

PublicSector

MANAGER

DG Mweli

on driving
transformation
in the education
sector

PanSALB calls on government

to uphold language
legislation across all
institutions

SA set to host special WEC Summit in 2027



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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Basic education at the centre of building South Africa's future



Image: Department of Basic Education/Facebook

Basic education lies at the very heart of our national project. Long before the future of our country is debated in boardrooms, Parliament or public

platforms, it is shaped quietly and daily in classrooms across South Africa. It is in our schools that young minds are nurtured, resilience is built, and the foundations

for independence, further learning and meaningful participation in the economy are laid.

Education has always carried a particular weight in our na-

tional story. It has shaped opportunity and social mobility across generations, even as it bears the deep scars of inequality.

Yet it remains the most powerful instrument we have to expand opportunity, restore dignity and strengthen social cohesion.

At the beginning of this year, I had the privilege of releasing the 2025 National Senior Certificate (NSC) results. I reiterated then, as I do now, that the NSC is one of the largest and most complex national undertakings in our democracy – surpassed only by national elections.

Historic NSC milestone

In 2025, more than 900 000 candidates wrote the NSC examinations at approximately 6 000 centres across the country. Over 656 000 learners passed. The national pass rate increased by 0.7 percentage points from 2024, reaching a historic milestone of 88%.

These results tell an important story. They point to a system that is becoming more stable. Participation is improving. Inclusion is expanding. Most importantly, the integrity of the examination system is holding firm.

These are the second NSC results released in South Africa's

new era of multi-party government.

In May 2024, South Africans made a decisive choice: cooperation over division, maturity over instability, shared responsibility over blame. From that choice emerged the Government of National Unity, anchored in a commitment to strengthen institutions, grow the economy and create jobs.

In basic education, we are proving that renewal does not require collapse, and that reform does not require chaos. We can work together, across political and institutional lines, in the national interest.

But raising the bar at Grade 12 places a moral obligation on us to strengthen the foundations of learning. School readiness, early childhood development, reading for meaning by age ten and early numeracy are not optional extras – they are non-negotiables.

Matric not an event

When we speak about the NSC, we must resist the temptation to treat it as a single moment in time. Matric is not an event; it is the outcome of a journey that begins in early childhood and unfolds over more than a decade. Many learners reach this milestone under immense strain: poverty and hunger, unsafe envi-

ronments, long travel distances, language barriers, overcrowded classrooms and uneven access to resources

These realities shape outcomes long before the first examination paper is written. That is why quality and equity in education cannot be separated.

To confront these challenges, we have made a deliberate shift towards strengthening the foundations of learning.

First, we are expanding access to early learning while driving quality and readiness. As early childhood care and education consolidates into the Department of Basic Education, we have placed quality firmly at the

centre of this transition. In 2025, we set an ambitious target to register 10 000 Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres.

We exceeded that goal, registering more than 12 000 centres in a single year. This brings the total number of registered ECD centres to over 33 000, enabling more than a million children to benefit from subsidies that support both nutrition and quality early learning.

To expand access in our rural provinces, we established an outcomes-based education fund. Through this mechanism, we are investing R496 million to expand safe, quality early learning and to create over 100 000

new learner spaces in Limpopo, the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal.

We have now set a new target to create 250 000 additional ECD spaces by next year.

Language matters

Second, we are strengthening early grade reading through evidence-based interventions. In November 2025, we released the first-ever *Funda Uphumelele National Survey*, providing critical insight into where reading development breaks down and why language matters so profoundly in learning.

In response, we are expanding Mother Tongue-based Bilingual



South Africa's top matric learners for 2025.

Image: Department of Basic Education/Facebook

Education. In the same month, South Africa conducted its first bilingual Grade 4 assessments in Mathematics and Natural Science – a significant step towards more inclusive, effective and context-responsive learning.

Third, we are improving the tools and conditions for learning in the Foundation Phase. We are finalising an updated National Catalogue of Learning and Teaching Support Materials for Grades 1 to 3, strengthening last-mile delivery, and defining a core package of “non-negotiables” that every Foundation Phase classroom must have.

For the first time in over two decades, we have launched a review of the post provisioning formula to ensure that the allocation of teaching posts reflects today's realities – including overcrowding, curriculum demands and the expansion of early learning.

With Grade R now compulsory, we are continuing to expand access while improving quality, particularly in poor and rural communities. We are currently upskilling 7 000 Grade R practitioners through a joint project with the University of South Africa, backing our policy commitments with real investment.

Our focus on foundational learning is also gaining international recognition. South Africa's efforts to establish an IBSA Network for Quality Foundational



Basic Education Minister Siviwe Gwarube announces the 2025 matric results.

Learning have been endorsed by the Heads of State of India, Brazil and South Africa.

Fourth, we are strengthening teacher development in practical ways that protect learning time, including prioritising Foundation Phase student-teachers through the Funza Lushaka bursary programme.

Child well-being and safety

Finally, we are treating child well-being and safety as a core pillar of learning. Children cannot learn when they are hungry, unsafe or traumatised. We are strengthening the National School Nutrition Programme, improving accountability, procurement and monitoring, and piloting an ECD nutrition programme to address child stunting caused by malnutrition. In June 2025, we strengthened

the School Safety Protocol in partnership with the South African Police Service. Together with provincial MECs, we have also launched an Anti-Bullying Campaign to intensify prevention, reporting and response at school level.

This year, we will finalise the review of *White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education*, ensuring that learning barriers are identified early and that support reaches learners where vulnerability is greatest.

Our system serves approximately 13.5 million learners, supported by more than 460 000 educators, across nearly 25 000 schools, coordinated through hundreds of circuit offices, 75 education districts and nine provincial departments.

While we rightly celebrate the achievements of the Matric

Class of 2025, it is deeply painful that, only weeks later, we were confronted with tragic incidents involving scholar transport that claimed the lives of innocent children.

I, therefore, appeal to all motorists to exercise extreme caution, particularly during peak school transport hours, and reiterate the responsibility of all operators to ensure the safety and roadworthiness of vehicles transporting learners. We cannot be satisfied with simply keeping the system running while its deepest challenges persist.

We must continue on a new course for basic education – one rooted in evidence, equity and a relentless focus on what matters most: quality teaching and meaningful learning for every child, in every classroom, every day. ♦



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MEDIA ADVISORY

2026 BUDGET TIPS – MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

The Minister of Finance, Mr Enoch Godongwana, invites South Africans to share their suggestions on the 2026 Budget.

Minister Godongwana will deliver the National Budget Speech on 25 February 2026. The budget allocation aims to strike a balance between growing the economy and supporting the vulnerable amid limited resources. People may submit views on:

- government spending priorities
- addressing a large budget deficit
- stabilising State-Owned Entity finances
- energy and water investments
- tax policies
- debt sustainability
- municipal finances
- any other economy-related topics

Minister Godongwana looks forward to your contributions.

Submissions can be sent to the National Treasury using this link: [Budget Tips](#). **Please keep contributions concise and to the point, not longer than 300 words.**

Tag us on our social media accounts using the hashtag #TipsForMinFin and #Budget2026:

X - Treasury_RSA

LinkedIn - National Treasury RSA

Tik Tok - @TreasuryRSA

Facebook - National Treasury RSA

Closing date for submissions: 16 February 2026

Issued by Ministry of Finance

Date: 20 January 2026

Ensuring no one is left behind: Language as a bridge to opportunity and participation

We begin this year by celebrating a major milestone in education: the Matric Class of 2026 achieved a historic 88% pass

rate – a milestone that reflects the collective effort of our educators, learners and families. This success reminds us that when teaching is effective and learning is meaningful, our young people thrive. Government remains committed to strengthening the quality of education and ensuring that every learner is equipped for a future that works.

One proven approach to strengthening education is teaching children in languages they understand. Research shows that that home language instruction in the early grades lays the strongest foundation for learning and that mother tongue education is integral to long term academic success.

As we ob-

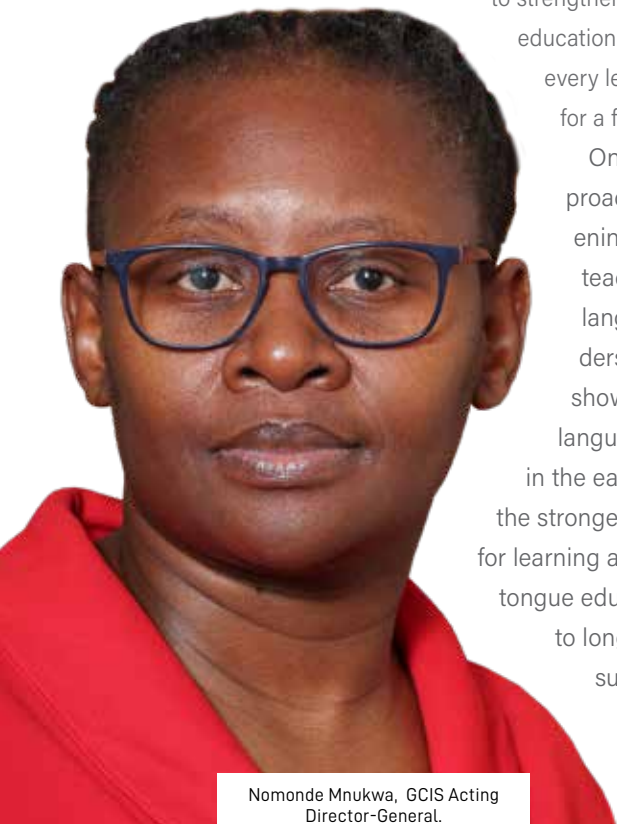
serve International Mother Tongue Day on 21 February, we are reminded of the vital role language plays in promoting equality in South Africa. Our country's diversity is reflected in its 12 official languages, all of which enjoy equal status under Section 6 of the Constitution. Upholding this constitutional commitment is both a legal duty and a moral imperative.

Language is also fundamental to how government delivers services, engages communities, and ensures meaningful participation in our democracy. As public servants, we carry a clear responsibility to advance multilingualism and to remove linguistic barriers that undermine access to services and information. Section 6 of the Constitution further obliges the State to take "practical and positive measures" to elevate

and advance indigenous languages, including the South African Sign Language.

This obligation is reinforced using the Official Languages Act, 2012 (Act 12 of 2012), which requires national departments, public entities and state-owned enterprises to develop and implement language policies that promote multilingualism and equitable access to information. This means that government communication must be accessible, inclusive and reflective of the linguistic realities of our communities.

The Pan South African Language Board, an independent statutory body, plays a critical role in advancing this agenda. Through its mandate to promote multilingualism, develop the country's official languages and conduct research across all official languages, as well



Nomonde Mnukwa, GCIS Acting Director-General.



as Khoe and San, PanSALB reinforces a fundamental truth: language rights are human rights.

Government continues to deepen its focus on language in education. Evidence consistently shows that children learn best when taught in their home language during the foundational years. The Department of Basic Education's Mother Tongue-Based Bilingual Education programme is strengthening this approach by extending home language instruction beyond Grade 3 and introducing a late exit bilingual model from Grade 4. This ensures learners continue using their home languages as languages of learning and teaching, especially in Mathematics and Natural Sciences, where conceptual clarity is strongly linked to language.

A 2025 systematic review

of select South African pilot schools confirmed that mother tongue bilingual education improves literacy, cognitive development and overall academic performance; especially when teachers use translanguaging strategies that draw on learners' full linguistic resources. DBE assessment data also show widening performance gaps after Grade 4, with learners who have African home languages scoring on average 32%, compared to 69% among English and Afrikaans home language learners. These gaps become increasingly difficult to close by Grade 6, highlighting the importance of sustained home language instruction.

Language is also central to effective public administration. When citizens can access information in languages they understand, compliance improves,

processes are better understood and trust in public institutions is strengthened.

This becomes even more critical as we prepare for the 2026/27 Local Government Elections. As the sphere of government closest to the people, local authorities must ensure that voter education, registration materials and electoral information are available in all official languages. Accessible communication strengthens participation and, ultimately, our democracy.

As leaders and decision makers in the public sector, we must now intensify our efforts to comply with the Use of Official Languages Act of 2012 by:

- ◉ ensuring language policies are updated, implemented and actively monitored.
- ◉ making information available in at least three official

languages, as required by the Act.

- ◉ embedding multilingualism across service delivery, including frontline offices and digital platforms.
- ◉ reporting annually on the implementation of language policies and progress achieved.
- ◉ prioritising community engagement in the languages spoken within specific localities.

By taking these steps, we can build a public service that is inclusive, people-centred and responsive – a public service where language enables access rather than creating barriers. Let us use the power of language to bring government closer to every community we serve. ❖

Cathsseta embraces the need for change in sector training

As South Africa's economy evolves, so too must the skills that drive it. Few sectors reflect this transformation more clearly than those under the Culture, Arts, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport Sector Education and Training Authority (Cathsseta).

Cathsseta is one of 21 Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) established under the Skills Development Act of 1998 and is tasked with nurturing talent across some of the country's most dynamic industries.

In an interview with *Public Sector Manager* magazine, Cathsseta Chief Executive Officer Marks Thibela revealed that the training authority is embracing change and strengthening its training and development focus to ensure that South Africans are Cathsseta presides over six diverse subsectors that play a vital role in employment and economic growth.

"We preside over six subsectors, the highest being hospitality and it pays us up to 65% in levies, followed by tourism and travel services at 12%, sport recreation and fitness at 9%, arts, culture and heritage at 7%, conservation at 5%, and the remainder from gaming."

Mandate

Thibela explained that the SETA's mandate is threefold: "we develop sector skills plans, facilitate the development of qualifications and implement learning programmes."

These efforts are guided by frameworks issued by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) to ensure that SETAs remain responsive to industry needs and policy direction.

Cathsseta CEO Marks Thibela.

Photo: Cathsseta/Facebook



Cathsseta-funded graduates from the Chef Artisan Programme.

Sector Skills Plans

For one to say they are developing sector skills plans, Thibela believes that they need to get levy-paying employers.

"Within our sector, we are sitting with around 40 000 constituent members, of which only 17 000 pay the skills levies. The rest are small enterprises that do not have a payroll exceeding R500 000," he explained.

The Skills Development Levies Act of 1998 requires employers with a payroll of more than R500 000 to contribute 1% of that amount to the South African Revenue Service (SARS).

"SARS takes 2% for administration purposes, the National Skills Fund receives 18%, and

the Seta keeps the remaining 80%. About 20% of the 80% goes towards mandatory grants," Thibela explained.

Skills mismatch

While the system provides a clear funding model, Thibela said that SETA's face a major challenge of ensuring that training aligns with market needs. He added that currently, the skills mismatch is a big issue. SETA's are training on courses that are not demanded by employers," he admitted.

"The challenge we are sitting with is that employers are not submitting their workplace skills plans. Out of the 17 000 employers that pay us, only about 2 000 are submitting the

plans, resulting in a skewed picture because we have a legal requirement to produce annual plans."

Cathsseta compensates for this data gap through in-house research. Thibela said out of the 2 000 plans, one employer may allege that they are struggling to employ a lodge manager, which becomes a critical skill that skews the overall picture.

"To address this, we recently conducted research studies across all six subsectors"

New and evolving skills

Thibela quoted a recent study by North West University, which he said uncovered new

and evolving skills needs within the conservation sector.

"The research found that there was a need for AI, geographical information systems, digital engagement and social media coordination, technology training, conservation coordination, wildlife monitoring systems and online reservations management," he explained.

He added that there was also a growing need for social-ecological integration officers to ensure that communities are involved in conservation efforts, as well as roles requiring resource planning, monitoring and digital literacy.

"What really surprised us," he noted, "was when human resource (HR) management

“The challenge we are sitting with is that employers are not submitting their workplace skills plans. Out of the 17 000 employers that pay us, only about 2 000 are submitting the plans, resulting in a skewed picture because we have a legal requirement to produce annual plans”

came out as a critical need. We discovered that many people in the conservation sector started as farmers and later converted their land into conservation areas. These individuals have never managed people before, but now they are running operations that require HR skills to deal with issues like discipline, wellness and staff retention”

Adapting to change

Thibela explained that the focus of SETA's has shifted since their inception. This is because when they started, the main focus was to look at the employed, because the money comes from the employers. However, due to socio-economic challenges in the country, SETA's were redirected to fund the unemployed.

“That is where you see us ramping up training, which is

now criticised for not addressing industry needs. The needs are not coming from the industry as we request. We need stronger collaboration from employers in identifying skills gaps,” he explained.

Once Cathsseta develops its Sector Skills Plan, it works with employers and training providers to channel discretionary grants into priority areas. It also develops qualifications from NQF level 1 to 8.

“We stop at NQF level 8 because SETA's sit on one side of the national qualifications framework while universities sit on the academic side. We develop occupationally based qualifications,” Thibela said.

The authority is currently updating its qualifications to reflect industry realities and the process is expected to end in June.

He urged employers under the SETA to play their part by providing information on relevant qualifications and the relevant NQF levels for those qualifications.

Employment creation

Thibela said Cathsseta is now placing greater emphasis on working with partners that contribute to job creation.

“We are looking for projects that have a high impact. When a partner comes to us and says they want to collaborate, we ask a simple question: how many permanent jobs will you create?” he said giving an example of SANParks, which has committed to creating employment and entrepreneurship programmes.

“The partnership we entered into has guaranteed employ-

ment for a specific number of people. We have also built strong ties with the private sector. We have entered into a partnership with McDonald's South Africa to train 1 300 learners, of which 80% will be absorbed into permanent employment,” Thibela noted.

Through forward-looking research, modernised qualifications, and high-impact partnerships, Cathsseta is positioning itself as a driver of transformation and opportunity.

“Our goal is to ensure that the people we train are employable, that the qualifications we offer remain relevant, and that every partnership we forge contributes meaningfully to job creation and sector growth. That is how we embrace change – by preparing South Africans for the skills of tomorrow, today,” he concluded. ♦



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FACT SHEET

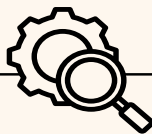
MEDIA BRIEFING ON GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE MTDP

23 January 2026

PURPOSE OF THE BRIEFING

Cabinet mandated an in-depth public engagement on the Medium-Term Development Plan (MTDP) Bi-Annual Monitoring Reports to enhance transparency on government performance, implementation progress, delivery constraints and corrective actions. This briefing forms part of government's commitment to evidence-based planning, accountability and continuous improvement in service delivery.

APRIL 2025



SEPT 2025

MONITORING PERIOD

This fact sheet reflects findings from the MTDP Bi-Annual Monitoring Reports covering the period April to September 2025. The review assesses implementation progress, performance trends, delivery challenges and corrective actions across MTDP priorities and Cabinet clusters.



WHAT IS THE MTDP?

The Medium-Term Development Plan (2024–2029) is government's implementation framework aligned to the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 and the agreed priorities of the Government of National Unity. It guides service delivery, reform coordination and performance monitoring across national, provincial and local government.

OVERALL MTDP PERFORMANCE SNAPSHOT

Monitoring results indicate measurable progress across several priority areas, alongside persistent structural constraints that continue to affect the pace and scale of delivery.

The MTDP monitoring process focuses on:



Outcomes
and impact



Implementation
performance and
trends



Delivery
constraints
and risks



Corrective
actions and reform
coordination

A NATION THAT WORKS FOR ALL



@DpmeOfficial

#DpmeAtWork

Professor Nnenesi Kgabi's vision to elevate the NSTF by bridging science and policy



Photo: Supplied

Professor Nnenesi Kgabi.

When Professor Nnenesi Kgabi stepped into the role of Chairperson of the National Science and Technology Forum (NSTF), she brought with her a clear sense of purpose and continuity. Appointed in November 2025, for a term running until October 2028, Kgabi is focused on strengthening the organisation's relevance by deepening member engagement and extending its reach across all nine provinces and sectors of South African society.

She describes her appointment as a bridge between strategic cycles, linking the current 2022-2027 framework with the next phase from 2028 to 2032 – positioning the NSTF to build on its achievements while preparing for a new era of national impact.

"My intention is not to work alone in this important role, thus working jointly and in collaboration with the NSTF board and executive committee," she said.

Ultimately, her goal is to build on the development of a new strategy

that will propel the NSTF to be an engaged, relevant and impactful organisation.

Strategic partnerships

Speaking to *Public Sector Manager* magazine, Kgabi said the strategy is designed to strengthen collaboration across government, industry, academia, professional societies and civil society. Through these partnerships, the NSTF aims to advance South Africa's science, engineering, technology and innovation (SETI) sector, while accelerating the implementation of solutions that support inclusive socio-economic growth.

"Overall, I intend to improve the reach, relevance, visibility and impact of the NSTF in South Africa," she explained.

South Africa is well aware of the critical role that SETI plays in the country's socio-economic advancement. The challenge, Kgabi notes, is not a lack of strategies or development plans to address persistent social and economic challenges.



Rather, she argues, there is a pressing need for committed, purpose-driven organisations that can bridge the gap between policy and implementation.

In this context, Kgabi believes the NSTF must be strategically positioned to serve as a catalyst for accountable SETI implementation – driving socio-economic development while supporting and strengthening existing national initiatives.

Background

A seasoned scientist, Kgabi holds a PhD in Environmental Sciences from North-West University and currently serves as Chief Director of Research and Postgraduate Support at the institution.

Her career reflects a rare blend of scientific rigour, leadership and governance across

academia and the public sector.

In addition to her scientific training, she holds a Master of Administration in Evangelical and Charismatic Studies from the University of Birmingham, as well as a Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration from Wits University – qualifications that underpin her multidisciplinary approach to leadership.

Kgabi also plays an influential role across several regional and national bodies. She is Chairperson of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) WaterNet Board, Vice President for Research Management within the executive committee of the Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association, and Chairperson of the Human Resources Committee of the Water Research Commission

Board. She further serves on the South African Bureau of Standards Technical Committee on Research Management.

Her international standing is reflected in her work with the Swiss Programme for International Research by Scientific Investigation Teams under the Swiss National Science Foundation, as well as her role as a merit reviewer for the United States National Science Foundation.

Increasing the scope

Excited about her new role at the NSTF, Kgabi highlighted the organisation's impact on learners across the country, particularly through initiatives such as the Brilliants and Share 'n Dare programmes, which aim to inspire the next generation of scientists, engineers and innovators.

"Most academics and professionals also participate in the NSTF discussion forums. The professionals involved in the member organisations also have the opportunity to share their insights on NSTF platforms.

These initiatives are well known and appreciated, however, we need to strengthen the innovation awareness, reach and impact for communities in the predominantly rural communities," she said.

Career accomplishments

Highlighting her career accomplishments, Kgabi points to a research trajectory marked by notable awards and active participation in programmes under the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) from the early 2000s through 2018.

These include her involvement in the UNESCO/Regional Office for Science and Technology in Europe International Union of Pure and Applied Physics programme, followed by participation in the UNESCO/African Network for Scientific and Technological Institutions. Her work later extended to the TWAS–UNESCO Associate Scheme of the World Academy of Sciences for the Advancement of Science in Developing Countries, and

the UNESCO Chair in Sustainable Water Research for Climate Adaptation in Arid Environments. This trajectory also led to her role in the UNESCO Brilliant Minds – Sustainable Solutions programme.

Her participation in regional and international research missions is another highlight of her distinguished career. This includes the Eighth African Roundtable on Sustainable Consumption and Production in 2014, the Sea Earth Atmosphere Linkages Study in Southern Africa in October 2015, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration-Observations of Aerosols above Clouds and their Interactions mission in 2016, and the Aerosol, Radiation and Clouds in Southern Africa project in 2017. These missions reflect her hands-on engagement with critical environmental and atmospheric research on both regional and global scales.

In her leadership journey, Kgabi has contributed extensively to both national and regional scientific communities. She served as a member of the Applied and Industrial Physics Interest Group of the South African Institute of Physics (SAIP) from 2003 to 2009. In 2005, she was nominated by SAIP as Team Leader of the South African delegation to the Second International Union of Pure and Applied Physics Conference on Women in Physics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. This role led to her membership on the national Working Group on Women in Physics in South Africa, a SAIP committee, where she served from 2005 to 2009.

She also served as a SADC Expert, providing technical support to the SA-European Union (EU) Dialogue Facility on the impact of COVID-19 on the EU and SADC Water Research Agendas. More recently, she

served as Regional Focal Point for Africa in the World Association of Industrial and Technological Research Organisations from 2021 to March 2023.

Fighting a climate change

Kgabi believes that the South African research community has made significant strides in climate change research and advanced nexus studies. However, she points out persistent gaps; both between research and policy development, and between policy and implementation; that need to be addressed to translate scientific knowledge into tangible socio-economic impact.

“Most research results are confined to journals and book chapters, and never get to be translated to inform policy or solutions that can be implemented at sector or community level,” she said.

“The fight against climate change does not only require a nexus research approach, it calls for multisectoral and multi-stakeholder implementation approach,” she added.

National service

Her message to public servants and the broader public is clear: the success of a nation relies not only on sound policies but also on the dedication and commitment of those tasked with implementing them, public servants and citizens alike. ♦

“My intention is not to work alone in this important role, thus working jointly and in collaboration with the NSTF board and executive committee.”





PRIORITY 1: INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH & JOB CREATION

Economic recovery is underway, supported by stabilising macroeconomic conditions and structural reforms. However, growth remains uneven and below the level required to significantly reduce unemployment.

Key Progress

- 248,000 jobs added in Q3 2025.
- The private sector accounted for 73.7% of Gross Fixed Capital Formation.
- A primary budget surplus was achieved.
- Infrastructure-led growth remains a central pillar of the economic recovery strategy.

Key Challenges

- Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth projected at 1.1% for 2025, insufficient to reverse unemployment trends.
- Youth unemployment remains critically high at 58.5%.
- Business confidence remains subdued due to logistics inefficiencies, high operating costs and energy-related risks.



INFRASTRUCTURE & INVESTMENT

Government continues to prioritise infrastructure investment to stimulate growth, crowd in private capital and improve service delivery.

Key Progress

- R1.03 trillion in public-sector infrastructure spending projected over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework.
- 26 infrastructure projects approved under the Infrastructure Fund, valued at R101.6 billion.
- State-owned entity investment focused on energy, water and transport infrastructure.

Key Challenges

- Municipal capacity constraints, procurement delays and maintenance backlogs slow project implementation.
- High municipal debt levels (R94.6 billion as at March 2025) pose risks to infrastructure sustainability.
- Grid expansion delays threaten future energy security despite recent improvements.



PRIORITY 2: REDUCING POVERTY & LOWERING THE COST OF LIVING

Social protection remains a critical stabiliser for households amid slow economic recovery, while poverty and inequality continue to present structural challenges.

Key Progress

- 19.2 million permanent social grant beneficiaries supported.
- 452,302 individuals benefited from food and nutrition support programmes.
- 120,935 victims of gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) received psychosocial support.

Key Challenges

- Poverty and inequality remain elevated, with a Gini coefficient of 0.63.
- Poverty reduction gains achieved prior to 2011 were reversed by COVID-19, energy constraints and slow growth.
- Administered prices and household cost pressures continue to affect vulnerable households.



Professor Shahida Moosa.

Leading genomics from Africa:

Professor Shahida Moosa's mission to transform medicine

Professor Shahida Moosa is at the forefront of a quiet revolution in medicine – one led from Africa and shaped by African realities. A clinician-scientist and medical genomicist, she has built a career on the conviction

that genomics research driven on the continent can redefine global science while delivering more equitable, life-changing healthcare in Africa.

As the Head of Medical Genetics at Tygerberg Hospital and Professor

for Medical Genetics at Stellenbosch University (SU), Moosa's work sits at the interface of clinical care, cutting-edge genomics research, education and health policy, with a strong focus on ensuring



that advances in genomic and precision medicine are accessible, relevant and equitable for African populations.

“I chose a career in medical genetics because it sits at the intersection of patient care, science and education. It allows me to serve African patients and students in a way that is both clinically meaningful and transformative,” she explained.

Early in her career, Moosa witnessed firsthand the life-changing power of genomic medicine; its ability to end long diagnostic odysseys, guide more precise treatment and offer families not only answers, but clarity and dignity.

System weaknesses

Concurrently, she became deeply aware of a stark imbalance: African patients were systematically underrepresented in genomic research and that the health system in the continent had limited access to these powerful tools.

“Patients I was seeing in the clinic did not have access to the same diagnostic and therapeutic tools which their counterparts abroad had access to. This struck me as

extremely unfair and I made a commitment to do my part to right this inequity,” she reflected.

Many of her patients face complex, lifelong conditions in under-resourced settings, yet Moosa is unequivocal that they deserve the same standard of precision care as patients anywhere in the world.

Through her expertise in genomics, she delivers holistic, person-centred care that integrates clinical insight, biological understanding and psychosocial support.

A unique approach

Trained internationally as a clinician-scientist and medical genomicist, Moosa brings extensive expertise in clinical genomics, bioinformatics, molecular biology and molecular genomics to her leadership of the Rare Disease Genomics in South Africa research group.

This integrated approach allows her to combine patient care, research and teaching in ways that directly strengthen African health systems while empowering students and young researchers to become leaders.

After completing her specialty training at Wits

University, she went on to earn a PhD in human genetics and genomics at the University of Cologne in Germany, graduating summa cum laude, followed by a postdoctoral fellowship at Harvard Medical School and Boston Children's Hospital.

Paying it forward

Training abroad to gain expertise that was not available locally at the time shaped her determination to ensure that the next generation of African scientists and clinicians can access world-class genomics education without leaving the continent – enabling them to build careers at home while serving their own communities.

Academically, her work focuses on rare diseases, inherited cancers, and complex phenotypes, integrating genomic and multi-omic approaches with clinical medicine, bioinformatics, qualitative research, and health economics.

She leads and coordinates large multidisciplinary and multi-institutional programmes, including Genomics for Health in Africa (GHA), a first of its kind in sub-Saharan Africa, which aims to provide diagnoses to millions of Africans

living with undiagnosed rare diseases and familial cancers, leveraging the power of the African genome for precision health in Africa.

Awards and achievements

In 2025, Moosa won the NSTF-SAMRC Clinician-Scientist Award for her leadership and coordination of the GHA programme, an achievement that is deeply meaningful to her because it recognises not only individual scientific output, but the integration of clinical care, research leadership, and capacity building in a South African context.

Behind this recognition is many years of sustained and often invisible work for Moosa, which includes building teams, aligning diverse stakeholders and creating systems that allow genomics to function within real clinical environments.

“My leadership of the GHA programme has required extensive coordination across disciplines, including clinical genetics, oncology, pathology, bioinformatics, ethics, health economics, and policy.

It has also involved forging partnerships between universities, laboratories, health departments, and international

collaborators, while ensuring that African priorities and leadership remain central," Moosa reflected.

She co-leads the newly established Africa/European Union Cluster of Research Excellence, the GHA programme. For her, creating and leading the Undiagnosed Disease Programme, which later evolved into GHA remains the highlight of her career.

Showcasing African capabilities

She added that the award also reflects a long-term commitment to building African genomic capacity, rather than exporting samples or talent.

"Through GHA, we are demonstrating that precision medicine can be designed, led and implemented from Africa, for Africa, by Africans, while contributing meaningfully to global science," she said.

As Head of Medical Genetics at Tygerberg Hospital, she leads a team of medical geneticists, genetic counsellors and genetic counselling interns to provide holistic academic clinical care to patients and

families with suspected genetic conditions.

"Our team also provides professional training across the hospital and our referral centres. Every day of the week is different, with outpatient clinics and inpatient referrals.

We have very busy prenatal genetic clinics on Mondays and Tuesdays, where we see pregnant women and their fetuses for assessments and counselling.

"Wednesday is our paediatric outpatient clinic, and Thursdays and Fridays we

run various multi-disciplinary clinics and outreach clinics to Worcester and Paarl hospitals.

In between, we also see ward patients and run a very busy oncology service for patients with suspected inherited cancers," she explained.

Women empowerment

In addition to her clinical work, Moosa also runs an all-female, multidisciplinary research group, where she hosts postdoctoral fellows and postgraduate students

who work on genomics, bioinformatics, qualitative aspects of rare diseases and health economics.

"Our mission and vision are to integrate research in all areas related to genomics into routine clinical care and to impact patients and families positively. This includes looking after their emotional needs and mental health challenges," she said.

Furthermore, Moosa has been awarded a C2 National Research Foundation (NRF) rating in recognition of her status as an independent researcher and is the only Medical Geneticist in South Africa with an NRF rating, which is a highly competitive, independent evaluation of a researcher's standing and impact within the global scientific community, based on sustained research outputs, international peer recognition, and scholarly leadership.

The rating widely regarded as a benchmark of research excellence in South Africa, plays a key role in shaping national research priorities, funding decisions and institutional prestige. ♦



Professor Moosa's work in genomics is providing life-changing diagnoses and care for people living with rare diseases in Africa.



SOCIAL SECTOR PERFORMANCE

Health, education and human settlements remain central to improving quality of life, though capacity and infrastructure gaps persist.

Key Progress

- 6,143,443 of the 7,790,877 people who know their HIV status (79%) accessed Antiretroviral Treatment (ART); Tuberculosis (TB) treatment success improved to 76.8%.
- The sector registered 12 000 ECD centres, exceeding the 2025 target 10,000 ECD centres.
- 17,028 housing units delivered and 12 623 serviced sites completed.

Key Challenges

- ART coverage remains below target at 79% against the target of 95%.
- Most registered ECD centres are at Bronze level, meeting only the minimum requirements.
- Declining Grade 12 mathematics enrolment threatens long-term skills development.
- Housing delivery remains constrained relative to demand, with over 2 million households on the national housing waiting list.



PRIORITY 3: A CAPABLE, ETHICAL & DEVELOPMENTAL STATE

Strengthening state capability is central to improving service delivery, restoring public confidence and ensuring effective MTDP implementation.

Key Progress

- MTDP-aligned Annual Performance Plans assessed and feedback issued ahead of Parliamentary tabling.
- Framework for Professionalisation is being implemented
- 93% compliance achieved on lifestyle audits for senior managers..

Key Challenges

- Increase in number of municipalities in financial distress.
- 34% of municipalities adopted unfunded 2025/26 budgets.
- Persistent under-expenditure on infrastructure grants undermines service delivery outcomes.



DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Digital reform is emerging as a key enabler of a capable, responsive and integrated state.

Key Progress

- MyMzansi citizen platform prototype launched.
- MzansiXchange information-sharing pilot underway.
- Digital ID reforms progressing.
- Improvements underway in South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) payment systems.

Key Challenges

- Uneven digital capacity across departments and spheres of government.
- Cybersecurity, data governance and digital skills gaps remain risks.

From the classroom to the nation: Mwel's unwavering mission to build South Africa through education

Basic Education DG Mwel gives a motivational talk to learners in Vhembe District, Limpopo

Photo: Litha Communications

As the nation applauds the historic accomplishments of the Matric Class of 2025, *Public Sector Manager* magazine sits down with Basic Education Director-General (DG) Hubert Mathanzima Mwel, one of the key leaders driving transformation in South Africa's schools. For Mwel, education

is far more than a government portfolio; it is the foundation on which the country's future is built.

His journey from a rural upbringing and classroom teaching to national leadership reflects a lifelong commitment to service, transformation and the firm conviction that educa-

tion remains the country's most powerful investment in social cohesion, economic growth and nation-building.

Raised in North West, Mwel's roots can be traced to Makwassie, a small town shaped by migration, perseverance and strong community values. He kick-started his career in 1991,

as a post-level one educator at Bophirima High School.

Teaching on the eve of South Africa's democratic transition exposed him to both the deep inequalities embedded within the education system and the immense potential of young people when given access to quality education.



Photo: Department of Basic Education | Facebook

Young learners arriving at school.

The classroom, he has often reflected, grounded his understanding that policy and leadership only have meaning when they translate into improved teaching practices and better learning outcomes for learners.

Building a strong foundation

In 1994, Mweliso transitioned into provincial administration in the North West. He was tasked with establishing a school governance and management unit, placing him at the centre of post-apartheid education reform. In this role, he contributed to the development of organisation governance and funding of schools, which later informed the legislation that reshaped school governance, strengthened accountability and expanded parental and community involvement across the education system.

Professional journey

His career spanned quality assurance roles as an external evaluator and senior management positions across government. This included a brief but formative tenure as Director: Human Resources at the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture, where he gained additional exposure to labour relations, organisational development and public sector finance.

He later returned to the North West Department of Education, where he served as Chief Director of the Southern Region during a complex period of cross-boundary municipal restructuring. He subsequently moved to the provincial head office and was eventually appointed Head of Department.

"It was an emotional and affirming experience. Addressing a R1.2-billion deficit and earning recognition for improved gov-

ernance confirmed that when systems are stabilised, educators and learners are empowered to succeed," Mweliso said.

In 2010, Mweliso was called to national service in the Eastern Cape as part of the Section 100(1)(b) administration intervention. "It was widely regarded as one of the most challenging assignments in public education, and it sharpened my understanding of systemic reform accountability and the urgent need to stabilise learning environments in under resourced and historically disadvantaged provinces," Mweliso said.

Leading the country's basic education

He later returned to national office to head the Curriculum Branch and, in August 2015, he was appointed DG of the Department of Basic Educa-

tion, assuming responsibility for steering one of the country's most critical social sectors.

At the core of his leadership is a firm belief in the strength of South Africa's curriculum. These views are supported by international benchmarking studies conducted by Umalusi, with global education experts confirming that the curriculum is globally competitive in both design and assessment.

The DG also challenges outdated perceptions about teacher capacity, "South Africa has made significant progress in building a cohort of well-qualified educators across key subjects such as mathematics and science, supported by universities ranked among the best in the world," Mweliso said.

The future

Looking ahead, Mweliso highlights the introduction of new techni-



A computer lab at Rusthof LSEN School in Onverwacht, Cape Town

Photo: Department of Basic Education | Facebook



Photo: Department of Basic Education | Facebook

A young learner practices her reading.

cal and specialised subjects, including technical mathematics and sciences, electronics and maritime studies as critical to aligning education with future

skills demands and economic transformation. While fiscal constraints and ongoing austerity measures limit rapid expansion, he remains resolute that

education must be treated as a long-term investment rather than a cost.

Importance of mother tongue

Mweli emphasises that language continues to be a significant challenge, with many learners studying in a language that is not their mother tongue.

"More than 60% of Bachelor's level passes are achieved by learners studying in a second language, a powerful reflection of resilience, dedicated teaching and sustained learner effort across the system," Mweli said.

Mweli consistently credits educators as the backbone of the basic education system. From urban centres to townships and rural villages, teachers devote weekends, evenings, and holidays to supporting learners – often with little recognition. Their dedication, he believes, is

what continues to drive progress, even in the face of economic and systemic pressures.

"...our education system continues to move forward strengthened by a world-class curriculum, dedicated professionals and resilient learners. When we invest in education, we invest in dignity, growth and the long-term prosperity of our nation".

Working together

For Mweli, the future of basic education lies in collective effort educators, principals, parents, officials and communities working together to ensure that every child, regardless of background, has access to quality education. It is a mission rooted in service, sustained by belief and guided by the conviction that education remains South Africa's most powerful tool for change. ♦

FACT SHEET



JUSTICE, CRIME & SAFETY

Progress continues in accountability and justice system reforms, though crime and safety remain key public concerns.

Key Progress

- 55% of State Capture Commission recommendations implemented or substantially completed.
- 64 of 218 criminal recommendations are in court or finalised.
- Contact crimes declined by 4.1% in 2025.

Key Challenges

- Persistent levels of violent crime and GBVF.
- Capacity constraints across parts of the criminal justice system.



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS & GLOBAL POSITIONING

South Africa continues to advance its foreign policy priorities in support of development, peace and regional stability.

Key Progress

- Participation in United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) 80.
- Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) expanded to 11 countries.
- 58 of 60 targeted high-level bilateral engagements achieved.

Key Challenges

- External trade risks, including proposed tariff increases on South African exports.
- Global economic uncertainty affecting investment and trade flows.

WHAT GOVERNMENT IS DOING DIFFERENTLY

Government is strengthening the shift from reporting to corrective action, using evidence to improve delivery and accountability.

KEY FOCUS AREAS



Strengthened monitoring and consequence management.



Reform coordination through MTDP platforms and Cabinet Sub-Committees as coordinating structures.



Cabinet-directed follow-through across departments and clusters.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For media enquiries, please contact: Media@dpme.gov.za

A NATION THAT WORKS FOR ALL



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International tourist arrivals reach new heights

Our country's reputation as a premier global tourism destination has been buoyed by a major milestone.

Between January and December 2025 approximately 10.5 million tourists visited South Africa, which is the highest number of international arrivals on record.

This surpasses the number of visitors we welcomed before the COVID-19 pandemic and is a vote of confidence in a sector that continues to show great

potential for further growth.

Every visitor to our country contributes to our foreign revenue earnings, supports local businesses, bolsters local economies and helps to create and sustain jobs.

It is estimated that tourism currently sustains 1.8 million direct and indirect jobs, with one job created for every 13 international arrivals.

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, tourism

contributes nearly 9% to our country's GDP.

South Africa's expanding global tourism footprint, supported by intensive destination marketing and branding, is an important part of our country's public diplomacy.

The more tourists that arrive from a given a country, the greater the likelihood of strengthening diplomatic relations with that country.

An increase in international

visitors is also a vote of confidence in South Africa's brand appeal, and in our reputation as a safe, reliable, value for money tourism destination.

As government we are determined to strengthen the regulatory and policy environment to further grow the sector. We are equally committed to deepening collaboration with the private sector, labour and other stakeholders to further bolster the industry.





number of tourists from key markets like India and China are already using group tour operators for a more structured, tailored travel experience.

Improving connectivity is also being prioritised. We have seen an increase in direct flight routes to South Africa from key markets such as Australia and France.

Tourists must be able to enjoy our country under conditions of safety. The deployment of additional tourism monitors and the establishment of a crime call centre by the private sector will help to further reduce crime directed at tourists.

Major tourism infrastructure investments are expected to further boost the sector's growth. At last year's inaugural Tourism Infrastructure Investment Summit, eight projects worth R1 billion were launched, signalling renewed investor confidence in our tourism sector.

Our strategic destination marketing efforts continue, as does the focus on niche markets such as halal and green tourism to attract diverse visitors.

As government, we are equipping citizens with skills to embrace the burgeoning tourism industry. For example, the

Department of Tourism offers fully funded Mandarin language training for registered freelance and employed tourism guides to enable them to better support tourists from the growing Chinese market.

We also continue to support the transformation of the industry through various support programmes.

Retaining our reputation as a tourism destination of choice is a society-wide effort, one in which communities have a particularly important role to play.

Every South African should be a tourism ambassador and every community a potential tourist attraction. Our country is rich in natural beauty, history and culture, with much of this potential untapped.

Working together as government, communities and tour operators, we can popularise and attract more tourists to regions and locations that don't traditionally feature highly as destinations for tourists.

Working together as government, industry, communities and civil society we can realise even greater value from this jewel in our nation's crown. ♦

***This message was first published on 2 February 2026**

The Tourism Growth Partnership Plan that was endorsed by Cabinet last year, outlines a series of priority initiatives aimed at improving the performance of the sector.

They include the expansion of the Electronic Travel Authorisation system, which was successfully piloted during the

G20 Summit last year, and is currently being rolled out in key tourism markets.

We will also be strengthening the Trusted Tour Operator Scheme launched last year, which streamlines visa processes for groups whose applications are submitted by vetted tour operators. A significant

Matric class of 2025 makes history

History was made in examination halls across the country in 2025, as more than 900 000 learners – the largest matric cohort on record – sat for the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations.

Speaking at the release of the 2025 NSC results in January, Basic Education Minister Siviwe Gwarube said the record numbers is a reflection that South Africa is reaching more learners in Grade 12 than at any point in decades.

“It is a story of resilience: of young people who kept going through difficult seasons. In 2014, 1.2 million children entered Grade 1. By the time that same cohort reached Grade 10 in 2023, a decrease of around 4% was noted,” she said.

She noted that the dropout becomes more pronounced between Grades 10 and 12, as some learners repeat grades while others exit the schooling



Basic Education Minister Siviwe Gwarube announces the 2025 matric results.

Photo: National Science and Technology Forum

system altogether. As a result, the full-time Grade 12 class of 2025 stood at around 778 000 learners

This means that the largest dropout pressure is not across

the whole system, but it intensifies late as learners progress into Grades 11 and 12.

The Minister pointed out that nationally, only about 84% progress from Grade 10 to

Grade 11, and about 78% from Grade 11 to Grade 12.

“If learners exit the system before Grade 12, the system is not yet delivering quality at scale, regardless of how strong the final pass rate is. Where we see lower learner retention alongside higher performance, we must question that pattern carefully and fairly using data, not assumptions,” the Minister added.

A stable system

The data at her disposal also points to a more stable education system, with the largest share of candidates aged 18 – a sign of on-time progression.

At the same time, the proportion of learners unable to sit for any examination papers has dropped sharply, from about 17% in 2017 to just 2% in 2025. The number of part-time repeat candidates has also declined, suggesting fewer learners are returning

to repeat Grade 12 as overall performance improves.

“Girls now outnumber boys by 56% to 44%, reflecting stronger protections for the girl child, including the removal of pregnancy as a barrier to education,” she said.

However, the Minister expressed concern that boys are increasingly being left behind, with growing under-representation in matric cohorts and a lower likelihood of returning through second-chance pathways, an imbalance she said requires urgent, targeted intervention.

Key gateway subject

Minister Gwarube said only 34% of candidates wrote Mathematics, with the majority opting for Mathematical Literacy – a trend she described as concerning, given Mathematics’ role as a critical gateway subject.

Despite this, she said the education system continues to grow, although not fast enough in the subjects that strongly shape access to further study, scarce skills and meaningful economic participation.

“A healthy system must grow the number of learners taking

Mathematics and Physical Science without sacrificing quality,” she said.

Inclusive education

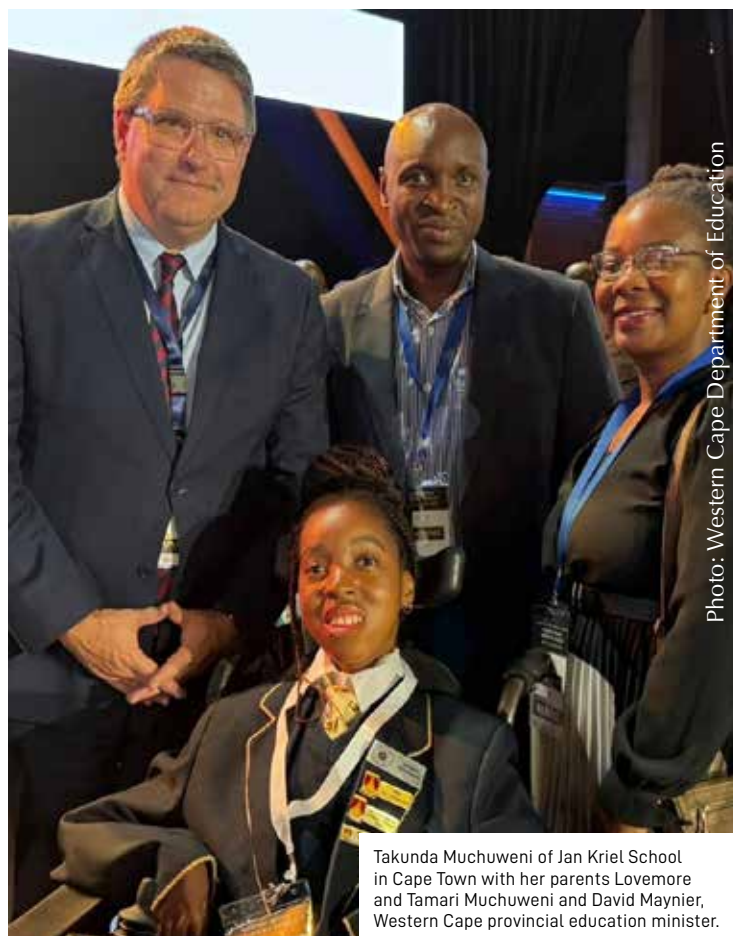
The Minister also pointed to a remarkable 57% rise in learners with special learning needs sitting the 2025 NSC exams, noting that the gains extend beyond participation to improved achievement as well.

“Significantly more learners with special education needs wrote, passed and achieved admission to Bachelor studies in 2025. The biggest increases were recorded in the Free State and Western Cape. We will continue to work with the other provinces to achieve similar increases” she said.

However, ensuring that South African Sign Language is widely accessible as a language of learning and teaching remains a challenge. With too few trained specialists to teach gateway subjects through sign language, the Minister stressed that this area requires careful attention and targeted intervention.

Social grant beneficiaries

While more social grant beneficiaries wrote the NSC exams in 2025, 78% of them



Takunda Muchuweni of Jan Kriel School in Cape Town with her parents Lovemore and Tamari Muchuweni and David Maynier, Western Cape provincial education minister.

passed, down from 86% previously. That drop, despite more learners writing, is a warning that the Minister needs to be understood and addressed.

The Minister also noted that learners who continued to receive grants outperformed peers whose support had lapsed after turning 18, underscoring just how closely social protection and education are intertwined.

The Minister pledged to work with the Department of

Social Development to ensure that no Grade 12 learner loses this vital support during such a pivotal year. ❖

Provincial results breakdown:

1. KwaZulu-Natal: 90.6%
2. Free State: 89.33%
3. Gauteng: 89.06%
4. North West: 88.49%
5. Western Cape: 88.20%
6. Northern Cape: 87.79%
7. Mpumalanga: 86.55%
8. Limpopo: 86.15%
9. Eastern Cape: 84.17%

NSFAS approves funding for over 626 000 first-time applicants



The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) has approved funding for 626 935 first-time applicants, while 427 144 continuing university students have met the progression criteria for support.

Briefing the media on the state of the Post-School

Education and Training (PSET) sector and readiness for the 2026 academic year recently, Higher Education and Training Minister Buti Manamela said NSFAS remains critical in enabling access to higher education for poor and working-class students.

However, he noted that sustained improvements in basic education, combined with broader economic constraints, continue to place pressure on the funding model.

"Short-term stabilisation measures are in place, while a medium-term sustainable

funding reform is being developed. The missing middle fund continues to scale," Manamela said.

The Minister also acknowledged the critical role of Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) in expanding access to funding, particularly for students who do not qualify for NSFAS.

He said that during the 2025/26 funding cycle, SETAs are supporting more than 15 000 new bursary beneficiaries and nearly 8 000 continuing beneficiaries, with a combined value of close to R2 billion.

"This diversification of funding sources reduces over reliance on NSFAS and strengthens system resilience," he said.

Bachelor's pass does not guarantee university admission

Manamela used the briefing to address what he described as a persistent misunderstanding regarding university admissions for learners who obtain a Bachelor's pass in the National Senior Certificate (NSC) exam.

He said that while 46.4% of candidates achieved a Bachelor's pass in the 2025 NSC examinations, this often

creates unrealistic expectations among learners and their families.

"A Bachelor's pass does not guarantee admission to a university or to a specific programme. Universities apply faculty and programme specific requirements, including subject combinations, minimum symbols, and selection processes where demand exceeds capacity.

"Where learners and families experience disappointment, it is often not because of failure, but because of misaligned expectations. Our responsibility is to ensure that learners understand, early and clearly, the full range of credible post-school pathways, not only the most visible ones," the Minister said.

A total of 28.1% candidates achieved a Diploma pass, while 13.5% obtained a Higher Certificate pass in the 2025 NSC examinations.

Manamela noted that with

more than 40% of learners not achieving a Bachelor's pass, the post-school system must be clearly differentiated, well articulated and effectively communicated.

While welcoming the sharp increase in matric pass rates, the Minister said the outcome has placed significant pressure on the PSET.

"The PSET currently has approximately 535 000 funded and planned spaces across universities, Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, Community Education and Training (CET) colleges, skills programmes, and workplace-based learning.

This gap between success and capacity is real, structural, and longstanding," Manamela said.

System reforms

Manamela rejected claims that the post-school system is in crisis, saying it is undergoing

deliberate reform.

"It is under pressure, but it is being deliberately reshaped. Education, training, and skills development in all their forms carry equal dignity and social value. Multiple pathways are not a compromise, they are a strength.

"Not every learner will secure immediate placement in their first choice but every learner must be able to find a credible, supported pathway into learning, skills development, and productive participation in society. That is the task we have set ourselves and that is the work we will continue to do," the Minister said.

Second chance and community education

Manamela said CET colleges remain central to inclusive access and are fully prepared for the 2026 academic year.

He said the colleges will accommodate youth and adults

seeking the Amended Senior Certificate, participation in the National Senior Certificate Second Chance Programme, as well as occupational and skills programmes.

"The academic year commenced on 12 January 2026, with registrations for annual programmes closing on 27 February 2026, while short skills programmes remain open throughout the year," Manamela said. ♦ – **SAnews.gov.za**



Higher Education and Training Minister Buti Manamela addresses the media on the state of the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) sector and academic year



Photo: DHET

Education with a purpose: Aligning skills training with employability



Photo: Supplied

Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Mimi Gondwe.

South Africa's education system is undergoing a fundamental shift, a trend that is likely to accelerate this year. The discussion has shifted after years of concentrating on training statistics, such as student enrolment and graduation rates. The question now is not just about who is being trained, but where they end up.

With youth unemployment at alarming levels and 3.8 million youth (people aged 15 and 24) not in employment, education or training (NEETs), the country cannot afford to produce graduates who add to unemployment queues. The imperative is clear: training must lead to employability.

"The success of our sector is not in just skilling and training but in ensuring that we are training and skilling for employability," Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Mimi Gondwe, told *PSM* recently. "That is where our success lies – in where our students end up once they emerge from the sector".

Focusing on employability

The focus on employability outcomes is increasingly urgent across sectors. Youth Employment Service (YES) Chief Executive Officer Ravi Naidoo emphasises the stakes: "It is critical for South Africa to develop a generation of youth who are confident and competent with Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology," he said at Microsoft's AI Skilling Day in June 2025.

YES is a non-profit organisation tackling youth unemployment through public-private partnerships and works directly with young people to connect

them with skills and workplace experience. The shift from training graduates to ensuring they can compete in a changing economy is no longer optional.

Redefining employability

The national pathway – study, graduate and get a job – no longer reflects economic reality. South Africa's economy is unlikely to absorb all graduates into formal employment. This has forced a redefinition of what "employability" means.

Education experts and policymakers now view employability as encompassing three pathways: formal employment, self-employment, and entrepreneurship. In an economy with limited job creation, Gondwe said graduates need to be equipped not just to find work, but to create it. "We need to see more young people starting their own businesses," explained Gondwe.

Critical skills for 2026: where is the focus?

Several critical skill areas have emerged as priorities for preparing South Africa's workforce. These include

entrepreneurship, AI and digital skills, artisan skills and demand-led training.

Entrepreneurship: from afterthought to foundation

Perhaps the most significant shift is the move to embed entrepreneurship throughout the curriculum rather than treating it as an elective or add-on. The approach aims to normalise self-employment as a viable career path from the earliest stages of training.

Enterprise hubs at technical and vocational education and training colleges and centres of excellence are being strengthened, and programmes are being designed to ensure young people understand that starting their own business is a legitimate option – not a fallback plan. The challenge is changing a mindset that has long equated success with formal employment.

AI and digital skills: preparing for disruption

AI presents both opportunity and threat. While certain roles will be automated, new opportunities are emerging for those with the right digital skills.

Through partnerships



Photo: DPME

Traditional artisan trades remain critical to

with information and communications technology companies such as Microsoft, which signed a three-year memorandum of understanding with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in October 2025, students are being equipped with AI and digital capabilities.

However, questions remain about whether the pace of curriculum change can keep up with technological advancement.

"It is a double-edged sword because there are certain roles and responsibilities that are going to be replaced by AI but there are those that can not," Gondwe noted.

She added that the challenge for education planners is determining which skills will remain relevant as technology advances and which new competencies students will need to thrive in an AI-driven economy.

Artisan skills: the irreplaceable foundation

Despite the push towards digital skills, there is growing recognition that traditional artisan trades remain critical to economic infrastructure – and cannot be automated.

Plumbers, electricians, welders and other skilled tradespeople are in high



Photo: Freepik

New opportunities are emerging for those with digital skills

demand, yet South Africa continues to experience shortages in these areas. Education planners emphasise that the future workforce needs both digital fluency and practical, hands-on skills.

The department has been clear that artisan training remains a priority alongside newer skills areas, recognising that infrastructure development and maintenance will always require hands-on expertise.

Demand-led training: aligning with market needs

Increasingly, the call is for skills development to be driven by what the economy actually needs rather than what institutions have traditionally offered.

“Our approach to skills development should be

demand-led and, of course, opportunity-led,” Gondwe said. “We have to skill for the future, and not just for the now and the immediate future.”

This requires closer collaboration between education institutions and industry to ensure training aligns with real job opportunities – both current and emerging. The challenge lies in balancing immediate skills needs with longer-term, future-focused training.

Private sector partnerships

One of the most significant developments in recent months has been the acceleration of partnerships between government and private sector to bridge the gap between learning and earning.

Since mid-2024, the

DHET has signed major agreements with various stakeholders. These include the Memorandum of understanding with Old Mutual on skills development and financial literacy, Microsoft on AI and digital skills and Takealot Group on youth skills development and education-to-employment pathways.

Four more partnerships are reportedly in the pipeline, including international collaborations.

These partnerships are structured to yield measurable results and extend beyond universities to community colleges. For public sector managers, they offer a model for how government can leverage private sector expertise and resources to amplify impact.

The partnerships aim to ensure that what is being taught aligns with what industry actually needs.

Reaching the unreachable: targeting NEETs

One of the most challenging cohorts to reach is the 3.8 million young people classified NEETs. Many have disengaged from formal systems entirely.

Government has responded with programmes designed to take higher education opportunities directly to

rural and under-resourced communities. The Taking Higher Education to the People programme visits these areas to inform young people about opportunities beyond traditional universities.

Business and skills *izimbizo*, held in partnership with municipalities, aim to access the NEET cohort directly. The Matric Support Programme also seeks to bridge the gap between basic and higher education, preparing students for post-school opportunities before they become disconnected from the system.

Measuring success

The ultimate test of the new approach will be tracking graduate outcomes. What are employment rates in the immediate future after graduates complete training? The answer will determine whether the shift from training-focused to employability focused education is succeeding.

Tracking employment outcomes requires new systems, new data collection methods and sustained follow-up with graduates.

As the sector shifts its focus, the success of South Africa’s skills development system will be judged not by how many people are trained, but by the outcomes they achieve. ♦



END GBVF NOW!

Report any form of Gender Based
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Empowering innovation through research



Photo: National Science and Technology Forum

Dr Robin Drennan.

Researchers are recognised worldwide for the vital role they play in developing solutions to the many challenges facing humanity. But have you ever considered what happens behind the scenes?

Research management and administration is a critical driving force, working to create an enabling environment where research can truly flourish.

Dr Robin Drennan, Director of Research Development at Wits University, describes his role as that of a "lubricant" – a vital, behind-the-scenes force that enables research success. He takes pride in being a catalyst for the achievements of many academic researchers at Wits.

His responsibilities include leading, promoting and supporting research initiatives across

the university. He accomplishes this by developing talent, building collaborative networks and minimising administrative barriers.

"I prefer to be known as a research steward rather than a research manager. My role is to lead a team of people that provide a research management function for the university. My impact as a research manager in this research-intensive university has a ripple effect across the university. The better I do my job the less friction there is to slow down research and less energy is wasted in getting things done," he explained.

The role of research and development

Research and development is one of the key areas prioritised

by government, with the goal of driving socio-economic development and strengthening the country's global competitiveness. This is achieved through a combination of direct and indirect funding mechanisms, as well as by fostering an environment that supports and enables innovation.

Drennan and his team play a role in making research efficient and effective without conducting the research themselves.

"In many respects, I think the title research management is a misnomer...my work is more akin to research stewardship in the sense of nurturing a precious resource – namely talent researchers – to be as effective as they possible can be," Drennan explained.

Drennan is deeply passion-

ate about knowledge and the pursuit of discovery. However, his greatest personal fulfilment comes from supporting others in achieving these goals. He finds the most reward in witnessing the success of others in research and innovation.

Balancing the act

Seeing how leading academic researchers at Wits contribute to knowledge with impact across the globe is one of the most exciting developments that Drennan witnesses through his career. However, he said the job is sometimes challenging.

"Research managers like me, often get caught between grantees, who want more and more, and grantors, who have limits. It is our role to navigate

this narrow path of getting the most for the grantee while remaining compliant and supportive of the grantor,” he said.

Recognising excellence

In July 2025, Drennan was a finalist in the Management Award category of the prestigious 2024/25 NSTF-South32 Awards. The event is the flagship project of the National Science and Technology Forum (NSTF), famously known as the ‘Science Oscars’ of SA in partnership with South32.

They recognise, celebrate and promote excellence in science, engineering, technology and innovation in South Africa.

He was nominated for research excellence through strategic development and support.

“There are many successful research academics at Wits, who have thanked me for the support my team and I have provided. This is humbling, but in truth we did very little to support their achievements. They did all the hard work. However, this scenario just reinforces

the value of research management, small gestures of support unleash fantastic research that benefit the individual academic, the university and indeed the country. I am proud to be that catalyst,” he said.

He said the NSTF awards have become the gold standard for recognition of achievement in science and technology over the years, and this is due to their consistent pursuit of excellence.

Passing on the button

Drennan advised aspiring

scientists and researchers to consider a career in research management if they have a passion for service and science.

“It is of growing importance in a world with limited research and unlimited need for new knowledge to tackle local and global problems... I am at the end of my career and so what comes next for me is to pass on my experience and knowledge to people who will use it to leapfrog into the future that will be better than my past,” he said.

About Drennan

Drennan has a PhD in Chemistry from Rhodes University, which was awarded for the investigation of pyrotechnic reactions. In simple language, he studied “reactions that went bang”.

In his career of more than 25 years, he has practiced as an applied researcher at African Explosives and Chemical Industries Limited, and at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). He has also worked for the NRF, where he managed technology and human resources for industry programme, established the administration for the centres of excellences, South African Research Chairs Initiative and the central grant administration.

He joined Wits University in March 2011. He is the recipient of several prestigious accolades, including the Golden Quill Award for excellence in research reporting and the DST-SARIMA Award – presented by the Department of Science and Innovation and the Southern African Research & Innovation Management Association – in recognition of his distinguished contributions to the research management profession. He is an alumnus of the CSIR Academy for Advanced Leadership and a member of the Royal Society of South Africa. Academically, he has graduated cum laude on four separate occasions.

“My passion is to encourage research with impact in the fields of discov-



Wits University's Great Hall.

Photo: Wits University/Chante Schatz

International Mother Tongue Day:

from conformance to compliance in the public sector



Photo: Supplied by Ntombi Huluhulu

Every year on 21 February, International Mother Tongue Day calls on governments around the world to reflect on the place of language in public life. In South Africa, where multilingualism is both a constitutional principle and a lived reality, this reflection must go beyond symbolic celebration. It must translate into measurable actions within public institutions as prescribed in Section 6(2) of the Constitution.

In recent years, national discourse on language has intensified, particularly around

education reform and access to services. While these debates have been valuable in raising awareness, International Mother Tongue Day now challenges leaders in the public sector to move from conformance to compliance.

Senior managers are uniquely positioned to ensure that language policy is not merely aspirational, but a legislative and operational obligation to promote access to information in the languages people prefer.

Language and education

Language inclusion remains central to education reform, particularly through the implementation of Mother Tongue-Based Bilingual Education (MTbBE) led by the Department of Basic Education.

Evidence consistently shows that learners who are grounded in their mother tongue acquire knowledge more effectively and transition better to additional languages.

es. However, the responsibility of the State does not end at the school gate. The effectiveness of MTbBE is undermined when learners later encounter public institutions that operate almost exclusively in a language they do not fully understand.

Are public institutions complying?

This reality highlights the importance of coherence across government. *The Constitution*

of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 and the Use of the Official Languages Act of 2012, require national departments and public entities to use at least three official languages for official purposes and to take practical measures to elevate previously marginalised languages. These obligations are designed to ensure access, participation and accountability. Yet language compliance monitoring continues to reveal uneven implementation across the public sector.

For public sector decision-makers, non-compliance with language legislation should be viewed as both a governance and service delivery risk.

When institutions operate in only one dominant language they restrict public participation and weaken openness leading to the exclusion of many people. This has impli-

cations for public trust, policy uptake, and the overall legitimacy of state institutions.

Recommendations

Improving compliance requires deliberate institutional action. Language policies must be aligned to the demographic realities of communities served and integrated into core business processes.

Official communication platforms such as websites, public notices, forms and customer-facing services should consistently reflect multilingual practice rather than symbolic translation.

Language units must be properly resourced and language practitioners empowered to support departments in meeting their statutory obligations.

Equally important is leadership accountability. Senior

managers should regard language implementation as an essential element of performance management risk governance and organisational culture. Budgeting for language services should be planned and sustained, rather than treated as an ad hoc expense.

Regular internal monitoring, combined with engagement with the Pan South African Language Board's oversight mechanisms, provides an opportunity for institutions to assess progress and address gaps proactively.

From policy statements to action

Section 6(4) of the Constitution affirms that all official languages must enjoy parity of esteem and be treated equitably. This principle cannot be

realised through policy statements alone.

It requires consistent practice, strong institutional discipline and leadership that recognises language as a key driver of inclusion, transformation and development.

As South Africa observes International Mother Tongue Day, the challenge before the public sector is not whether multilingualism is important but whether it is being implemented with the seriousness it deserves.

Making languages count means embedding them into governance systems service delivery models and accountability frameworks. By doing so, public institutions can strengthen democracy advance social cohesion and ensure that sustainable development is truly inclusive. ♦

Language is a key driver of inclusion, transformation and development in South Africa.



Photo: Freepik

SA to host special WEF Summit in 2027



Minister Lamola at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Photo: DIRCO

The Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Ronald Lamola, has announced that South Africa will host a Special World Economic Forum (WEF) Summit in 2027.

Speaking at the recent WEF meeting in Davos, Switzerland, Lamola said that as Africa's most industrialised economy and a key voice of the Global South,

South Africa is uniquely positioned to convene global leaders to advance collective solutions to pressing global challenges.

"South Africa's leadership in climate diplomacy, renewable energy transition, digital transformation and regional integration align closely to the WEF's mission to improve the state of our world," the Minister said.

World leaders from government, business, civil society and academia gathered in Davos from 19 to 23 January 2026, to engage in forward-looking discussions to address global issues and set priorities.

Successful engagements

South Africa's delegation to the

2026 WEF meeting held successful meetings with global investors, potential investors and business partners.

Led by Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana, the meetings gave Team South Africa a valuable platform to highlight the country's recent progress in implementing the reforms needed to unlock growth and generate



Photo: DIRCO

Minister Godongwana is welcomed at the World Economic Forum (WEF) by Brand SA CEO Neville Matjie.

much needed employment.

"When we came here in 2025, we presented our ambitious plan for driving economic reforms, building investor confidence and mobilising private investment. We returned in 2026 with concrete evidence of our progress. We returned not with promises, but with real successes," Godongwana said.

The wins

In engagements with potential investors and business partners, the delegation highlighted the positive impacts of South Africa's removal from the Financial Action Task Force

greylist and an upgrade of its sovereign credit rating by rating agency S&P Global as well as the structural reforms driven by Operation Vulindlela that have stabilised electricity supply, improved port and freight rail operations and lifted investment in infrastructure.

Stabilising debt

The Minister emphasised that government would deliver on its commitment to stabilise debt in the current fiscal year.

"This signalled its commitment to the macroeconomic stability and consistent policy execution needed to create an

environment for higher local and global investment. He also noted that the recent lowering of the inflation target would contribute to reducing costs across the economy and providing policy and price certainty for investors," National Treasury said.

The WEF hosted a press conference at which Team South Africa reported on its 2025 G20 Presidency that culminated in a historic G20 Leaders' Declaration.

"Our G20 Presidency offered an increasingly rare opportunity for economic cooperation and dialogue to rise above narrow self interest, geopolitical rivalry

and brinksmanship.

"We will continue to act as a credible mediator on key issues of debt relief, climate and infrastructure finance, global tax rules and the reform of multilateral institutions," Godongwana said. ♦ - [SAnews.gov.za](https://www.sanews.gov.za)



Wear *TSHEPO* Jeans this summer

This month, *Public Sector Manager* magazine features a curated selection from TSHEPO, one of South Africa's most celebrated luxury fashion houses. Founded in 2015 by designer Tshepo Mohlala, the brand is deeply personal; rooted in heritage, storytelling

and meticulous craftsmanship.

"TSHEPO is my story and you will find the three women who raised me in the crown, ever present in my creative process," says Mohlala.

This feature highlights a selection of

TSHEPO's bestselling menswear, bringing together the brand's most iconic garments, where fine detail meets elevated design. Each piece is accompanied by a brief insight, inviting readers into the narratives and craftsmanship that define the house.



Card holder Osfa olive green leather: R1 500

The TSHEPO handcrafted leather cardholder combines minimalist design with smart security. Made from genuine leather, it feels as good as it looks...soft, durable, and made to age beautifully.

With advanced Radio-Fre-

quency Identification-blocking technology, the cardholder protects your cards from wireless theft.

Checked knit polo and shorts: R2 500.

The knit checkered polo and shorts bring pattern into play with a bold, textured design that



stands out while staying effortless.

Made from 100% cotton, both pieces are cut in a regular fit



that feels easy on the body but sharp in look. Finished with embroidered detail, it is a set that moves between casual and considered with ease.

TJI – Straight leg – Sand stitch: R2 500.

The straight fit is denim in its purest form. Cut parallel from

** Prices correct at the time of publishing.*



hip to hem, it gives a clean line that does not taper or flare. Wear it loose over sneakers, stacked on boots or cuffed to show the stitch. Finished in white with contrast stitching, it is the jean that lets the details do the talking.

RINE, Vhathu, cobalt blue:
R1 500.

A part of our WE, THE PEOPLE



Wordmark, Cap: R900.

The TSHEPO Wordmark cap, an instant classic. Subtle in its design but as bold as the brand's naming. Now in a black on black and white on black print.

Flagship T-Shirt:
R1 500.

Celebrating the Bapedi people, the brand shares the vibrancy and richness of their culture as represented in the colours of the country's flag. ♦



About the Brand

Committed to the development of denim through the promotion of Africanism and localisation, TSHEPO honours denim's enduring nature by respecting the past, acknowledging the present and designing with the future in mind. The brand believes its responsibility lies in creating desirable, functional pieces that can be valued and worn for a lifetime. Each product tells a true story.

*For more information,
call: 087 985 0585
or email: info@tshepojeans.co*

* Prices correct at the time of publishing.

Coleslaw, reimagined:

Chef Trevor Makamo's creamy classic



For many South Africans, coleslaw salad is a beloved staple, especially for braais and Sunday dishes. Chef Trevor Makamo offers his own thoughtful interpretation with a creamy coleslaw salad recipe.

Creamy coleslaw salad

Ingredients:

- ◉ ¼ large green cabbage, finely shredded.
- ◉ 1 cup red cabbage, finely shredded.
- ◉ 2 tablespoons white vinegar (for red cabbage only).
- ◉ 1 large pepper (bell peppers) finely diced (*robot* colours if available).
- ◉ 2 cups of Nola mayonnaise (depending on size of cabbage).
- ◉ 1 cup plain Greek yoghurt (depending on size of cabbage).
- ◉ 2 teaspoons of vegetable seasoning.

- ⦿ 2 teaspoons Knorr Aromat
- ⦿ Freshly ground black pepper to taste (optional).

Tip: The finer the shred, the more elegant the coleslaw appears, allowing the dressing to coat every bite.

Method:

1. Prepare the red cabbage

- ⦿ Place the shredded red cabbage in a small bowl.
- ⦿ Sprinkle over the white vinegar.
- ⦿ Toss well and set aside to lightly pickle while you prepare the rest.

2. Combine the vegetables

- ⦿ In a large mixing bowl, add

the shredded green cabbage, diced *robot* peppers and the vinegar-treated red cabbage.

- ⦿ Toss gently to distribute evenly.

3. Add seasoning

- ⦿ Sprinkle over vegetable seasoning and Knorr Aromat.

***If using black pepper, mix well, ensuring that the seasoning coats the vegetables before adding the dressing.**

4. Make creamy dressing

- ⦿ In a separate bowl, whisk together Nola mayonnaise and Plain Greek yoghurt.
- ⦿ Whisk until smooth and well combined.

5. Combine salad and dressing

- ⦿ Pour the creamy dressing over the seasoned cabbage and peppers.
- ⦿ Toss until everything is evenly coated and creamy.

6. Rest and serve

- ⦿ Chill for at least 15 minutes before serving for best flavor and texture.
- ⦿ Serve cold.

***Serves 6 – 8 people**

Notes for best results

- ⦿ Greek yoghurt lightens the mayo and adds freshness without losing creaminess.
- ⦿ Adding vinegar only to the

red cabbage keeps color vibrant and prevents the dressing from becoming too runny.

- ⦿ If you prefer slightly sweeter coleslaw, add 1 – 2 teaspoons of sugar or honey.

***Pair this dish with a Sauvignon Blanc – its crisp citrus notes and vibrant acidity cut cleanly through the richness of the mayonnaise while harmonising beautifully with the dish's bright vinegar-driven tang.**

About the Chef

Makamo is a qualified and professional chef, a food specialist whose work bridges the kitchen, the classroom, and culinary research. A triple graduate with an Honours Degree in Food Operations, he has led high-performance kitchens while developing systems that improve how large-scale food services operate.

Passionate about teaching and learning, he creates research-based culinary content that breaks down the science of food in a way that is practical and accessible. Across social media, he is known simply as Chef Makamo, sharing insights, food education, and conversations that move beyond recipes into the thinking behind cooking. At the heart of his work is a simple promise: respect ingredients, cook with purpose, and deliver unforgettable flavour.

For bookings send an email to: bookings@chefmakamo.co.za, info@makamoculinarysolutions.co.za, info@chefmakamo.co.za



Join the Heritage Walk to Mapungubwe Hill
Photo: Rudolph de Girardier



The timeless spirit of Mapungubwe National Park and World Heritage Site

There is something about being in Mapungubwe that feels like you have taken a time capsule back into a very ancient past. Perhaps it is the ancient baobab trees that are millennia old, with their towering canopies standing like wise old sentinels guarding the land.

Or it could be the rocky sandstone escarpment with its golden brown hues and lush green forests and savannah landscape that reminds us of how nature and people co-

existed for centuries.

Most likely, though, it is the profound knowing that you are standing upon sacred ground, once home to an extraordinary African civilisation that flourished here between 900 and 1300 AD.

Ancient civilisation

Mapungubwe National Park is the location of this ancient civilisation. Not only is it one of SANParks' most treasured destinations but it is also a

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization World Heritage Site honoured for its archaeological and cultural significance.

Located in the far North of Limpopo, approximately 450 kilometres from Johannesburg and 200 kilometres from Polokwane, it is a place where history, culture, and ecology intertwine.

The Kingdom of Mapungubwe was among Southern Africa's earliest civilisations, a

thriving society renowned for trading gold and ivory with East Asian countries such as China and India. The area has hundreds of archaeological sites, including San rock art sites predominantly in the eastern side of the park which are estimated to be 15 000 years old and renowned iron age settlement of K2 and Mapungubwe Hill where the legendary golden rhino, sceptre and other gold artifacts were found.

Yet Mapungubwe is far more than an archaeological wonder. It is also a Big Four park, home to lion, leopard, elephant and rhinoceros, along with a spectacular diversity of birdlife.

Confluence Viewpoint

The park invites visitors to explore at their own pace, with scenic self-drive routes leading to its most iconic landmarks. Chief among them is the

Ancient baobab trees in Mapungubwe National Park.
Photo: Rudolph de Girardier



Leokwe Rest Camp.
Photo: Joep Stevens



Confluence Viewpoint, where the Shashe and Limpopo rivers merge, a breathtaking spot that also marks the meeting point of three countries: South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe.

Here, you can enjoy a picnic or braai beneath the shade of mighty baobabs, with various viewpoints providing panoramic views of the rivers and valley below.

A tour back into history

One of the highlights of a visit to Mapungubwe National Park is to book a guided heritage tour which includes a hike to

Mapungubwe Hill and a visit to the Interpretation Centre.

The park's guides are incredibly knowledgeable regarding the history and cultural significance with some of them having been born in the communities surrounding the park.

They will take you to the archaeological site which demonstrates the many stages within the settlements' history and finally up to the sacred hill, where the royal families lived and the golden artifacts were found.

Nothing can explain the feeling of standing on top of the hill overlooking the valleys below and imagining in awe at how

just over a thousand years ago a thriving culture existed.

The tour ends with museum visit at the Interpretation Centre, where you will be able to view and learn about some of the artifacts and sacred objects (glass beads, shells, clay pots and tools) that were found at not only Mapungubwe hill but also at various locations within the park.

Braai in the river

Then comes one of my personal highlights: the bush braai in the middle of the Limpopo River (offered during the dry season).

Your guide will collect you

from camp for a scenic sunset drive through the park. As dusk settles, you will arrive at the riverbed, transformed into a magical outdoor dining spot beneath a canopy of stars, with Zimbabwe just 50 metres away. It is a moment that feels both intimate and infinite, where borders blur and nature takes centre stage.

Guests are able to self-drive throughout the main areas in the park but can also book game drives with additional activities such as morning or afternoon guided bushwalks available.

Accommodation

There are four accommodation

options, each offering a different kind of wilderness experience.

Leokwe Rest Camp, nestled among striking sandstone formations, serves as the main camp and offers a range of self catering chalets ideal for couples or families

For small groups seeking privacy and exclusivity, Tshugulu Lodge is perfect as it accommodates up to 12 guests, giving you and your companions the entire lodge to yourselves.

From exploring cultural heritage, to visiting bucket list worthy sites to game drives and bush braais or even if you just want peace and serenity, Mapungubwe National Park has it all.

For travellers drawn to culture and connection, the park also hosts the annual Mapungubwe Lecture Series, a curated weekend experience that combines expert talks, cultural performances, guided tours and a traditional music festival.

The event has quickly become a not-to-be-missed pilgrimage for lovers of travel, heritage and art, offering a rare opportunity to engage with the spirit of Mapungubwe in a deeply meaningful way.❖



Photo: Alistair Daynes

