The Department of Education’s Programme in Commemoration of significant historical events in 2008

The milestones that will be commemorated in 2008 include the following:

The History of Education in South Africa and the role played by prominent educationists in the development and transformation of education

- The commemoration of the three hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the introduction of formal schooling for the children of slaves by the Dutch East India Company at the Cape.

The individual as leader and role model

- The celebration of the life and role of former President of South Africa, Mr Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, on the occasion of his 90th birthday on 18 July 1918, as an exceptional son of Africa who remains an inspiration and an example to millions in South Africa and around the world;
- The celebration of the life of Mrs Albertina Sisulu, on the occasion of her 90th birthday on 21 October 1918, as one of the leading figures in South African progressive women’s organisations such as the ANC Women’s League as well as in the United Democratic Front in the 1980’s. As a wife of Walter Sisulu, she kept her family united during the difficult years of banishment, imprisonment and forced exile of some of her children; and
- The 60th anniversary of the ANC Youth League Policy Statement, adopted in 1948, which enunciated its stance on radical African Nationalism, in which Mr Mandela played a leading role.

The role of women in challenging gender inequality and in the struggle against segregation and apartheid

- The 90th anniversary of the formation of the Bantu Women’s League of the ANC, an historical assertion of the central role of women in the struggle for liberation, and a seminal moment in the course of the struggle for women’s emancipation and the 60th anniversary of the formation of the ANC Women’s League, which galvanised women within the ANC into an organised grouping capable of advancing the interests of women within the movement and society; and
- The 50th anniversary of Zeerust (North West) anti-pass campaign, in which large numbers of women burned their pass books, actions which were met with severe repression;

Rural resistance

- The 50th anniversary of the Sekhukhuneland (Limpopo) revolt against ‘Bantu Authorities’, an act of defiance that served as a precursor to similar uprisings among the rural masses against apartheid impositions;
- The 50th anniversary of the potato boycott (Mpumalanga), which drew attention to the harsh and repressive conditions under which farm labourers worked and lived;
The re-emergence of working class resistance:

- The 35th anniversary of the Durban strikes marking the re-emergence of working class resistance and the formation of the trade union movement

Resistance of Community and civil society to apartheid

- The 25th anniversary of the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF), a critical moment in the deepening of internal resistance and mobilisation that contributed to the collapse of the apartheid system;

Attempts by the apartheid state to silence the struggle for transformation

- The 30th anniversary of the assassination of Rick Turner by agents of the apartheid state, whose death robbed South Africa of one of its most strident anti-apartheid campaigners and political thinkers;
- The 20th anniversary of the Khotso House bombing, a desperate attempt by the apartheid regime to destabilise the work of leading human rights groups;
- The 20th anniversary of the assassination of Dulcie September in Paris in March 1988; and
- The 20th anniversary of the defeat of the SADF at the battle of Cuito Cuanavale, which marked a turning point in the apartheid war of aggression against the people of Angola, contributing to the achievement of Namibian independence, and providing impetus to the process that led to the negotiated end of apartheid. The contribution of the sons and daughters of the Cuban people who laid down their lives in the fight for South Africa’s freedom will be commemorated.

The Department of Education has planned a programme of activities as part of the commemoration of events of historic significance, including:

- The production of a booklet for schools on the key historical anniversaries, with suggestions for teachers on how to use the resources in the classroom. The book will be distributed to all schools by the end of the second term.

- The key national events that the Department will organise are the following:

  i) An oral history competition in commemoration of Nkosi Albert Luthuli, the national finals of The Young Historians’ Competition will take place on 01–04 October 2008, to be initiated in co-operation with South African History Online.

  ii) A competition in the celebration of the life and contribution to South Africa and the world of the former President, Mr Mandela and Mrs Albertina Sisulu, on the occasion of their 90th birthdays in 2008.

  iii) An exhibition celebrating the life of the former President to be installed in Sol Plaatje House, 123 Schoeman Street, Pretoria and to be opened by the Minister at the beginning of July 2008.