



**basic education**

Department:  
Basic Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## **Address by the Minister of Basic Education, Mrs Angie Motshekga, MP, at the Infrastructure Workshop held at DBSA, Vulindlela Hall**

**23 April 2024**

Programme Director,

Dr Makgabo Reginah Mhaule (MP) - Deputy Minister of Basic Education,

Mr Hubert Mathanzima Mveli - Director-General of Basic Education,

Ms T Diale - Acting Head of DBE Infrastructure,

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Messrs T Matunda and Mr J Van den Berg - Programme Support Unit,

Ms MB Ramohapi - Director of Intergovernmental and Technical Support

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to stand before you today at the Vulindlela Hall in Midrand to discuss a topic paramount to our nation's future—our basic education infrastructure.

The development of infrastructure in basic education is intimately linked to the Section 29 rights enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa, Act No. 108 of 1996 as amended.

Section 29(1) of the Constitution contains the right to a basic education and the right to a further education. (b) to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible.

Therefore, the provision of adequate infrastructure in schools and educational institutions is crucial in ensuring that these rights are upheld and that all learners have the opportunity to access quality education.

The theme of this infrastructure workshop, “*A Portrait of Excellence in the Basic Education Infrastructure Delivery*,” invokes a vision of educational environments that are not only functional but also provide inspiration.

It highlights the importance of delivering high-quality infrastructure that not only meets the basic needs of education but also inspires students to learn and grow.

This theme emphasises that every child is a valuable national asset and should receive a quality education in well-designed school buildings, irrespective of their socio-economic background.

Every child has the right to learn in an environment that reflects the value we place on basic education in our society. By prioritising basic education and investing in its improvement, we not only enhance the lives of individual children but also contribute to our nation's overall development and prosperity.

Moreover, the theme challenges us to envisage and construct learning spaces that are not mere buildings but bastions of creativity, safety, and inclusivity. These environments should stimulate learning and growth, serving as the bedrock upon which we cultivate the next generation of leaders, thinkers, and innovators.

In translating this vision into reality, we acknowledge that excellence in educational infrastructure goes beyond the physical. It integrates the aesthetics of architecture with the functionality needed to support a dynamic learning process. Such excellence in educational infrastructure ensures that schools become places where learners are educated and motivated to excel.

These facilities' well-thought-out designs and maintenance communicate to learners that they are valued, their education matters, and that the community is vested in their success. Schools designed with this holistic approach facilitate enhanced learner engagement and retention, setting a standard of educational excellence that aligns with the global best practices.

Programme director, well-kept and well-designed schools do more than encourage learners to come to school and learn. They serve as a haven where young minds feel nurtured and respected. There is a profound psychological impact when learners enter a bright, clean facility equipped with the necessary resources. Such environments not only reduce distractions but also enhance the overall learning experience.

In contrast, schools that are dilapidated and neglected send a disheartening message to their pupils. Learners in poorly maintained environments often feel overlooked by the system, diminishing their motivation and academic performance. This neglect can lead to a cycle of educational apathy and underachievement, perpetuating societal inequalities.

To illustrate the impact of our environment on our well-being and productivity, the 32<sup>nd</sup> US President Franklin Roosevelt once said:

*“We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future.”* Indeed, by investing in high-quality educational infrastructure, we are not merely providing learners with a place to learn but equipping them with the confidence to aspire. These investments reflect our commitment to their future and our belief in their potential.

As we strive to enhance our educational facilities, we must remember that the condition of the schools speaks loudly to learners about how the community values basic education.

Therefore, creating and maintaining inspiring educational environments is essential to nurturing a generation that feels respected, valued, and empowered to achieve their full potential.

Dr Maria Montessori, an Italian physician and educator best known for developing the Montessori method of education, which is practised in schools worldwide today, once opined: *“Children acquire knowledge through experience in the environment.”*

Programme director, over the past three decades, our department has made significant strides in enhancing the accessibility and quality of our educational facilities.

Through a robust portfolio of initiatives, we have renovated thousands of existing structures and erected new schools, particularly in areas previously underserved.

These efforts have dramatically improved the learning environment for millions of learners across our country, offering them access to clean running water, reliable electricity, and secure learning spaces.

We repaired and refurbished 11,077 schools, provided water infrastructure to 2,459 schools, electrified 8,313 schools, provided fencing to 5,605 schools, and added 115,512 additional classrooms to alleviate overcrowding.

By August 2023, under the Accelerated School Infrastructure Delivery Initiative (ASIDI), 329 state-of-the-art schools have been built. These replaced the 510 schools identified in 2011 as made from inappropriate materials.

Since 2018, the Sanitation Appropriate for Education (SAFE) programme has equipped 3,015 schools with age-appropriate and safe sanitation facilities following the tragedies of a few learners drowning in pit latrines.

Furthermore, the Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Delivery Initiative (ASIDI) has constructed 15,000 sanitation facilities at 1,047 schools.

We bemoan that around 360 schools have yet to receive dignified sanitation facilities, but rest assured, we are determined to complete these installations by the end of the 2024/25 financial year.

Ladies and gentlemen, in our lifetime, we will eradicate pit latrines in our schools.

Despite these remarkable achievements, we face ongoing challenges. The planning and credibility of our data, essential for strategic decision-making, remain areas where significant improvement is needed.

Our monitoring processes often lack the continuity and rigour necessary to ensure projects are not just initiated but fully realised and sustainable.

The capacity within the Department of Basic Education and among our Implementing Agents needs considerable strengthening. We must address these gaps to prevent initiatives from stalling or failing to deliver the expected outcomes.

Today's workshop is structured to forge a path through these complex issues. We have planned multiple workstreams designed to foster in-depth discussions, share experiences, and draw insights that will guide us toward refined and actionable strategies.

The outcomes from these discussions will play a pivotal role in shaping our actions and policies in the future. We will begin with an overview of the sector's progress and the implementation of our 10-Point Plan, followed by presentations on innovative sanitation technologies and insights from our Implementing Agents and various provincial leaders.

This afternoon, we will break into five specific workstreams. These sessions are crafted to address critical areas, including implementing the 10-Point Plan, planning and design, supply chain management, contract management, and monitoring and support.

Each group is tasked with developing a clear and actionable plan that adheres to SMART principles—specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.

Our discussions will focus on what has been accomplished, the challenges that lie ahead, and the strategic interventions needed to propel us forward.



This includes enhancing our data management systems to provide real-time, accurate information that can guide our planning processes more effectively. We also need to explore innovative funding models to ensure our infrastructure projects are not hindered by financial constraints.

Moreover, a critical part of today's agenda is cultivating a spirit of collaboration among all stakeholders. This includes local communities, provincial governments, educational experts, and the private sector.

Only through a united front can we hope to address the multifaceted challenges of educational infrastructure development and ensure that every child in South Africa has access to a safe, supportive, and conducive learning environment.

Let us use this opportunity to reinforce our commitment to these goals, sharing best practices and learning from past experiences to build a robust infrastructure that supports our children's educational journeys.

It is rightfully asserted that: *“We see the environment itself as an essential part of the conditions of learning. When children feel that they are valued, their learning is enhanced. A positive environment, full of colour and design, can stimulate learning and creativity.”*

Together, let's continue to invest in our children's future, ensuring that our basic educational facilities reflect a true portrait of excellence.

Thank you.