

PublicSector

MANAGER

16 days of Activism

be part of
the fight

DRAM2023

accelerating the
rights of persons
with disabilities

2023 Rugby World Cup

leadership
takeaways



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Public Sector Manager THE MAGAZINE FOR PUBLIC SECTOR DECISION-MAKERS

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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Empowering society's most vulnerable groups requires a concerted effort



November marks the Disability Rights Awareness Month (DRAM) (3 November – 3 December) and the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children (25 November – 10 December), drawing particular focus on vulnerable groups. This year's theme for DRAM is: "Consolidate and Accelerate Rights of Persons with Disabilities into the Future", while the theme for the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence against

Women and Children is: "Accelerating actions to end Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF): leaving no one behind" under the sub-theme: "Safe access for women to clean water: a basic human right".

To ensure equal rights of persons with disabilities and a safer society for women, who are largely affected by GBVF, a lot more needs to be done by all of government and all of society.

Persons with disabilities are

often left behind and excluded from decisions impacting their lives and livelihoods. The motto: "Nothing About Us without Us" implores proper consultation with the sector about their specific needs at school, at work, at home for their well-being and access to healthcare, services and employment opportunities. All efforts must be made by all organisations and individuals to create a barrier-free environment for persons with disabilities,

removing stereotypes and unfair discrimination and that allows for inclusion, equity and diversity to be celebrated.

Moreover, women and children with disabilities are perceived as easy victims by perpetrators of GBVF and it is imperative that these perpetrators must receive harsher sentences, bail and parole conditions if they perpetrate crimes and abuse against victims with disabilities. The links of the justice value chain must

urgently be strengthened in terms of services and support available for victims with disabilities.

Similarly, the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children campaign requires that we all stand together and stand up against GBVF.

Gender inequality has increased in the country as a result of the ongoing absence of substantial economic engagement and representation across a wide range of socio-economic categories. The under-empowerment of women is closely related to a number of characteristics of femicide and GBV. We see a South Africa in which women are actively engaged in all spheres of human endeavour, including academics, the judiciary, the economy and politics. This is especially true given that the empowerment of women is essential to the empowerment of society as a whole.

The 16 Days of Activism campaign is a clarion call for systematic change. A multi-pronged approach is required to tackle the root causes of GBVF. This includes policy reform, stakeholder engagement and cultural shifts, aligning with a broader societal vision of gender equity. We cannot ignore that the systemic marginalisa-

tion of women, particularly within economic contexts, exacerbates vulnerability to violence. In addressing this, public-private partnerships can be instrumental in bridging the gender gap in economic opportunities.

The latest technology advancements should play a role in ensuring transparency in women-focused funding, ensuring that resources actually reach the intended beneficiaries. By elevating women in all sectors, we not only reduce the risk factors associated with GBVF but also enrich our communities, economies and governance structures. Achieving this vision requires concerted efforts from all stakeholders, from grassroots organisations to high-level policymakers.

This year, the 16 Days of Activism campaign will include the following activities:

- Policy Dialogue on GBVF Prevention Strategy: this serves as a critical platform for collective brainstorming and decision-making. Key stakeholders, including non-governmental organisations, policymakers and experts in the field, can collaborate to refine existing policies and strategise for impactful intervention.
- Launch theme on safe access to water for women:

this has dual implications for both gender equality and fundamental human rights. Lack of safe access to water exacerbates vulnerabilities of women to GBVF. The provision of running water reduces the need for women and girls to travel long distances to fetch water, a task that exposes them to heightened risks of sexual assault and violence. By improving water accessibility, you not only mitigate these risks but also free up time for women and girls to engage in educational and economic activities, thereby contributing to their empowerment and reducing vulnerability.

- Men's conference and positive masculinity dialogue: engaging men and boys is crucial in shifting societal norms that perpetuate gender inequality and violence

as men and boys are part of the solution.

By harmonising these diverse activities, we aim to create a multi-dimensional approach to tackling GBVF. This is consistent with the concept of intersectionality, recognising that various forms of social stratification such as gender, race, class and disability do not exist in isolation but interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels.



Advancing the rights of persons with disabilities

South Africa celebrates National Disability Rights Awareness Month (DRAM) annually between 3 November and 3 December.

The World Health Organization (WHO) notes that, “disability is part of being human. Almost everyone will temporarily or permanently experience disability at some point in their life. An estimated 1.3 billion people – about 16% of the global population – currently experience significant disability. This number is increasing due in part to population ageing and an increase in the prevalence of noncommunicable diseases”.

According to Statistics South Africa, around 7% of our population of 62 million people has some form of disability.

Like all citizens, they too have both rights and responsibilities, and disability has become a cross-cutting issue that remains everybody’s responsibility.

The National Development Plan Vision 2030 prioritises the significant role of women, youth and people with disabilities. As such, government, through the Medium Term



Nomonde Mnukwa,
Acting GCIS
Director-General.

Strategic Framework (MTSF) 2019 – 2024, acknowledges that empowering these groups will strengthen the whole society.

The MTSF notes that persons with disabilities face various challenges, including:

- barriers that exclude them from accessing socio-economic opportunities;
- lack of effective articulation and alignment between different services offered by different departments targeting the same target group;
- lack of access to appropriate and timely information and support; and
- lack of access to essential disability and other support services, particularly in rural areas.

As the public sector, let us drive a coordinated and consolidated effort with all stakeholders to improve the socio-economic security of persons with disabilities.

The DRAM offers an opportunity for all of us to address these challenges and improve

the quality of life of persons with disabilities through concrete action. This year’s commemorations are held under the theme: “Consolidate and Accelerate Rights of Persons with Disabilities into the Future”.

Government continues to develop policies and programmes aimed at empowering persons with disabilities across South Africa.

With the adoption of the Constitution in 1996, the *Bill of Rights* not only gave rise to significant advancement for persons with disabilities, but also gave equal protection to all, preventing discrimination based on disability and other factors.

In 2007, South Africa ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol without reservation.

The year 2015 also marked a critical turning point for South Africa on a global stage with the publishing of the *White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. Giant strides were made to establish the priorities of the Presidential Working Group on Disabilities. These include increasing funding for



disability-related programmes and services, including funding for the education, training and employment of people with disabilities.

In a 2011 report, the WHO observed that persons with disabilities worldwide can undertake respected professions, engage in entrepreneurship, be self-employed or work in various responsibilities in both government and private enterprise.

The Commission for Employment Equity's 2022/23 Annual Report notes that representation of employees with disabilities in South Africa is very low at the top management level, with only 1.7% of top management being persons with disabilities. The report further reveals that in this segment, the private sector is doing better than government, with 1.7% of top management in the private sector being persons

with disabilities as opposed to 1.4% in government.

As the public sector, we need to play a leading role in ensuring that persons with disabilities are not left behind. While the minimum employment equity target for people with disability is at 2%, by September 2022, data from PERSAL showed that we were at 1.04%.

The *6th Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the White Paper on the Rights of People with Disabilities*, which was recently approved by Cabinet for publication in the *Government Gazette* has increased this target to 3% from 2024/25.

We should all work towards the realisation of the 7% minimum employment equity target for people with disabilities by 2030.

Government has established partnerships with the National School of Government to further

roll out disability inclusion training across the public sector. The training will serve to improve government departments' capacity to implement policy directives and deliverables of the *White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.

By understanding these directives and deliverables better, we can begin to break down existing barriers that inhibit universal inclusion. We can better provide sustainable resources and safe environments for persons with disabilities by also recognising that not all disabilities are visible.

Government has also committed to create accessible and inclusive environments for persons with disabilities, ensuring that public facilities and services are accessible, and promoting universal design principles in the built environment; and promoting the participation of people

with disabilities in decision-making processes and ensure that their voices are heard in all areas of public life.

To further highlight inclusion and communication amongst persons with disabilities, South Africa has recognised sign language as its 12th official language, becoming the fourth country in Africa to recognise sign language as an official language.

As we commemorate DRAM, let us get involved and do more to develop and realise the National Disability Rights Agenda as required by MTSF 2019 – 2024 targets.

Almost 30 years into democracy government programmes are proving that indeed “persons with disabilities can and should be active players in building the economy”.^o

Government alone cannot end GBVF

DWYPD DG
Advocate Mikateko
Maluleke.

While the South African Government's commitment to curb the scourge of gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) over the past 29 years is evident in the various legislative and policy initiatives, more still

needs to be done if the country is to turn the corner.

It is a reality that will once again rear its ugly head when the country joins the international community to commemorate the annual 16 Days of Activism against GBV, from

25 November to 10 December. Locally, the campaign is known as the 16 Days Activism for No Violence against Women and Children.

In South Africa, the campaign will be under the theme: "Accelerating actions

to end GBVF: leaving no one behind" with the sub-theme: "Safe access for women to clean water: a basic human right".

The country's custodian of the cause is the Department of Women, Youth and Per-

sons with Disabilities (DWYPD).

In a recent conversation with *Public Sector Manager* magazine, DWYPD Director-General (DG) Advocate Mikateko Maluleke said: "We are saying 'live no one behind' because we cannot be focusing on specific (geographic) areas and not look at all areas and sectors of society that make women vulnerable".

This rang true for women in rural and far-flung areas with little to no access to clean and safe water.

She recalled the tragic incident of a 25-year-old woman from Vuwani, in Limpopo, who was mauled to death by a crocodile while doing laundry at a local river.

"Some women are killed while fetching water, some are attacked and raped, and some are killed by wild animals – there are many things that are happening to women in areas where there is no water.

"Having access to clean and safe water – which she reiterated is a basic human right – will reduce women's vulnerability and exposure to GBVF," she said.

Government commitment

In a clear illustration of government's commitment to curbing the scourge of GBVF, President

Cyril Ramaphosa, in 2019 and 2022, held the Presidential Summit against GBVF.

"One of the things that I would like to refer to on the Presidential summit is the establishment of the End GBVF Collective – a collective of government, labour, civil society, and the private sector, where independently and voluntarily they come with programmes that they will be implementing in order to contribute to the eradication of

dress service delivery challenges or the case backlog that we have in courts and everywhere else," she added.

In a move to lessen complaints relating to access to justice being stifled at the level of police stations, the South African Police Service (SAPS), in 2020, introduced GBVF desks. Created to eliminate secondary victimisation, the SAPS, by 2022, had set up these desks at 381 police stations across

"Many police stations have the [GBV] desks, and they are functioning. You come as a complainant, you are taken to a safe place where you can be able to talk and be able to open a case with the help of a police officer"

GBVF," she said.

Chief among these was the 100-Day Challenge, a pilot project aimed at fast-tracking the implementation of the National Strategic Plan on GBVF at a municipal level.

"That programme is working because people themselves are the ones that want to improve the services. I always say that it is like a movement, everybody can join this and we can ad-

dress the country. This was coupled with the training of 91 489 police officers in victim empowerment, domestic violence and sexual offences-related programmes to ensure a victim-centred service.

Maluleke said this has resulted in some general improvement in how GBVF victims were being treated at police stations, despite there still being some room for improvement. She added that the few cases that still

need to be improved were as a result of some police officers who were not doing their work as expected.

"This is where we always say we want the police service to deal with the individuals who are not providing the service as (expected).

"Many police stations have the [GBVF] desks, and they are functioning. You come as a complainant, you are taken to a safe place where you can be able to talk and be able to open a case with the help of a police officer," she explained.

Beyond police stations, GBVF victims are also encouraged to report cases at Thuthuzela Care centres. These one-stop facilities were introduced in 2006, as a critical part of the country's anti-rape strategy aimed at reducing secondary victimisation, improving conviction rates and reducing the time for finalisation of cases.

"Now even the private sector is contributing to the PCC (Provincial Command Council). For example, there is one in Limpopo – there the mines contributed for it. But we do not want to see more PCCs, we want to see GBVF eradicated," she stressed.

Child maintenance

On the child maintenance front, the DG said serious challenges



persisted, with a high number of fathers continuing to default.

"The Department of Justice (and Constitutional Development) has established the track and trace system to be able to check through the credit bureaus and others to see whether the father, or the person responsible for the payment of maintenance, is employed or not. They are able to track that if the person has an identity document in South Africa," she explained.

However, even when the defaulter is tracked and they are brought to court, they may continue not to pay maintenance.

She lamented the fact that despite the amendment of the

Child Maintenance Act, 1998 (Act 99 of 1998), to ensure that those who do not pay child maintenance are blacklisted, no one was being blacklisted.

"...it is not happening. They are not listing anyone," she said.

Having taken stock of how child maintenance cases were treated in court, the DWYPD has in recent times engaged the Rules Board for Courts of Law.

"We have asked them to develop new rules that are specifically for maintenance courts. They have responded and they have agreed that they will work on that. They have indicated that they submitted

the request to the drafters so that they can develop the new rules," she said.

In the new rules, she said, it was envisioned that women would not be treated like criminals "where they would have to prove cases beyond reasonable doubt when these are not criminal cases".

The campaign

This year marks 25 years of South Africa's participation in the 16 Days of Activism Campaign, an initiative started by Women's Global Leadership Institute in 1991.

Reflecting on the country's participation in the campaign, Maluleke said since 1998,

the reporting of violence in South Africa had increased and government departments understood that they had a role to play in addressing the pandemic.

"It was after 1998, when we started to see establishment of specialised courts, the PCCs, SAPS Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences units. Laws are being developed, laws are being amended to respond accordingly. In terms of violence decreasing, that is a different story. You see that when the Minister of Police releases the crime statistics," illustrated the DG.

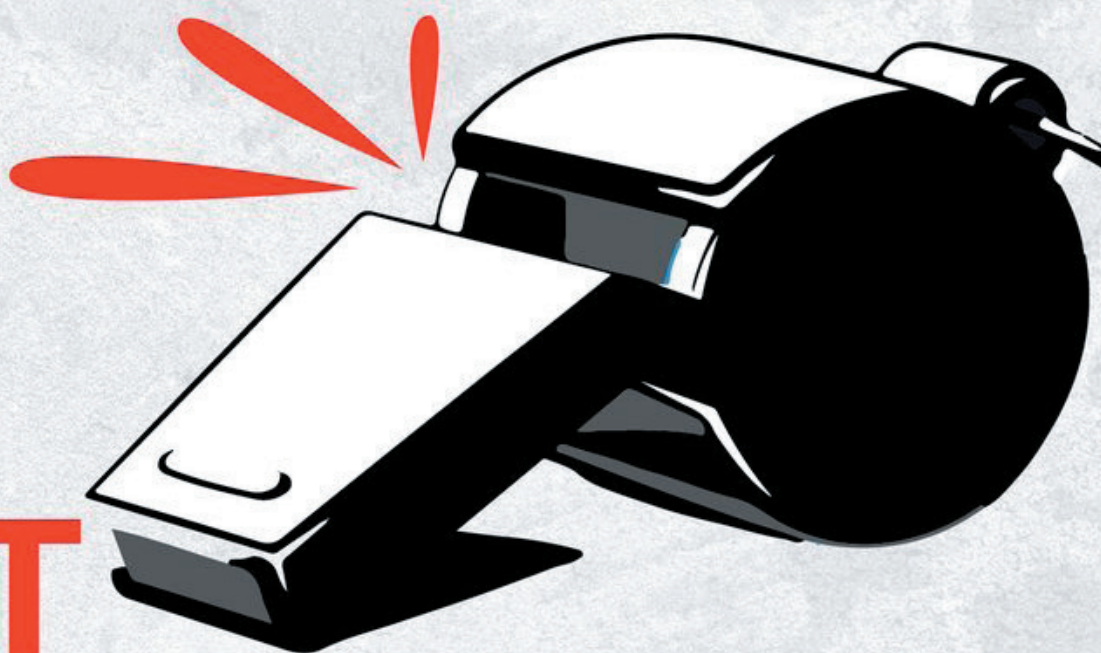
Despite this, Maluleke emphasised the need for a change in the mentality of the general population.

Community involvement

"[Police and courts] come after the fact – our approach now is to focus on the community. Let us teach families and parents how to raise their children. The prevention is from the communities, we cannot prevent violence through police. The communities themselves must raise children who neither engage in violence nor resolve problems through violence.

That is what we want to focus on because family values have collapsed," she concluded. ○

DO NOT become a bystander of GBVF!



**If you know or witness any
form of GBVF, say something,
do something – Let's all end GBVF!**

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](#) [@GovernmentZA](#)

MOVING TOWARDS 30^{YRS} OF FREEDOM



REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA





Transformational leader sees public service as an act of patriotism

Mabatho Sedikela says working as a public servant is an act of patriotism and considers herself as a transformational leader.

"I love South Africa and I want to do good for my country. I grew up at the times when the country was in a state of change – the dawn of democracy. From

an early age, my parents planted a seed in me that I should use my education for the betterment of our country," she briefly introduced herself during an interview with *Public Sector Manager* magazine.

Sedikela, who hails from Motlolo village in Ga-Sekhukhune, Limpopo, is the Head of Audit

- Provincial at the Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA).

She also serves as a member of the executive committee, who also supports (deputises) the Deputy Auditor-General on any delegated responsibilities.

Part of her job is to provide strategic leadership, direction and overall management of the audit portfolio in the provincial spheres of government (Municipal Finance Management Act, 2003 (Act 56 of 2003) audit cycle).

She is mainly responsible for the leadership of the audit executive team, collectively ensuring integration and coordination of all audits activities across the AGSA.

"I lead or establish effective and appropriate processes in governance structures allocated to me to chair, such as the Material Irregularity Committee and co-lead the audit integration

forum. I also oversee the audit portfolio of the nine provincial business units, with a staff complement of 1 807. The AGSA has offices in all nine provinces, which report to me functionally," she explained.

Furthermore, she ensures that agreed objectives of the strategic plan of the organisation are implemented across the audit portfolio.

Sedikela is a passionate accomplished executive and a Chartered Accountant (CA (SA)) with more than 15 years of experience in the audit profession.

She completed her articles at Deloitte and qualified as a CA in 2004, and specialised in South African and international Tax for five years.

She was appointed Deputy Business Executive at the AGSA in 2010. She was promoted to Business Executive in 2011, before ascending to become Corporate Executive in 2016 and

then Head of Audit Provincial in 2021.

Roughly, Sedikela said the audit portfolio units for the nine provinces generates audit revenue of approximately R2 601 560 000 per annum with a range of 332 Municipal Finance Management Act of 2003 audits.

She believes that national and provincial departments fare better and produce more clean audits, have more financial management disciplines and practices than in local government, because they get most basics right such as producing financial statements.

However, she acknowledges that political instability in leadership positions at many municipalities contributes immensely to their poor performance.

"When new leaders come in, they sometimes inherit conditions that already need to be overhauled quite substantially. Unfortunately, municipalities are the coalface of service delivery and this is where communities express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction," she explained.

In the recently released local government audit outcomes report, there were only 38 clean audits achieved by municipalities out of 257. In 2021/22, local government budget was an estimated expenditure of R539.13 billion.

#CultureShift2030

For Sedikela, clean audits mean that the principles of good governance are respected, and the AGSA advocates for that all the time, so that service delivery can also improve.

To redeem the situation, Sedikela said the AGSA has recommended that local government works together with provincial departments, including Premiers, MECs, and provincial legislatures, as well as national departments and the national legislature so that municipalities can improve their audit outcomes and overall performance.

"In our new strategy under AG Tsakane Maluleke, we have started to switch our minds from just auditing to auditing to generate insights that we give to our stakeholders. This is aimed at driving action on their side and yield results. We call our new strategy #CultureShift2030, which we have been driving for the past two years," she bragged.

This does not come without challenges, as Sedikela agrees that some of her team members get discouraged to continue putting their best foot forward only for certain municipalities and provinces, such as the Free State and North West to produce disappointing results and service delivery continuing to deteriorate.

"I have a responsibility to keep

motivating my team to keep going back and continue the hard work. We also use different ways of auditing such as accessing bank accounts where financial statements are withheld in order to trace the money. If the money ended up where it should not, it can be brought back into the government coffers," she said.

The danger though, is that this opens a new window of threats and intimidation where the safety and security of the auditors are at risk. This worries her, but she is grateful that no life of an auditor has been lost due to the threats and the AGSA has put measures in place to try and ensure their safety.

Excellence

In 2021, Sedikela was recognised as the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) Public Sector Difference Maker, a prestigious award that

recognises the hard work and dedication of SAICA members and associates who are making a difference in their areas of work and businesses.

"This really warms my heart because when I joined the profession many years ago, there were not enough women and black professionals like me and I vowed to change that and inspire more young people through various initiatives to join the profession.

"To be recognised by my membership body for making that difference in the public sector was just icing in the cake for me," she beamed.

She encourages public servants to keep fighting corruption and calls on leaders in various state institutions to manage funds with prudence, build the right controls within the system to ensure that the money ends up where it is meant to go. ○

Sedikela has served as a member on various boards over the years, including:

- The Advancement of Black Accountants of Southern Africa,
- the SAICA, and
- The Independent Regulatory Board for Auditors.

Most recently, she also served at the AGSA's Accounting Standards Board, represented the office on the board of external auditors of the African Union (as the only non-AG) and served as a member of the Southern African Development Community Audit Committee.

Young teacher's innovative method creates love for mathematics



South Africa's best mathematics teacher Tebogo Mokwene believes in teaching learners how they want to be taught so that they can love subjects and improve their performance in school.

This has proved to be a winning formula for Mokwene since the beginning of his teaching career in 2015. The teaching method earned the 32-year-old recognition as the best mathematics teacher in the country during the 2022 National Teachers Awards (NTA) hosted by the Department of Basic Education (DBE).

The NTA were conceptualised and launched in 2000 as one of the ways in which the DBE acknowledges the extraordinary efforts made by teachers, often in very difficult conditions.

Mokwene is a high school teacher at Mmabatho High

School in Mahikeng, North-West. In order for learners to perform well in their studies, he believes that teachers must first understand how learners like to be taught so that they can grasp their attention and make subjects interesting.

"One of the methods that I have always employed in the classroom when teaching mathematics is to incorporate the Amapiano music genre in my subject delivery because that is the music that Generation Z love," he explained.

This has earned Mokwene the nickname *Jobe* – a title of an Amapiano song. The young teacher embraced the name and used it to call his teaching method the "Jobe Rule" for

trigonometry.

"The Jobe Rule allows learners to tackle trigonometry with ease. I use Amapiano sound to explain it to them. As they see, narrate and recite this Jobe Rule song, they realise that mathematics is not as tough as they think and when they get to the examination room they excel," explained Mokwene.

He also boosts learners' confidence by rewarding excellent performance in class. He creates groups in the classroom according to the performance of his learners, and the top performers become group leaders.

"This is called differentiated or focused teaching, and it motivates the learners to improve their performance and take up

the leadership roles, so they always have a healthy competition among themselves," he added.

Mokwene's passion for mathematics started just before he completed matric. He was a top mathematics learner in his school when he completed matric.

He obtained a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science and a Postgraduate Certificate in Education from the North-West University and started teaching mathematics at Romaine High School in Mafikeng in 2015, before moving to Motswedi High School in Zeerust in 2017.

According to Mokwene, both schools were underperforming in mathematics when he was appointed, but the results im-

proved after his appointment.

In 2019, Mokwene moved to Mmabatho High School. Before his appointment, the school had produced less than 50% matric pass rate in mathematics. The following year, the matric class produced 78% – thanks to his hard work.

“As a result, more learners who used to study mathematical literacy were encouraged to enrol for pure mathematics and the overall performance of the school improved,” he said.

In 2022, his class produced 83.3% pass rate in mathematics. Over and above, Mokwene said this achievement has also encouraged teachers in his school to improve on subject delivery across the board.

Tutoring mathematics

Mokwene's passion for mathematics does not end in the classrooms, he is one of the two mathematics tutors at the

South African Institute of Chartered Accountant's (SAICA) development camp in North-West, along with his colleague, Medusa Nkgatho.

The camp aims to holistically reshape and develop learners' schooling careers. The camps, which were launched in 2002, are hosted annually across South Africa.

They form part of SAICA's strategy to aid the global drive for transformation, employment, and growth by supporting social and economic development as outlined in the National Development Plan and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

To be invited, learners must score a minimum of 60% in mathematics and English. Mokwene has been a tutor in the camps for the past five years.

“We sharpen our learners' mathematics skills and in subjects like accounting, physical sciences and many others, so

that our learners can pursue a career in chartered accountancy and other key professions of high demand,” he said.

He said many learners are poorly grounded on mathematical concepts and urged teachers to ensure that learners see mathematics as a subject that stimulates logical thinking.

Climbing the ladder

Mokwene's excellent work has not gone unnoticed. In 2023, he was promoted to become a subject specialist.

“My new role is to train mathematics teachers in the 35 high schools that fall under Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality. This includes teachers of Grades 10, 11 and 12. I am also their moderator and I monitor and support them,” said the young teacher.

He added that teaching mathematics comes naturally to him because it is a subject that he has always loved from when he

was still a learner. However, as a young teacher he is sometimes faced with a challenge of ill-disciplined learners.

“Bad behaviour normally affects a learner's overall performance and this also affects the overall performance of the school”.

Mokwene addresses the challenge by keeping learners motivated and reminding them about the importance of education.

He added that it is every teacher's duty to entice learners to love education so that the country can end up with more educated citizens who are innovative and committed to tackle unemployment and other challenges facing the country.

Besides teaching, Mokwene loves interacting with learners and changing their lives to the better. He encourages his learners to relate well to each other and refrain from bullying and other discriminatory behaviour. ○



Steering learners into job opportunities in the Oceans Economy

Although David Silman is approaching retirement, the Project Manager for Marine Science, Mathematics, Science and Technology at the Department of Basic Education (DBE) is a national treasure.

The 62-year-old Silman is the only one and the first to oversee the development of marine and maritime sciences curricula for South African schools.

He joined the Ministry of Basic Education in 2011 as Director for Special Projects, after working as a science teacher in private and public schools in South Africa for 19 years, including one year of teaching in the United Kingdom.

He holds a Bachelor of Science in Physiology and Zoology and an Honours Degree in Education from Wits University. He specialised in Curriculum Development and Science Education.

"When I joined the Ministry, I had to take over the Dinaledi School project,

which was launched in 2002 with the aim of ensuring that selected schools (500 across the country) are supported to significantly increase the participation and performance of

learners, especially

African and girl learners, in mathematics and physical science," he explained.

In 2015, he moved from the Ministry to the DBE, where he was responsible for managing various projects, including Schools of Specialisation.

"My job was to develop

guidelines of what

specialised schools should look like, from the internal structure to the subjects that are suitable for learners

attending those schools," Silman said.

He assumed duties in his current role in 2018. He is responsible for bringing the marine sciences into the basket of curricula offerings for the new subjects, which was written in 2021 for the first time by Grade 12 learners.

"At that time, there were only 12 learners in the country who wrote the Marine Sciences subject in Grade 12 examinations, and they were in the Western Cape because that is where we piloted the project. The subject was taught part-time and online for the first cohort of learners," explained Silman.

Increased uptake

In 2022, 62 learners enrolled for the subject and sat for matric examinations. They were all still in the Western Cape, but Silman said there has since been a substantial increase in number

of learners who take up the subject as more teachers became interested in offering it in their schools.

Currently, Marine Sciences is being offered in five provinces; the Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng. A total of 156 learners enrolled for the subject in Grade 12 this year.





Silman said the subject that covers maritime is being offered in selected schools from grades 10, 11 and 12. A total of 658 learners across the five provinces enrolled for the subject counting all the three grades this year.

"I must be doing something right because the numbers are increasing," he said.

He believes that the subject should be offered in all provinces, as opposed to limiting it to coast. However, he said, it is a prerogative of the respective provinces to decide if they want to offer the subject in their schools or not.

"The major problem is that there are not enough subject specialists available to ensure that teaching and learning of the subject occurs in all schools. Since I do not have a team, and I rely heavily on consulting specialists, I try my best to constantly engage with

a range of professionals in provincial departments, including heads of department, deputy directors - general, chief directors, subject managers for marine and maritime subjects," he explained.

He said since 2019, the DBE has revised and reviewed the curriculum and assessment structure of the subject three times because teachers critiqued it and identified areas of improvement to ensure that they are able to deliver the subject better.

Lack of budget

Unfortunately, there is currently no budget available for teacher training to take place in order to offer the subject across the schools. Silman said there are currently about 15 teachers who are teaching marine sciences in schools.

"These are the teachers who are just doing it out of love

at the moment, and it is a lot of work if you are a working teacher who is responsible for teaching other subjects already. We are still attracting more teachers," he explained.

Although he worries that he is currently not transferring the skill to anyone – as the only one doing this job – Silman, surprisingly, does not find this job overwhelming.

"It is quite exciting to deliver a new subject area to the system," he said.

He encourages more learners to take up subjects such as marine and maritime sciences because there are a lot of job opportunities in the sector. The subjects cover maritime economics, nautical science, and marine science.

Silman said up until recently, there has been no school subject that learners who have interest in the Oceans Economy could study in South

African schools. It is now a time for learners to learn about content, including marine biology, oceanography, environmental sciences, and indigenous knowledge system.

More new areas for learners

The other part of his job is to develop, as he did for marine sciences, a curriculum for mining as well as aviation and aerospace sciences.

"I have written draft content for the academic stream, but I do not have the competence and knowledge to deal with the vocational and occupational streams that apply to aviation," he said.

He has held a number of workshops and meetings with relevant stakeholders, including the Department of Transport and experts in the aviation industry so that the DBE can develop syllabus suitable for learners.

He draws a lot from his experience as a teacher.

In 2022, as part of efforts to unlock the potential of the Oceans Economy and drive transformation, government prioritised the acceleration of interventions in the maritime sector. Introducing learners to this field at an early age is expected to contribute to this initiative. ○

The Springbok victory is about much more than sporting excellence

The Springboks' win at the Stade de France on 28 October 2023, has lifted the nation's spirits, confirming the enduring power of sport to unite and build a nation.

The Springboks go down in history for having won the Rug-

by World Cup more than any other nation, but this alone is not what makes this an exceptional triumph. The symbolism of this victory is as significant as the great sporting achievement we have witnessed.

It has been under democracy

that the Springboks racked up these wins and lifted the coveted Webb Ellis Cup a record four times.

When South Africa first competed in the Rugby World Cup in 1995, our democracy was just a year old. Back then, there was just one black player on the team, the legendary Chester Williams. Of the squad that played in the 2023 Rugby World Cup final, just short of half were black players, including the team captain, Siya Kolisi.

The journey of the Springboks to the historic victory in the 2023 Rugby World Cup is as much about our journey towards nationhood as it is about sporting excellence.

It is as much about our quest to ensure that representation in all facets of public life, including sport, stands as a potent

symbol of the cherished values upon which this country was founded.

The fervent, colourful and touching displays of national pride from South Africans both at home and abroad during this tournament, show that perhaps as never before, the Springboks have well and truly been embraced by all races as their own.

The viral clip of Springboks winger, Makazole Mapimpi, being cheered on by customers and store staff whilst out grocery shopping, and that of Eben 'Elizabedi' Etzebeth and RG Snyman dancing with South African fans near the Eiffel Tower in Paris, are among my personal favourites.

Witnessing so many South Africans don the national team's colours and profess their support online and on





other platforms speaks to the deep love for our country and to our ability to pull together even when the going gets tough.

We need more of this, and not just in the domain of sporting achievement.

That we were able to overcome one of the worst global disasters in living memory in the form of the pandemic was in large part due to our ability to rally around a common cause, in pursuit of the greater good.

At times such as this, when our country faces many problems that at times cause our spirits to flag, we are reminded that our South Africanness,

our sense of community and belonging, and our very nationhood did not evolve overnight.

It has taken considerable time to forge, and at times faced obstacles that threw us into uncertainty and doubt.

But if the story of the transformation of South African rugby, a sport that was once the bastion of racial supremacy, is anything to go by, our country will continue to reap the benefits of change if we remain united and if we stay the course.

The patriotism we display in sports stadiums should be reflected in our approach to overcoming our challenges. We are all in this together as

government, business, labour, civil society and citizens.

We do not make light of South Africa's challenges. They cannot be forgotten or wished away by a fleeting moment such as a sporting victory.

The Springboks' win has united us in celebration. It is our hope that it must also serve to inspire the younger generation to derive important life lessons about perseverance, teamwork, discipline and leadership.

The interview that Kolisi gave shortly after the team's win will be remembered as one of the most poignant and meaningful from a sports person in our country.

He spoke about the differ-

ent backgrounds of the team members and the difficulties they have had to overcome to reach this pinnacle of sporting achievement. "You have to be South African to see, feel and experience the things we do," he said.

This Springbok squad is one of the best rugby teams in the history of the sport. But they are far more than that. They are also great ambassadors for our country and for the values that continue to drive our efforts to build a united, more equal and prosperous nation. ○

From the desk of The President was published on 30 October 2023.

Reflecting on progress

made in promoting rights of persons with disabilities



The consolidation and acceleration of the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities into the future will over this month be cast into the spotlight as South Africa commemorates National Disability Rights Awareness Month.

In a recent interview with *Public Sector Manager* magazine, Chief Director of Advocacy and Mainstreaming and Rights of People with Disabilities at the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (DWYPD), Phuti Mabelebele, noted that 2023 is an opportune time for government to reflect on progress made on promoting the rights of this community.

"We are looking at the fact that we are reaching the end of the Sixth Administration and, therefore, we need to reflect on the progress that we have made in terms of the realisation of rights of persons with disabilities," she detailed.

This includes government assessing its efforts on mainstreaming, advocacy, monitoring and evaluation interventions with regard to how far government has gone in implementing programmes, services, and budgeting for disability inclusion.

While government has over the past three decades made significant strides in uplifting and promoting the rights of people with disabilities – with sizeable achievements – there is still a lot of groundwork to cover.

Highlights include the establishment of the DWYPD and the recent promulgation of the South African Sign Language Amendment Bill in July 2023.

Reasonable accommodation

Another milestone was the 2015 approval of the Policy on Reasonable Accommodation and Assis-



tive Devices for Employees with Disabilities in the Public Service.

The policy makes it mandatory for government departments to implement necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden to ensure persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

“For instance, your transport policy should be aligned to that reasonable accommodation policy. Your supply chain in terms logistics when you book accommodation and all of that. Over and above all of that, there should be reasonable accommodation in terms of tools of trade. If you appoint a person who requires maybe

Jaws software on their computer to enable them to function optimally, we need to be able to avail those resources,” explained Mabelebele.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities defines communication as inclusive of languages, display of text, Braille, tactile communication, large print, accessible multimedia as well as written, audio, plain-language, human-reader and augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication as well as accessible information and communication technology.

In 2015, the South African Government developed the *White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, a call to action for government, civil society and the private sector

to work together to ensure the socio-economic inclusion of persons with disabilities.

All these achievements, she underscored, illustrate government’s willingness to implement impactful interventions.

“We are seeing more and more government departments appointing people with disabilities. Although it is not an equitable scale, we are working on that to ensure that targets are met,” she added.

Mabelebele noted that there were some departments that claim that they cannot meet targets because of budget constraints. “Through research, we (DWYPD) have been able to prove that budgets can never be used as an excuse. People with disabilities are willing and able to perform duties if they are fully equipped to operate,”

she explained.

She added that inclusion involved being “mindful of the environmental and all other aspects that enable people with disabilities to function”.

“It is for this reason that with deafness, for example, which to some is a temporary condition and to some a permanent impairment or disability – government has a responsibility to create an enabling environment for these people to operate and function.

She explained that the DWYPD’s responsibilities include coordinating “and leading in the transformation agenda for inclusion and mainstreaming in all aspects of society”.

She added that the DWYPD achieves this by ensuring that policy and legislation respond to identified challenges. ○

Public servants urged to play their part in advancing the SASL



In July 2023, South Africa became the 41st country in the world to promulgate sign language as an official language.

On the African continent, SA joins Kenya, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

While the milestone had been long coming, a protracted journey of recognition lies ahead for the deaf community, says Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) Chief Executive Officer, Lance Craig Schultz, adding that he believes that the enactment of the South African Sign Language (SASL) by President Cyril Ramaphosa brought pride to the nation.

Throwing down the gauntlet for his fellow public servants, he asserted: "As civil servants, it becomes our duty to determine how this progressive step in our constitutional democracy will affect the deaf community and improve their lives in a meaningful and substantive way."

The first step in this journey, he believes "is to shift the pervasive view in society of treating deaf persons, as a disability, as opposed to it being a 12th language".

In fostering its aims of multilingualism, the PanSALB has a duty to ensure that the voice of expression gets recognised as an official language.

"One of the things that really resonates with me is that when we joined the President in the announcement of the amendment bill, the members of the deaf community made a very thought-provoking and important statement and something that I carry with me in all our engagements when we are dealing with members of sign language.

"When you are dealing with issues related to SASL, it can never ever be done without members of the deaf community being present and party to that. We have to make sure that it carries through in all of our focused engagements," he stressed, reiterating that the primary challenge faced by the deaf community was access to information, services and economic opportunities.

Bridging the gap

To address this, PanSALB has created a South African Sign Language Charter. The charter contains nine pledges that seek to promote fair and courteous treatment and offer support to the deaf commu-

nity. It also sought to give the community access to information and services.

The charter is expected to be a long-term project.

"It requires regular review and input from stakeholders to ensure that its implementation is effective in what we need to achieve," he said.

'With an estimated four million deaf people in South Africa, many of whom are born to hearing families, language barriers often result in feelings of isolation," said the CEO.

To bridge the gap, PanSALB has initiated several programmes to teach basic sign language through workshops to parents and relatives of deaf children and frontline workers.

Training frontline workers is an important move as they are the ones to first respond in cases of emergency.

"We have to ensure that they are equipped to at least conduct basic sign language. We are also going to make it our mission at PanSALB that all of us attend basic courses on the SASL."

Advancing the SASL

The organisation, an agency of the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture, is cur-

rently spearheading a project towards the digitisation of the SASL as well as developing digital and human interaction technologies aimed at bridging the communication barrier between the hearing and the deaf.

"We are also working on advancing the SASL for Fourth Industrial Revolution technological development, using templates to collect and create computer-readable sign language that will assist in the development of sign language technologies," he said, adding that the move will ensure broader access to the wider community.

The project started in April 2022 and is expected to be concluded by June 2025.

PanSALB is also accelerating its efforts to standardise SASL for educational purposes.

The organisation is doing this through consultation with various linguists and deaf stakeholders so that work on terminology development can commence.

"We are also looking at establishing an advocacy unit that will be responsible for compiling dictionaries for the SASL. I must also say that my crystal gaze says that it cannot only be the domain

of PANSALB to ensure that this work is done to a level of adequate maturity. It is going to take a compact amongst a number of [stakeholders] that support the work of the deaf communities.

"We have to set aside the silo thinking and ensure that we take into account issues of the fiscus that we have to find a way to work around to further the needs of the deaf community," said Schultz.

He urged public servants to adhere to the SASL Charter and ensure that they are accessible to the deaf community.

"Real change in how government interacts with the deaf community can only come right when we acknowledge our privilege as hearing individuals and take steps to address the marginalised section of the deaf community. As civil servants, it is our responsibility and duty to protect the linguistic rights of the deaf and bridge the communication gap between the hearing and deaf communities," he said. ○



My leadership takeaways from the 2023 Rugby World Cup finals



First I must declare that I am not much into the sport of rugby. In fact, I do not understand half the rules of the game. Having watched it since the last success by the team, I have come to realise that what I always regarded to be a hooligans sport is, in fact, a game of strategy and tactics.

There is elegance in the wrestling madness. From this world cup installment, I have been enriched by these notables:

Lesson number one:

Always lead from the front. Be prepared to do or get into messy situations and get things done. Roll up your sleeves and lead by example in doing what needs to be done for the mission to be accomplished. When you do that, people will know that their

leader is not only there to bask in the glory of success, but is willing to get hands dirty and break bones along with all of them, thus inspiring confidence and getting team members mobilised. Siya Kolisi did that.

Lesson number two:

Although it may sound like a tired cliché, this rugby world cup winning team has once again reminded us that in any organisation, teamwork matters, and that the leadership is part of (not above) the team. Therefore, the leader should not stand on the podium or high office shouting instructions. Teamwork means recognising energies and talents of different people, allowing

different ideas and talents to thrive. That way the diversity and energies of different people, from the most junior to the most senior, will be brought to bear and help the organisation or team to succeed.

Lesson number three:

For leaders to succeed, they must be comfortable with the idea of working alongside the most talented people. As we saw in our rugby team, there are players, young and older, who are more talented than the captain, yet he remains their captain. By him embracing these most talented players and actively cheering them, he himself becomes a superstar.

With your guidance as team leader or captain, talented people will find creative ways of getting the job done successfully, and such success, in the

final analysis, is to be cherished by all. As captain, you will lift the trophy. Talented people get the job done. Untalented people have a problem for every solution. They are exhausting and dangerous like retread tires – when the road gets hot and the load heavier, they buckle and cause a mess for everyone on the road. That is why the captain of this team, from the first to the last match, was always happy to be substituted and go sit on the bench without him sulking each time the coach made that call.

He always understood that even as he sits on the bench, the victory of the talented people inside the rugby pitch will be his victory. He led them from the back and neither lost his confidence nor his shine. In fact he became more effective as he could guide and motivate without the pressure of being next to the ball. At the end of the day victory is his. He lifted the trophy. He leads the headline. He made history by accepting that

there are other more talented and agile players, who are there as part of the team to make a sterling contribution. And sure they did, in every game. That is a remarkable leadership trait that many of us need to embrace for our organisations to succeed.

Lesson number four:

Have reliable and visible co-pilots. These are people who will lead with you and take the organisation to success. They must be willing to take tough decisions; they must be ready to enter the scrum and their hands dirty; they must not be afraid to be unpopular with other members of the team. Co-pilots must be as much willing to take the blame as they are to share the glory. After all, they are part of the leadership collective of the organisation.

Co-pilots must inspire confidence amongst the team members in the aircraft or the ship. Team members must know

that the co-pilot will not sink the ship if the captain dropped dead. They must know that with the captain not in the cockpit, the destination (success) and the path (game plan) towards that destination is the same. Co-pilots must be solid, talented, brave and willing to take risks as much as we saw in this game. The deputy captain (as part of the leadership collective) was the remarkable Bongi Mbonambi.

Lesson number five:

Never underestimate any challenge. We saw in this world cup that the team played every game as if it was the final match. From this they tested their fortitude and agility. It is hard but essential to keep the team motivated, especially during difficult times when it seems like the dream is fading away. Staying focused on the vision, whilst making technical adjustments in response to situations, builds

cohesion and lift spirits. Rigidity must make way for flexibility. The coaching staff was at their best in this regard. They made difficult, but effective, calls. Their calculated risks paid off.

Lesson number six:

Never create doubt among your team members. Be transparent. Be consistent. Be predictable. Do not create factions. Treat everyone equally. Embrace diversity. Be prepared to do what you expect from others. Be the shield - your team members must know you have them covered.

Lesson number seven:

In team sport, like in any organisation, trust and fellowship matters. From this winning team we witnessed unlimited amounts of trust, love and fellowship among the players and their coaching staff. The shortest and smallest players in

the team had as much responsibility as the biggest and most experienced. Faf and the Ox made things happen regardless of their sizes. Trust, honour and sportsmanship was their zeitgeist – the highest manifestation of patriotism. Now that is beauty of diversity in all its manifestations. As the Inanda Proverb goes: “you cannot claim to love those you represent without fellowship with those you lead with”.

Lesson number eight:

Be humble. Arrogance and rank consciousness break spirits and discourage people. You become a monster who is feared and people find ways to undermine you. They give you nicknames and mock you. In the end, you lose more than they do. You become a captain (and or coach) who achieved nothing. You are remembered for failure rather than success. With all his achievements, Kolisi remains humble.

He acknowledges the roles and contributions of others, thus endearing himself with his teammates, coaches and supporters. His modesty in the era of the big ego is humbling. Kolisi is a superhero, a marvel that we are learning from. Thank you for being such a role model. Every bedroom (sorry I meant boardroom) deserves your portrait. ○



Transforming MENTalities to fight GBVF and gender inequality



The Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, has called on men and boys to play an active part in co-creating new ways of relating to women and girls.

He said this during the inaugural Transforming MENTalities Summit that was recently held in Ekurhuleni. The summit was

aimed at engaging men and boys to address the root causes of violence against women.

It brought together university vice-chancellors, deans, principals and council chairpersons of technical vocational education and training colleges, student support structures and leadership, chief executive officers

of sector education and training authorities, entities of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), policymakers, survivors of gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF), peer educators and change-makers.

They were all unified by a shared commitment to address

GBVF within the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) sector.

“Transforming MENTalities is about transforming the way men and boys build relations with women and girls, the liberation of men and boys from [old-fashioned] and dominant positionalities, and men and boys un-learning reactionary habits and embracing emancipatory values, norms, roles and practices in the variety of relationships they enjoy with women and girls,” said the Minister.

The summit stems from discussions held within the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) over the past year, dealing with a universal concern that men and boys need to be brought into the discourses on gender equality.

In 2015, UNESCO launched its Transforming MENTalities Programme in Latin America

and the Caribbean, to promote positive redefinitions of norms of masculinity and meaningful engagement of men and boys, alongside women and girls, in the global pursuit for gender equality.

The Minister revealed that South Africa's objectives of Transforming MENTalities are broadly informed by UNESCO's global initiative, including:

- gathering context-nuanced and feminist evidence and building knowledge to inform gender-transformative policymaking;
- countering and uprooting harmful gender norms to promote positive and healthy alternatives with the support of role models; and
- strengthening the structures to engage men and boys as accountable allies for gender equality alongside women and people of diverse gender identities.

The Minister said the engagement of men and boys in gender equality issues is a crucial element for South Africa and the world at large in order to achieve the desired progress, and encourage men and boys to become active and positive advocates for gender equality.

In order to tread on the rightful path towards a gender-equal society, the Minister said

stereotypes and norms need to be rethought, and relationships between women and men reshaped.

Gruesome statistics

The Minister said in South Africa a woman is raped every three hours and South Africa is considered to be the rape capital of the world due to its high cases of rape.

"The rate at which women are killed by intimate partners in this country is five times higher than the global average. GBVF, a widespread and common occurrence in South Africa, is deeply ingrained in homes, workplaces, cultures and traditions," Minister Nzimande said.

He added that the scourge has far-reaching effects that go beyond violence itself as it manifests in various forms, including physical, emotional, psychological, financial or structural harm and usually perpetrated by intimate partners, work colleagues, strangers and even institutions.

Addressing GBVF in higher education institutions

The PSET sector is part of the broader community and higher education institutions are part of the larger society, and it is hard to isolate them from the

violence that stems from around communities.

Minister Nzimande noted that the sector is home to more than 2.5 million youth in the country, with 51% being females.

"10% of all reported rape cases originate from young women in the higher education sector," he said.

The department, through Higher Health, has done some work over the past few years to implement sustainable and impactful systems, controls, infrastructure, and safety nets to address the scourge within the PSET sector.

Higher Health is an entity of the DHET that promotes the health and well-being of approximately 2.5 million students in higher education institutions, including 26 public universities, 50 technical and vocational training colleges and nine community education and training colleges.

Since the Minister launched the of GBV Policy Framework in 2020, Higher Health has been putting systems, controls and capacity in all institutions to fight the scourge.

Higher Health has also developed a technical task team with various PSET stakeholders as well as technical experts who are together developing a multi-sectoral response to issues of GBVF.

In 2021, the task team released

procedural guidelines on how to respond to cases of GBVF on campus. It also released protocols on rape and code of ethics.

The Minister revealed that Higher Health is working with the National Prosecuting Authority to develop protocols on statement of complaint, whistleblowing and other legislature.

Cabinet recently gave the summit thumbs up, saying it has left an indelible mark on 1 500 delegates who were in attendance with its powerful engagement and insightful discussions poised to pave way for transformation in men and boy behaviour.

"Evidence and data suggest that men's behaviour has been one of the root causes of GBVF and the summit called for action for men and boys towards being part of the solution," Cabinet said in a statement.

Recommendations from the summit include the development of more peer educators and champions across all campuses, to work as change agents towards transforming MENTalities; more men dialogues across all institutions; incorporating gender studies, including GBVF, gender equality, gender diversity; and transforming MENTalities as co-curriculum alongside the main curriculum in the sector. ○

IEC launches **2024** national and provincial elections programme

The Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC) has launched the 2024 National and Provincial Elections (NPE 2024) programme, declaring that it is ready to host millions of eligible voters at over 23 296 voting stations across the country.

The NPE 2024 will be historic as independent candidates will, for the first time, be able to

contest for seats at the national and provincial elections. The law enabling the participation of independent candidates was signed in April by President Cyril Ramaphosa.

The commission, led by the institution's Chairperson Mosotho Moepya and Chief Electoral officer, Sy Mamabolo presided over the launch, which was held

at Gallagher Estates in Midrand, and attended by various stakeholders, including political parties.

"Today, we stand proud as the pre-eminent constitutionally mandated body that manages elections and make bold that we are ready for the NPE 2024," declared Mamabolo.

He explained that while the

term of office of the current legislatures, national and provincial, ends around 18 May 2024, the national and provincial governments would remain in office until the newly elected public representatives are able to take office.

He said in terms of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996, the country must have an election within 90 days of the expiry of the legislatures' terms.

"Therefore, an election is possible between May and the middle of August 2024. The proclamation of the election date is by our head of state, His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa after consultation with the electoral commission. Our expectation is that the provincial elections will be, as they have for the past 30 years, be synchronised with the national election," he added.

Mamabolo said that once the



Chief Electoral Officer, Sy Mamabolo.



Electoral Amendment Act, 2023 (Act 1 of 2023) was signed into law by the President, the commission moved with deliberate speed to finalise supporting business applications necessary for the implementation of the Act.

Voter registration

Prior to each election, the IEC launches registration drives aimed at enrolling new voters and empowering existing ones to scrutinise and, where necessary, amend their registration details. These endeavours breathe life into the voters' roll.

The commission reiterates its commitment to open nearly 23 300 voting stations for the weekend of 18 and 19 Novem-

ber 2023. This monumental effort not only registers new voters but also facilitates the verification of the voter's roll. Station-based registration ensures equitable access to the vote.

The IEC has expanded registration modalities to enable voters' continuous enrolment. For those with Internet access, registration, inspection and updates are accessible on www.elections.org.za. Voters can also visit local IEC offices or capitalise on various activation campaigns to register and update their information.

Media campaign

The theme for NPE 2024 is: "Your democracy, own it!" The

commission urged South Africans to use its online portal for registration, verification and updates.

"We urge you to actively participate in the registration weekends and exercise your responsibility as engaged citizens who choose their own representatives.

We extend a call to all electoral stakeholders to stand shoulder to shoulder with us, working collaboratively to make these historic elections a resounding success," said Mamabolo.

Moepya said the elections were unique as they come at a time when the country will be celebrating 30 years of democracy.

"As we gaze upon 2024, an

election year of unique significance, marking not only another stride in South Africa's democratic journey but also celebrating the 30th birthday of our electoral democracy, let us remember that democracy is not a destination; it is a perpetual journey.

"It thrives on our active engagement, reverence for its values and collective effort to surmount challenges. With hope and determination, we embark on this journey, knowing that the next 30 years hold opportunities for growth, unity and progress. Together, as South Africans, we shall ensure that our electoral democracy continues to shine as a beacon for the world," he concluded. ○

Automated internal audit quality assessment tool developed

National Treasury's Capacity Building chief directorate has developed an innovative web-based quality assurance self-assessment tool for internal auditors in the public sector. The tool is believed to be distinctive and in a class of its own globally.

The Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) Standards, in particular Standard 1310, requires that the Quality Assurance Improvement Programme consist of both internal and external assessments. By using the newly developed Quality Assurance Self-Assessment Preparation

(QASP) Tool to perform annual self-assessments, it prepares an internal audit function (IAF) for external assessment.

The development of the tool is informed by the results of the Internal Audit Capacity Survey that was carried out from 2016 to 2018, which highlighted a need for a shared quality assurance (QA) service. From this, the proposal to develop a web-based QA self-assessment tool that is premised on the IIA Standards and its Quality Assessment Manual (2016) arose.

What was once an intense manual process, where the

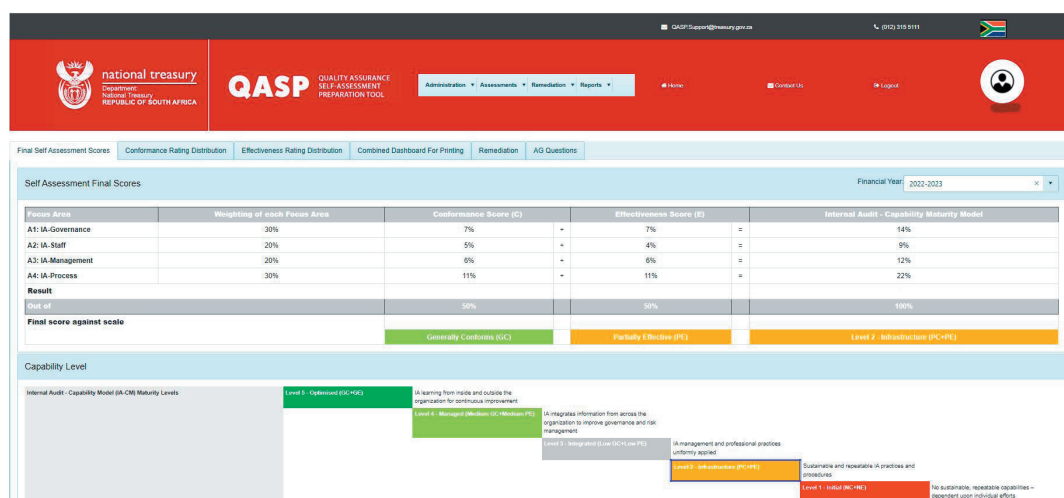
internal assessment was conducted using Microsoft Word or Excel, has now been simplified into an automated web-based tool that is accessible from anywhere. One of the tool's key salient points is that at a click of a button, one can automatically generate reports on transversal issues, repeat findings, and with the main objective, measure the quality and effectiveness of IAFs at a country level or per sphere of government. Such reports are useful to internal audits and their key stakeholders such as senior management and audit committees.

Quality internal audit

According to Zondre Seitei, who managed the project, the purpose of the QASP Tool is to assess the quality and effectiveness of IAFs by allowing them to self-assess the quality of their work against rigorous standards, identify where improvement is needed, and monitor their progress. This is expected to build capacity among public sector internal auditors. Quality internal audit practices assist organisations in meeting their objectives, ultimately leading to improved service delivery. The QASP Tool is developed to accommodate any size IAF.

It provides a standardised platform to measure quality across the public sector. It also adds a level of quality assurance through the introduction of qualified Government Validators (GVs) – internal auditors with expertise in quality assessments. They are only permitted to validate public institutions they do not work for, which reinforces a high level of independence and fosters an ethical climate.

A reference group of expert



internal and external assessors at provincial and national levels, including the Leadership Academy for Guardians of Government (LAGG), established a mutual mandate which proved critical to the tool's development.

The QASP Tool is built on the Microsoft SharePoint platform and its data use and privacy protection is covered by National Treasury and SITA's governing prescripts and systems, ensuring that it conforms to high-security standards. It also has a built-in helpdesk functionality that houses a dashboard to manage queries.

Components

The tool has three key components namely;

- self-assessment, during which gaps in conformance and performance are identified and automatically filtered into a system-generated Remedial Action Plan (RAP);

- monitoring, in which the projected improved targets are set together with a plan of action to address the findings highlighted in the RAP, and progress tracked; and
- reporting, in which useful reports can be generated at all spheres of government, highlighting the areas for improvement.

Apart from the self-assessor conducting the assessment, chief audit executives are involved in reviewing it. GVs are also part of the value chain from the perspective of verifying and confirming if they agree with the self-assessment ratings given.

A valuable element of the QASP Tool is the involvement of such GVs. While internal assessments are done at least annually, an external assessment per the IIA Standard 1312 must be

done at least once every five years by a qualified independent assessor or assessment team.

In designing the tool, the team asked why the external element should wait for five years since a self-assessment can never be fully objective. As a result, the tool has been designed to house a database of GVs, one of whom is nominated at the start of the process to validate an IAF's self-assessment at least once every other year during the five-year period.

In November 2022, National Treasury conducted a two-day hybrid pilot testing and training session in Bloemfontein. Free State provincial departments, Northern Cape and National Treasury IAFs were part of the session. Various other national and provincial departments were also involved as observers in preparation for their participation in Phase 1 of QASP Tool

implementation.

Using dummy data, the training sessions generated valuable feedback that was incorporated into the tool to ensure that it works effectively and as intended.

This was followed by Phase 1 roll out implementation and further training took place with the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Treasury, Departments of Public Works and Infrastructure as well as of Sport, Arts and Culture.

Phases 2 and 3 will be extended to willing national and provincial departments, and public entities during the remainder of 2023.

The project team is enhancing the QASP Tool to incorporate the new global internal audit standards to be introduced in 2024. These enhancements will also include improving the user experience and expectations. ○

Benefits of the QASP Tool:

- Conducts online periodic internal assessments in terms of the IIA Std 1311 (internal assessments).
- Identifies transversal and repeat gaps at country level and per sphere of government that can inform targeted solutions to be developed, including technical guidance materials, frequently asked questions and training solutions).
- Houses a central repository where all supporting evidence and documentation is stored to support assessment outcomes.
- Generates reports at a click of a button.
- Ease of reporting on findings to key stakeholders, such as audit committees
- Builds IA capability in the space of quality internal assessments and can eventually contribute to building external assessor capacity.
- Prepares IA for the external assessment to take place at least once every five years as per the IIA Std 1312 (external assessments).
- Cost and time savings due to automation of 'self-assessment with independent external validation'.
- Database of qualified GVs improves quality of assessments.
- Assists IA in preparing for Auditor-General of South Africa's evaluation of IA by generating an extract of the self-assessment related to their ISA Std 610.

Census 2022: Know the population

Censuses remain the major source on population information, the basis for population denominators for basic health and socio-economic indicators. Population size and composition for all levels of geography at a specified time facilitate effective planning and policy formulation.

South Africa's population is not evenly distributed across provinces and districts, including metropolitan areas and local municipalities. Any population development initiatives are informed by population dynamics, including population size, age-sex structure and composition of a locality as well as other characteristics such as sociocultural and economic circumstances.

According to Census 2022, the population of South Africa grew by 19.8 percentage points between 2011 and 2022, from 51.7 million persons in 2011 to 62

million persons in 2022. This is the largest percentage change in population size since 1996.

Population

The Black African population group constitutes the largest proportion of the South African population at 81.4% followed by coloureds (8.2%), white (7.3%) and Indian/Asian (2.7%). 48.5% of the population is male and 51.5% is female.

Education

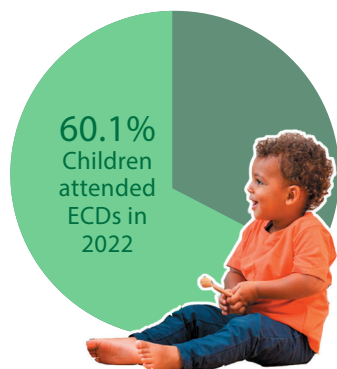
Post-apartheid South Africa was challenged with the difficulty of integrating the previously marginalised and oppressed majority of the population into a new education system. These required extensive reforms through the Reconstruction and Development Programmes, especially targeting the education sector.

Policy makers rely on information on education indicators in the formation and evaluation of such policies. In addition, the education indicators disaggregated by different geographical levels,

including provinces, districts and municipalities are used in funding formulas to distribute public funds to the education sector. Information on enrolment ratios, school dropout rates and trends



Children in ECDs



Western Cape ECD attendance

69.5%

Gauteng ECD attendance

66%



dwelling and access to basic services such as water, sanitation, energy and household assets.

Understanding characteristics of households including size, composition and headship, and location of households is paramount in a population

tion on household characteristics become inevitable. Household's welfare is largely dependent on its headship and such information is largely collected in censuses. Head of household is the person who is the main decision-maker in the household.

Other types of information collected at household level include access to communication services such as the Internet. Information on Internet penetration is required to assist government and other organisations to evaluate access to Internet in various communities and the extent to which it is used as a communication and information channel.

Development

Reacting to the census results, Cabinet said the country has been developing over the course of the last 29 years.

This is in addition to President Cyril Ramaphosa's call

to government departments, policy makers, researchers, civil society organisations and international organisations to use information from Census 2022 to collectively strive to improve people's lives.

"Census 2022 has told us where we are making progress, but it has also laid bare the challenges that remain. It will be an invaluable tool in meeting those challenges.

Access to electricity



46.3%

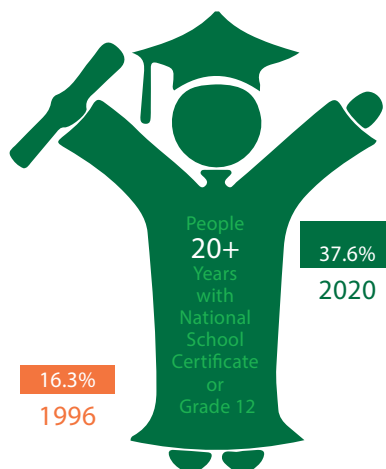
2011

94.7%

2022

We now have the information we need to ensure that as we build this country, we leave no one behind," the President said as he received the results of the count from Statistician-General Risenga Maluleke.

The population and housing census was conducted in February 2022 and provides comprehensive data on population size, demographic trends and other service delivery related information. ○

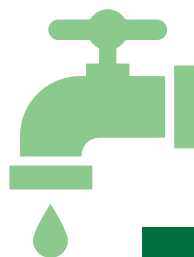


of such indicators form the basis for policy reviews.

Housing living conditions

Information on housing living conditions offers opportunity for planning, resource allocation and policy making. Collected information at a household level provides detailed household living circumstances, including type of housing or

Access to piped water



46.3%

2011

60%

2022

and housing census. In order for government and other role players to address the needs of the population in a given area, accurate and reliable informa-

Fires must be interpreted as metaphors for the challenges we face as a country

I n recent past, we have unfortunately witnessed a series of devastating fires, violent floods, and explosions that have had profound impacts on our nation's history, specifically in KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, Western Cape and North West. These series of distressing incidents have had significant repercussions on various communities and had negative impacts on the economy.

Starting in 2021, there was a surge in looting incidents in both KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng, leaving a trail of destruction in its wake. The looting spread rapidly, impacting businesses, infrastructure, and the livelihoods of countless individuals. The widespread nature of these incidents brought to light some underlying socio-economic issues that

require immediate attention and resolution.

Moreover, the province of KwaZulu-Natal, specifically eThekweni faced another challenging situation in the form of devastating floods in 2022. These floods wreaked havoc, causing mass displacement, destruction of homes, and loss of lives. The affected communities have been struggling to rebuild their lives and recover from the aftermath of this natural disaster.

Continuing the unfortunate sequence of events, we also witnessed the burning of the Parliament building in Cape Town, also in 2022. The Parliament building, not just an ordinary structure but a symbol of our democracy and governance, was tragically engulfed in flames.



The fire not only destroyed a significant architectural landmark but also left a lasting impact on our collective consciousness. The loss was not just physical but also symbolic, reminding us of the fragility of our democratic institutions.

Sadly, the recent events have not ceased. In the first quarter of 2023, Johannesburg experienced a devastating fire that engulfed a prominent building in the city. I am not prophetic but the symbolism behind these events cannot be ignored, as they serve as a stark reminder of the challenges South Africa continues to face. The fire not only inflicted physical damage but also represents the underlying tensions and discontent prevalent in society.

In July 2023, we witnessed a gas implosion in Bree Street, downtown Johannesburg, which claimed lives and destroyed properties. During the month of August, the City of Cape Town experienced unprecedented and violent taxi strikes, which claimed lives of innocent people and destruction of properties.

More tragedies

Again, towards the end of August 2023, we witnessed yet another unfortunate incident –

the Usindiso Building fire. The Usindiso Building, a prominent cultural centre and hub of creativity in Marshalltown, Johannesburg, has been reduced to ashes. This blaze has not only ravaged a renowned structure but also dealt a severe blow to the artistic community, taking away a space that nurtured talent and fostered artistic expression.

Another building in Marshalltown, Johannesburg was also engulfed with fire and fortunately no lives were lost. There are other incidents that were reported from various provinces, cities, and towns, which collectively when you properly deconstruct, communicate a worrying message.

These incidents sent shockwaves through the nation, symbolising the deep-rooted discontent and frustrations that exist within certain segments of society. They serve as a reminder of the pressing need for dialogue, understanding, and collaborative efforts to address the underlying issues that led to such an extreme act.

Moreover, these back-to-back incidents of fire, flood, explosions and destruction have prompted me to write this piece with an attempt to explore the

symbolism attached to these events. The fires, although accidental in nature, can be interpreted as metaphors for the challenges that society face.

This might be true, when you look at the challenges we face, be it load shedding, economic stagnation, crime, gender-based violence, unemployment, corruption, homelessness, inequality, poverty and generally decay across our social fabric. They symbolise the need for resilience, adaptability, and unity in times of adversity.

Recommendation

Considering these events, as a start it is imperative that we come together as citizens, to firstly extend our support and assistance to those affected and bring about normalcy in their livelihoods. We must acknowledge the significance of these events and work towards rebuilding what has been lost. Importantly, we should come together to reflect on the lessons these fires have taught us.

The Commission of Enquiry into Marshalltown Fire that has been announced by Premier Panyaza Lesufi, provides us with a good start, not only to lament on who did not do what, but it will form the baseline and reori-

entate all in paving a collective way forward.

It is also essential to address the root causes of these incidents by engaging in open and honest conversations, seeking effective solutions, and promoting inclusivity and social reforms.

We must recognise that the road to recovery may be long and arduous, but with collective efforts and a commitment to positive change, we can overcome these challenges and build a brighter future for all South Africans. Let us seize this moment as an opportunity to reinforce our commitment to democracy, cultural preservation and community resilience.

In conclusion, I understand that this may require a significant amount of coordination and resources, but I strongly believe that the insights gained from such an event could be invaluable. ○

**Myeza is a town planner by profession and the Chief Executive Officer of the Council for the Built Environment. He is a loyal South African determined to make a difference in the transformation of his beloved post-apartheid country of birth. He writes here as a serving public sector official.*

Growing cyberattacks:

SA needs an integrated approach to protect critical infrastructure



Over the past few years, organisations have seen accelerated waves of digitalisation, digitalisation and digital transformation. State-owned and run organisations, many of which oversee critical infrastructure, are no exception. While this rapid adoption of digital technologies has been crucial to operational efficiency and, ultimately, service delivery, it has also opened new entry points for cybercriminals.

The attack surface has increased, and meanwhile the attacks launched by cybercriminals have grown in frequency,

strength and severity. They are also increasingly targeting critical infrastructure, including healthcare systems, utilities and ports.

And while South Africa is yet to experience a truly devastating attack, it is certainly not immune to one. If the country is to protect its critical infrastructure (some of which is already in a vulnerable state), it needs an integrated approach that brings together various arms of the State and makes use of the latest tactics in both attack prevention and response.

A growing global problem

Cyberattacks targeting infrastructure have become increasingly commonplace. Just within the last few years, several major global powers have seen incredibly disruptive attacks on their critical infrastructure. In 2021, for example, an attack on the United States' (US) Colonial Pipeline (which carries gasoline and jet fuel to much of the Southern Eastern US) caused it to shut down for several days. So big an impact was the shutdown that US President Joe

Biden called a state of emergency, suspending limits on how much petroleum could be transported by road and rail.

In the United Kingdom, meanwhile, an Information Technology supplier to the country's National Health Service fell victim to a ransomware attack in 2022. As a result, several important functions – including patient referrals, ambulance dispatch, out-of-hours appointment bookings, mental health services and emergency prescriptions were affected.

Even smaller players on the

world map are not immune to such attacks. In mid-2022, for instance, Estonia was the victim of its most intense cyberattack since 2007. And in May 2022, a ransomware gang infiltrated the Costa Rican government systems.

Experts agree that in the case of South Africa, as with most countries, it is only a matter of time before the country experiences a highly disruptive attack.

In fact, there have already been several cyber attacks on our shores. For example, a recent report by Interpol indicated that 34% of business email compromise events recorded in the continent were in South Africa.

Integrated defences

But what can the State and private sector players charged with running and maintaining critical infrastructure do to ensure that it is kept as safe as possible? While there are no simple answers, an integrated approach is key.

That starts with policy. If government provides clear direction and makes it clear that cybersecurity is a country-wide responsibility, rather than something to be handled by a single department, everyone is much more likely to move in the same direction. Here, South Africa has already laid a decent

foundation.

The National Cybersecurity Policy Framework, for instance, has been in place since 2015. Led by the Ministry of State Security, its aim is to provide a holistic approach to the promotion of cybersecurity measures by players across South Africa. It is supported by the National Cybersecurity Implementation Plan, which lays out roles and responsibilities, timeframes, specific performance indicators, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

With those frameworks in place, education becomes critical. Remember, 95% of cybersecurity issues can be traced to human error. Social engineering and phishing attacks are powerful tactics for cybercriminals and are used in the vast majority of cyberattacks. Unless people working at all levels across an organisation know what attachments not to open and which links not to click on, there is likely to be exposure.

Beyond that, it is also important to ensure that the relevant cybersecurity skills are developed and retained, particularly within organisations dealing with critical infrastructure. Here too there is work to be done. According to the *2023 Cybersecurity Skills Gap* report, 40% of South African companies struggle to hire and retain

cybersecurity talent. Additionally, 86% indicated that they had experienced more than one cyberattack that could be at least partially attributed to a lack of cybersecurity skills over the past 12 months.

Another area where integration is particularly important is intelligence. If state departments, organisations, and those in the private sector can seamlessly share intelligence around the kinds of threats they face, then building proper defences becomes much easier.

Preparing for the worst

Of course, in a world where cyberattacks should be viewed as a matter of 'when, not if', an integrated response plan is also needed. In the event of a successful cyberattack, organisations need to be able to respond quickly and in a way that gets any affected critical infrastructure back up and running as quickly as possible.

A response plan should clearly lay out key roles and responsibilities for a team drawn from departments across the organisation. The team should also be well drilled in dealing with different event scenarios. Additionally, it should cover everything from how attacks that have been successful are investigated, how vulnerabili-

ties are patched up and how the attack should be communicated to stakeholders.

While each organisation will have its own specific response plan requirements, it is still possible for a broad cross-section of organisations to take an integrated approach and adopt similar best practices.

Taking on a constant, growing threat

Ultimately, cyberattacks are unlikely to decrease in frequency or ferocity in the near future. And in a fraught global socio-political and economic environment, attacks on critical infrastructure are only likely to grow in strength and sophistication. South Africa needs to be aware of that and plan accordingly.

While an integrated approach may not stop every attack, it will prevent many. Moreover, such an approach can also help mitigate the impact of any such attack.

Right now, South Africa has the right building blocks in place for a fully integrated approach, but it should also be clear about the fact that there is more to be done. ○

**Ncube is a Partner in the Public Sector Practice at management consultancy, Oliver Wyman.*

Make-up tips for summer

Those who dislike cold weather are always looking forward to the fun that comes with sunny weather, but the thick heat and humidity that comes with summer can be a bit uncomfortable.

The heat can cause painful sunburns, oily skin, and if you wear make-up there is a risk of being irritated by melting foundation and

smeared mascara. This daunting task does not have to be the norm.

Somatologist Palesa Lobisi gives the following hot weather make-up and beauty tricks that will help you avoid these dilemmas.

"Minimal make-up and pops of colour are in. A natural face is not going anywhere this summer. You can expect a few changes to the fresh face make-up look for a simpler result. Meaning the contour is looking more natural, the brows are softer and fluffier, and the skin is fresh-looking, not dewy to the point of looking like an oily complexion," said Lobisi.

She added that it is important

to use a concealer to minimise any imperfections before applying make-up.

Minimal make-up

Lobisi advises you to embrace a natural look with minimal make-up for a fresh spring appearance.

"People are not using as much foundation as they used to. They are opting for light coverage by using minimal products and make-up with skin care benefits," she explained.

To achieve this, Lobisi recommends the L'oréal Paris true match hyaluronic tinted serum because the hyaluronic acid helps to hydrate and brighten skin, leaving it with a natural and radiant finish.

For the night routine, she recommends maintaining the minimal application of make-up, but being a bit more generous with the highlighter and bronzer to accentuate favourite facial

features and give yourself that night-time glow.

"A wing will not hurt when applying eyeliner for a bolder eye. You can add a little smokiness with a brown shade of eyeshadow to make the eyes pop, but nothing too dark like a grey or black eyeshadow," she said.

She said the evening make-up look is ideal for any night out and it will still have the same light-weight look, but with a bolder and brighter lip to give your face the pop of makeup it needs.

Bold eyebrows

Brows can be emphasised by brushing them to give them a softer and fluffier look. Lobisi advises using your preferred brow liner to fill in some hairs to give your brows a bolder look.

Glossy lips

Lobisi recommends nude glossy lip products to enhance the

* Prices correct at the time of publishing.

R88,95 at Clicks



R106.00 at Clicks



R329.95 at Clicks

youthful spring look.

"The point here is to look as natural as possible. You can go brighter and darker when wearing evening make-up for a bold look," she explained.

Graphic eyes

"Try creative eyeliner styles like graphic wings or floating liner for a trendy twist. For eyeliner, using your bronzer

as an eyeshadow is a great way to achieve this toned-down look," she explained.

To complement your eye lids, Lobisi recommends that you pair your eyeshadow with graphic eyeliner in unexpected hues like purple, green, blue or burgundy.

Lashes

Mascara is still in fashion despite the growing trend of eyelash extensions. A volumising mascara will enhance the look of your eyelashes by giving the illusion of density and length.

"It is a subtle way of making your eyes pop without eyelash extensions. Eyelash extensions can be used for evening make-up to complement the shimmer and boldly winged eyeliner," she explained.

Powder and setting spray can be used to seal make-up in for a longer lasting finish. "Translucent

powder is the best way to go if you want to achieve a minimal matte finish," she said.

Additional tips:

- Drink eight glasses of water daily. Air conditioners and the sun are dehydrating, so it is important to stay hydrated. Remember, a dehydrated body means a dehydrated skin.
- Apply sunscreen all over the body. Regardless of whether you are indoors or outdoors, you are still exposed to ultraviolet rays.
- Remember to cleanse your face in the evenings.
- Change your pillow cases weekly – your skin can get (re) infected by the bacteria on your pillowcase and cause break-outs.
- Get seven to eight hours of sleep to keep you looking and feeling more energised. ○



R57.95 at Clicks

**Lobisi is a qualified and internationally accredited Somatologist with over 10 years' experience, including working on cruise ships as a beauty therapist or skin specialist. She holds a Bachelor of Technology Degree in Somatology from the Central University of Technology and is accredited to work internationally by CIDESCO International. She runs a mobile nails and massage business in Bloemfontein while furthering her studies in Educational Management. For bookings, you can WhatsApp her on 078 133 7610.*



** Prices correct at the time of publishing.*

Chicken Piccata

with string beans in a lemon butter and caper sauce

If you are looking for a recipe that offers a harmonious blend of protein, vegetables and dairy, look no further because Chef Thulani Mathebula will help you prepare a scrumptious Chicken Piccata with string beans in a lemon butter and caper sauce.

Ingredients:

- 1 chicken breast butterflied.
- 20g chicken spice.
- 80g parmesan.
- Half a lemon.
- 50 ml sunflower oil.
- 100g green beans.
- Salt.
- Water.
- 30g capers.
- 50g red onion chopped.

Method:

- Rinse chicken breast and pat dry. Season the chicken breast with spice on both sides then coat the chicken with the parmesan on both sides as well. Press the cheese onto the chicken to ensure a proper coating. Rest the coated chicken in the fridge for 20 minutes.
- Place the water in a pot and boil over medium heat. With a sharp knife, cut the ends of the beans and add the beans and salt to the boiling water.



Photo: Yalamber Limbu on
Unsplash

Cook for 12 minutes and transfer beans to an ice water bath.

- In a saucepan, pour in the oil and pour it out. The aim is to coat the pan with the oil. Gently grill the coated chicken until golden delicious on both sides. Place the chicken in a preheated oven at 160 °C for six minutes.
- For the sauce, gently sauté the onion in butter till translucent. Add the string beans, capers and lemon juice and mix well. Season with salt and pepper. Set aside when ready.
- Using a large flat plate, pool the caper, string bean and butter mix in the middle of the plate and then top with sliced chicken piccata and garnish with extra parmesan.

"The dish features delicate notes of parmesan and lemon, and captures the essence of a light and refreshing summer meal.

"I would pair this dish with a crisp Chenin Blanc, my favourite is Wildekrans Barrel Select," said Mathebula.

Mathebula's love for cooking dates back to his childhood years in Soweto, Gauteng. Whenever there was a family or community

event, he was always drawn to the activity and preparations taking place in the marquees.

"My parents were quite adventurous with food. My father in particular, cooked meals that were unfamiliar by township standards and this awakened an interest in me," he explained.

His first job was in a restaurant cooking strictly vegan and vegetarian food. However, always hungry for knowledge, it was not long before he ventured into more contemporary cooking.

Now with more than 20 years' experience as a chef, Mathebula has never grown tired of the work.

In 2019, he was appointed as the Executive Chef at Truffles on the Park, a casual yet elegant botanical bistro with a proud touch of Africa, located in Mushroom Farm Park in Sandton.

He stays relevant to the industry by following trends, reading books and keeping an eye on his peers.

"I am always driven to create something unique. I am particularly inspired by what is currently in season. We are extremely fortunate in South Africa to have access to an abundance of locally

Co-owner of Truffles on the Park restaurant Carmen Graham and Executive Chef Thulani Mathebula.



produced quality ingredients. I enjoy experimenting with flavours and cooking styles to deliver something bespoke and contemporary," he said.

He added that food presentation is an art form that can elevate a dish's appeal. It is important to consider colour, texture, even the choice of crockery when deciding how to present a finished product.

"If I were to give advice to aspiring chefs, it would be

that you have to love what you do; passion is your shield and your weapon, be prepared for long days and long hours," he said. ○

If you want to tantalise your palates, visit www.trufflesbistro.co.za or email reservations@trufflesbistro.co.za to book a table. You can follow Chef Thulani Mathebula's work on Instagram: @2lanichef.

Thailand and Dubai

perfect destinations for girls' trips



There were 10 of us, mainly friends and friends of friends. Some of us had never met before the trip, but we hit it off like a house on fire. We spent four nights in Thailand and three nights in Dubai.

The trip was everything we had hoped it would be: fun, relaxed,

flexible, adventurous. Did I mention fun?

Thailand

Thailand was such a vibe. We loved everything, especially the fact that the rand is stronger than their currency.

We enjoyed all the touristy

things like boat rides to James Bond Island. We swam, canoed, were drenched in rain but defied it by dancing in it. We knew that September is a wet month before we booked but a friend assured us that the rain is light and no big deal. She was right. If you do not mind a light shower here

and there choose September as it is a more affordable month to travel there.

Bangla Road is the party street. During the day it is a normal street for cars. At 18:00, it is closed to traffic and it turns into one big party...every night!

We loved Illuzion nightclub. It



is ranked number 1 in Phuket and number 13 in the world. It is massive and stunning, with a capacity of 5 000 people. If you are in Thailand go there at least once. Sugar Beach Club across the road is also great, and tends to play more R&B music.

To get a great hotel, book five-star. We booked four-star and got an 'OK' hotel.

We thoroughly enjoyed the abundant massage parlours and could not help going back again and again.

Tuk Tuks were another favourite. They are red little vehicles that are used as taxis. One of my favourite moments on the trip was on our first night. We arrived tired and hungry. We showered, changed and hopped on a Tuk Tuk to Bangla Road. The driver said, "I have Bluetooth if you want to play music". So there we were, nine South African women (the 10th only joined us in Dubai) in the back of a Tuk Tuk dancing to *Sista Betina* and *Mnike*.

Thailand is laid back and tourist friendly. I highly recommend it as a destination.



Dubai

This was my fourth trip to Dubai and I cannot get enough of the city. More than anything, to me it is a living monument to what great leadership can do. Yes, they have the money but many other countries across the world are blessed with natural resources like oil but their citizens remain locked in extreme poverty.

In Dubai a three-star hotel feels like a four star, so wherever you stay, it is new and shiny and top notch.

Again, we did all the touristy things, including the hop-on and hop-off bus tour, the desert safari, camel riding, sandboarding and shopping of course. We took in the magic of the water fountain show and the wonder that is the Burj Khalifa. We were mesmerised by the skyline and hammered by the heat and we loved every moment.

In both countries we felt safe while we were out at night, which is a rare privilege for South African women.

Girls' trips are the spice of life. ○