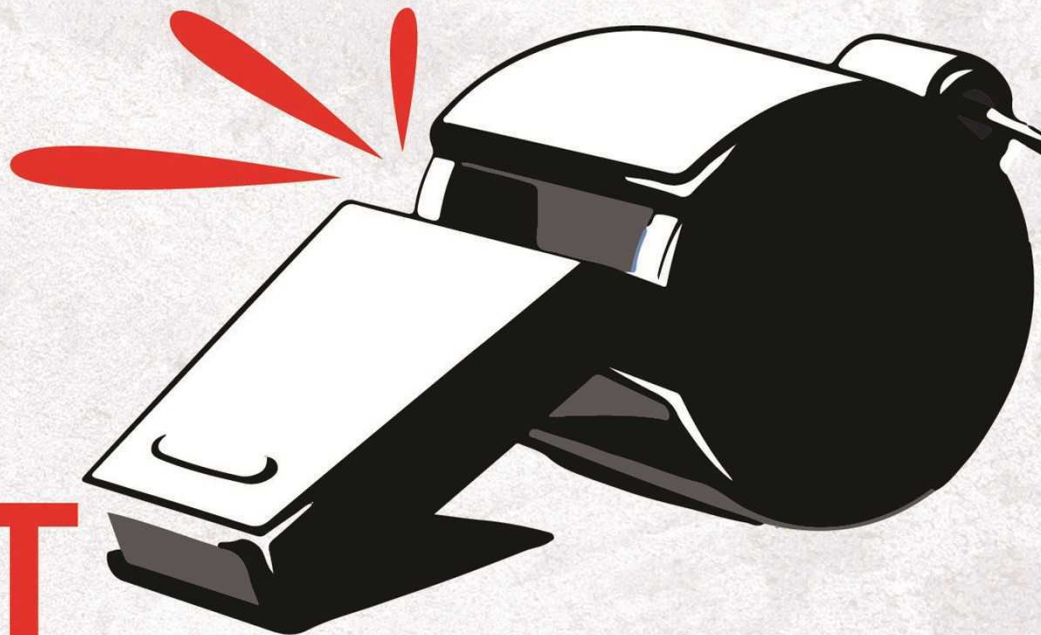
a dynamic fusion of viewpoints, punctuated by an impressive line-up of presentations from a variety of erudite professionals in the interest of enhancing South Africa and the world's PHC approach.

The DPME, will continue to facilitate, influence and support effective planning, monitoring and evaluation of government programmes aimed at improving service delivery, outcomes and the impact on society. We will execute our work, including research, monitoring of health facilities and evaluation of programmes, in conjunction with key stakeholders in the interest of South Africa and its citizens.○





# DO NOT become a bystander of GBVF!



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form of GBVF, say something,  
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**Report any form of GBVF to:**

**SAPS: (10111)**

**GBV Command Centre Emergency  
Line Number: 0800 428 428**

**USSD, "please call me" facility:  
\*120\*7867#**

**SMS 'help' to 31531**

**A Skype Line 'Helpme GBV' for members of  
the deaf community.**

**More information visit: <https://gbvf.org.za/> <https://www.gov.za/GBV> and [f](#) [t](#) [i](#) [v](#) [y](#) @GovernmentZA**



**MOVING TOWARDS 30<sup>YRS</sup> OF FREEDOM**



**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**





# What to wear to the beach

**S**ummer is soon coming to an end, and while most public servants have just returned from the December/January holidays to the hustle and bustle of serving the nation, others are yet to take a breather and go on leave.

In this edition, I am giving tips to men and women on what to wear to the beach if they end up at the beautiful coastal areas.

Because I am Proudly South African, I will mostly refer you to brands or items that are locally designed and manufactured.

## Must haves:

- You do not want any damages to your skin, so never forget to wear sunscreen, preferably with a sun protection factor of more than 50.
- Protect your eyes from the harsh ultraviolet (UV) light by wearing UV-protected sunglasses.
- Have a lot of water to stay

hydrated.

- It is always advisable to have a bag in which you can put few items mentioned above.
- You might also want to have your sunhat / cap on for extra protection from direct sunlight.

## What to wear

South African designers have been coming through with some exciting designs that you can consider.

For instance, media personality and businesswoman Thando Thabethe has few items that women of all sizes and shapes can buy on her online store Thaboootys:

[www.thaboootys.com](http://www.thaboootys.com)

- One of the options women can consider is Thaboooty's Water Monokini, which looks luxurious and comfortable.

If you want to put on something light to cover your skin from direct sunlight while walking or chilling by the beach, you can pair



An IMPRINT Safari Set  
**R11 000**  
(IMPRINT South Africa)



Imigca  
yembali kimono  
**R4 200**  
(IMPRINT South  
Africa)



The Mauve  
Swimsuit  
**R899.99**  
(Thabootys)

the Monokini with IMPRINT South Africa's Imigca yembali kimono which you can also buy online:

[www.imprintza.com](http://www.imprintza.com)

Alternatively, you can go for a similar look by wearing Thabooty's Mauve Swimsuit also available online:

[www.thabootys.com](http://www.thabootys.com)

- IMPRINT South Africa also has a nice simple look for men to consider as an option. An IMPRINT Safari Set is also comfortable to wear when going to chill by the beach. You can take the top off and ride the waves if you like.
- All the above outfits can go well with traditional sandals SoulShooz Slide Imbadada (Multicoloured) also available online:
- [www.soulshooz.co.za](http://www.soulshooz.co.za)
- What better way to complete your look than with a pair of good shades? Get a pair of Africa Is Not A Trend Monochrome Shade online:
- [www.imprintza.com](http://www.imprintza.com)
- Alternatively, you can just get a combo pack from [Takealot.com](http://Takealot.com) which includes classic sunhat, beach bag, sunglasses and a scarf: [www.takealot.com](http://www.takealot.com)

Africa Is Not A Trend Monochrome Shade **R2 200** (IMPRINT South Africa)



SoulShooz Slide Imbadada  
(Multicoloured) **R550** (SoulShooz)



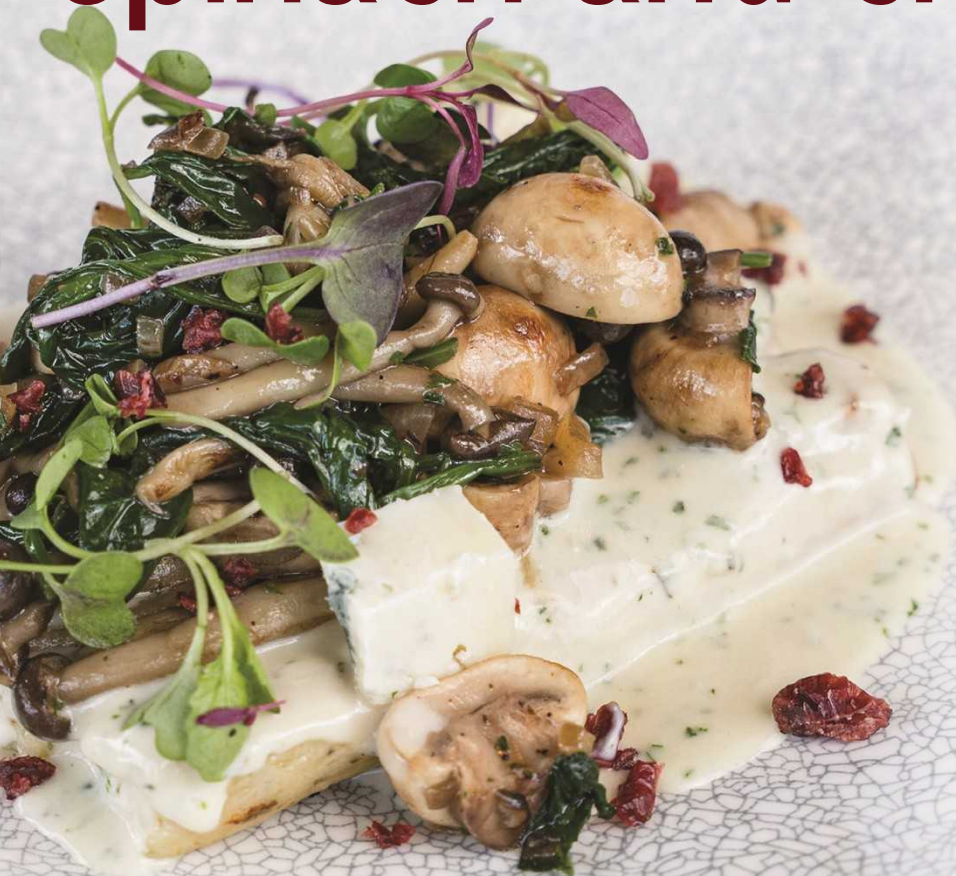
Classic Sunhat, Beach  
Bag, Sunglasses and  
Scarf- Combo Pack  
**R270** (Takealot.com)



\*prices correct at the time of publishing



# Gnocchi and Gorgonzola sauce with wild mushrooms, spinach and cranberries



It is early in the year, and you might have a few new year's resolution up your sleeves. Eating healthy is always encouraged, and one of the options available to you is to prepare a vegetarian meal, and it is up to you if you want to do this once in a while, temporarily or long term.

In this edition, Chef Thulani Mathebula is giving tips on how to prepare a scrumptious Gnocchi and Gorgonzola sauce with wild mushrooms, spinach and cranberries.

"Gnocchi and Gorgonzola sauce with wild mushrooms, spinach, and cranberries offers a medley of flavours and nutritional

benefits. The pillowy softness of gnocchi pairs beautifully with the rich, creamy tang of gorgonzola sauce, creating a comforting and indulgent dish," he explained.

"The addition of wild mushrooms brings an earthy depth while spinach adds a nutritious boost of vitamins and minerals. Cranberries contribute a delightful touch of sweetness and tartness, elevating the dish's complexity," he added.

Mathebula said this combination offers a wealth of nutrients, from the antioxidants in cranberries to the vitamins and fibre in spinach, making it

a satisfying and well-rounded meal that tantalizes the taste buds while nourishing the body.

This dish pairs well with the AA Badenhorst Secateurs Chenin Blanc.

Here is how you can prepare this meal to serve four people:

### Ingredients: Gnocchi:

- 1kg large potatoes.
- 300g flour.
- 20g Sage.
- 20g Parsley.
- 100g Parmesan.
- 5g salt.
- 4 eggs.

### Gorgonzola sauce

- 8g onion.
- 2g thyme.
- 5 ml cooking oil.
- 200 ml cream.
- 100 ml milk.
- 70g Gorgonzola cheese.
- Salt and pepper to taste

### Other ingredients:

- 250g baby spinach.
- 120g dried cranberries.
- 20g Gorgonzola cheese.
- 40g micro shoots
- 320g mixed wild mushrooms.

### Method:Gnocchi:

- Boil and mash the potatoes.
- Chop the herbs fine and mix with the mashed potato, eggs, flour and salt.
- Shape the potato mixture into 12 gnocchi fingers.
- Drop the gnocchi fingers into boiling water – when they float to the top they are cooked – set aside.

### Gorgonzola sauce:

- Chop the onion and thyme.
- Sweat the onion and thyme in the cooking oil in a saucepan over low heat.
- Add the milk, cream and grated cheese until all cooked together.
- Season to taste.

### Final preparation

- Grill the gnocchi fingers on all sides on a griddle pan until heated through.
- Place on a serving dish or individual plates.
- Pour over the Gorgonzola sauce.
- Top with lightly sauteed spinach and wild mushrooms.
- Add cubed Gorgonzola cheese.
- Finish off with dried cranberries and micro greens.



To have a delightful experience of meals prepared by Chef Mathebula, you can visit [www.trufflesbistro.co.za](http://www.trufflesbistro.co.za) or email [reservations@trufflesbistro.co.za](mailto:reservations@trufflesbistro.co.za) to book a table. You can follow his work on Instagram: @2lanichef





# Journey to serenity:

## a homecoming adventure to Port Shepstone

**T**here is a unique magic in the air as I embark on a journey back to my hometown, Port Shepstone. This trip is not just a routine visit; it is a soulful return to the comforting embrace of family, the rhythmic waves of the Indian Ocean, and the enchanting landscapes that make Port Shepstone a coastal haven. Join me as I take you through

a heart-warming reunion with my mother and two lively nieces, an exhilarating Christmas photoshoot, and the exploration of the mesmerizing coastline.

The journey begins with a sense of anticipation, as I make my way through familiar roads and scenic routes leading to Port Shepstone. I love the smell of the ocean; it says "I am home".

There are several activities you can enjoy in the Port Shepstone to Southbroom area that are free of charge. Here are a few suggestions:

- **Beaches:** The coastal region offers beautiful beaches where you can relax, swim and soak up the sun. Some popular beaches include Southport Beach, Umtent-

weni Beach, Uvongo, Marina Beach, Ramsgate Beach and one I recently discovered, Pumula Beach. These beaches offer stunning views and are great for taking long walks or picnicking.

- **Nature Reserves:** There are a few nature reserves in the area that offer free access. My personal favourite is





Mpenjati. This reserve, covering approximately 66 hectares, is renowned for its diverse ecosystems, including a pristine beachfront, estuary and lush coastal vegetation. A network of well-maintained walking trails invites nature enthusiasts to explore the coastal forest, revealing indigenous flora and fauna along the way.

- **Local markets:** The Port Shepstone area has various markets where you can explore and experience the local culture. The Uvongo Flea Market is a popular destination where you can find unique crafts, clothes and local products. The South Coast Mall hosts a farmers market every Saturday, offering fresh produce and local delicacies.
- **Hiking and walking trails:** There are several hiking and walking trails in the area that are also free to access. The Oribi Gorge Nature Reserve has a variety of trails suitable for different fitness levels, offering stunning views of the gorge. The Southbroom Conservancy also has walking trails that meander through coastal forests and offer scenic ocean views. I usually avoid hiking in summer due to the fear of snakes however, Mpenjati Nature Reserve, offers beautiful coastal trails where you can revel in nature's wonders without the anxiety of encountering snakes. The reserve is carefully managed to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for visitors. If you are not convinced, you can have a lovely picnic at Palm Beach.

As I prepare to bid farewell to Port Shepstone, my heart is full of gratitude for the precious moments spent with family and the enchanting beauty of this coastal town. The trip has been a nostalgic journey, a celebration of love and a visual feast capturing the essence of Port Shepstone. Until the next homecoming, the memories of this adventure will linger, a testament to the timeless charm and warmth of this South African gem.

\*Radebe is a travel blogger who is passionate about exploring new destinations and sharing her experiences with others. Through captivating stories, stunning photographs, and practical tips, she aims to inspire fellow adventurers and help them plan their own unforgettable journeys. You can follow her adventures and stay up-to-date with her latest travel recommendations by following her on Instagram @n\_radebe and at [www.bentontravel.co.za](http://www.bentontravel.co.za)