



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION, DR
REGINAH MHAULE, MP ON THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF
NKULULEKO RALO PRIMARY SCHOOL, EASTERN CAPE**

29 October 2021

Programme Director

His Majesty-King of the AbaThembu- aah Zwelibanzi!!!

Members of the House of Traditional Leaders present

MEC of Education in the Eastern Cape – Hon Fundile David Gade,

Executive Mayor of OR Tambo District Municipality – Cllr Thokozile Sokhanyile

Local Mayor of King Sabatha Dalindyebo – Cllr G.N Nelani

Ward councillor, Chief whips and Speakers of Councils' present

Chairperson of the SGB – Mr Z. Ngomthi

HoD of the Eastern Cape Department of Education – Dr Naledi Mbude

National, Provincial and District Officials

Rev. L. Mshumpela

Principal – Ms KD Gilman, SMT and all Teachers

Parents and Community members present

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Sanobinani

It is my singular honour and a privilege to be in the province of the Eastern Cape to officially open yet another state-of-the-art school, namely Nkululeko Ralo Primary School. The launch of this new schools offers some sort of catharsis for all of us involved in advancing basic education in our country.

Programme Director; as we know, the Eastern Cape Province is an exceptional place, a home of legends, they call it, not for nothing. This province has produced many finest revolutionaries, including the legendary maths teacher, struggle stalwart and former President General of the African National Congress Oliver Reginald (OR) Tambo, of which the district is named after him. Other legends include uTata Nelson Mandela, our founding father of the new South Africa, and uMama Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, the Mother of the Nation.

Last but not least, of these home-grown legends include Mandela's lifelong friend and comrade, a man who refused the limelight, uBaba Walter Sisulu and many to mention in this limited time I've been allocated. Yet, all form the backbone of the Eastern Cape legends in leadership and politics, and their umbilical cords are buried here. All these sons and daughters of the Eastern Cape dedicated themselves for the national cause of liberation, for freedom, peace and democracy.

As a people, we owe a debt of gratitude to our forebears for making it possible for us to stand here today and declare that our country today is a better place than before the dawn of freedom in 1994. We have come a long way since the dawn of democracy in 1994. The time is now for us to seize the moment and Build Better Schooling Communities Together. No better school infrastructure project encapsulates the truth about the importance of partnership than the history of how this school was founded, extended and finally rebuilt.

Programme Director, in this regard, and for future generations, it is important to give you a brief history of how partnerships over the years have brought us to this glorious

day. The Mbuqe Primary School was founded in 1992 by Mrs KD Gilman, the school's current Principal. It was located in the garage of Mr Nkululeko Ralo. Today, in honour of Nkululeko Ralo, we would rename this Mbuqe Extension Primary School to Nkululeko Ralo Primary school.

It is worth noting that the first chairperson of the School Governing Body was Mr Thembani Mtyida, the current DDG for Institutional Operation Management and Education District Coordination in the Eastern Cape Department of Education. The school moved in 1996 from Ralo's garage to where it is now located. This move was spearheaded by the former Premier of the Eastern Cape, Mrs Nosimo Balindlela, who donated some classes.

She was also later joined by the NGO called Kats and Spaks that donated more classrooms. Mrs Gilman and the community lobbied for the building of a decent structure over the years. For instance, during 2011, in one of the government events attended by the former President of the Republic, Minister of Basic Education, Minister of Economic Development, and others, Mrs Gilman implored the Government to rebuild this school.

It is heartening to witness that even during these uncertain times of Covid-19, Mrs Gilman and a legion of our teachers continue to hold the line convinced that their individual sacrifice and actions are in the service of the nation, not for personal gain or fortune. It has been a long road, but here we are to officially open a state-of-the-art facility to honour the promise of a Better for All in our lifetime.

It is clear that our school infrastructure build programme is beginning to bear fruits for our people. The accelerated school infrastructure build programme is part and parcel of our comprehensive Programme of Action as encapsulated in Action Plan to 2024 Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2030. One of the main goals of the said Programme of Action states clearly that "we must ensure that the physical

infrastructure and environment of every school inspire learners to want to come to school and learn, and teachers to teach.” Experts call this a positive school environment.

A positive school environment is defined as a school having appropriate facilities, well-managed classrooms, available school-based health supports, and a clear, fair disciplinary policy. We know from experience that poorly designed schools give an impression that learners reflect their school: undervalued, worthless, dirty and uncared for.

Honourable Executive Mayor; directly linked to the physical infrastructure, the Programme of Action, another goal enjoins us to “use schools as vehicles for promoting access to a range of public services amongst learners in areas such as health, poverty alleviation, psychosocial support, sport and culture.” In this regard, we already have a package of care and support services available to all schools. I am glad that this school is part and parcel of our pro-poor initiatives, such as the no-fee school policy and the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) availability.

Other vital programmes to be rolled out here include health initiatives such as the National School Deworming Programme and the National School Hygiene Programme, especially critical in the era of Covid-19. As a result of improved infrastructure and pro-poor interventions, a higher proportion of younger children in this community will access first-class basic education.

Honourable MEC: To achieve the goals stated in the Action Plan to 2024 Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2030, we had to have a focused programme to undo the legacy of apartheid education mismanagement, underinvestment and poor infrastructure planning. This legacy meant that our learners were learning under the trees; some schools were constructed from inappropriate materials (mud, plankie, and asbestos).

I am happy to say this school meets the Minimum Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure and boasts appropriate and modern ablution facilities in line with the Safe Sanitation Appropriate for Education (SAFE) programme. As we know, SAFE's fundamental purpose is to provide safe sanitation facilities for all our learners, thus restoring their dignity and providing optimum safety.

The overall idea is to restore dignity to rural and under-privileged school-going children and teachers. In fact, we are no longer just building schools; but we are providing first-class learning spaces to advance academic excellence. We restore the dignity of rural and poor communities as an act of restoration. We are creating chances for rural and poor children to have decent structures and quality education so that they too can reap the rewards of a Better Life for all that often people talk about. It is empirically proven that countries that invest in quality basic education through public schooling have a greater chance to unlock economic bottlenecks and enjoy higher employment rates, health and democracy.

Therefore, opening modern classroom doors to all rural children as we do today, especially girls, helps break the inter-generational chains of poverty. Research proves that education empowers women and girl children. In addition, the economic and personal empowerment that education provides allows women and girls to make healthier choices for themselves and their families.

According to the Bread for the World Hunger Report (Bread for the World, 2005), expanding education for girls is also one of the most powerful ways of fighting hunger. Research undertaken by the World Bank (2004) indicates that a child born to an educated mother is more than twice more likely to survive to the age of five than a child born to an uneducated mother. Educated mothers are also 50% more likely than mothers with no schooling to immunise their children against diseases (World Bank, 2004).

This is particularly important as we roll out the lifesaving Covid-19 vaccination for school-going children. Let's all take the jab and save lives. A report by the Global Campaign for Education (GCE, 2004) asserts that educated people are healthier people. HIV/AIDS infection rates are halved among young people who finish primary school. Thus, if every child received a complete primary school education, at least seven million new cases of HIV could be prevented in a decade.

In simple terms, our investment in basic education has a positive ripple effect. Education is a prerequisite for tackling poverty and promoting short and long-term economic growth. No country has achieved continuous and rapid economic growth without at least 40% of adults being able to read and write (GCE, 2010). At an individual level, a person's earnings increase with each additional year of schooling they receive. This is especially true for additional years of higher education. Thus, educated people can earn more money and support their families, which helps economies to grow faster and poverty rates to decline.

Ladies and Gentlemen; in this school, our Government invested R62 million to build it and provided much-needed local jobs during construction. We invested this amount of money because we want you to understand that this is the norm and standard that befits you as citizens of South Africa.

You, the people of the Eastern Cape, are not the children of a lesser God. The very least we can do as the ANC-led Government is to invest in basic education. The very least that you can do as a community is cherishing the opportunities now open before you and make education your best friend. As a community, I implore you to protect this fantastic facility.

It is a product of a strong partnership amongst a diverse group of South Africans; let's protect it for this current cohort of learners and future generations. We must redouble

our effort in ensuring that the road to the success of this community and beyond is through education, not drugs, crime and violence.

In conclusion, I must reiterate that our infrastructure built programme goes beyond brick and mortar, especially to the press and adults here. Building these schools and providing services is as much about breaking up with the past as healing the wounds of apartheid education.

We are meeting our constitutional obligation to heal the wounds of the past and build a new society founded on fundamental human rights, social justice, and democracy. As I said earlier, this is ultimately about restoring dignity for our people and laying the ground for a better future so that our children can enjoy the democracy dividends.

Ngiyabonga.