



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Address by the Minister of Basic Education, Mrs Angie Motshekga, MP, at the Launch of the EC Provincial Support Network for Women Leaders held in East London

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Programme Director

MEC for Eastern Cape Education Fundile David Gade

Principals

Teacher Unions

Senior Officials

Distinguished Guests

It is indeed an honour and privilege for me to address you today as we officially launch the Eastern Cape Provincial Support Network for Women Leaders here at the Mandla Makupula Education Leadership Institution.

Today, we are honoured to be joined by women leaders from various regions, districts and schools.

As we know, women make up the core of the teaching cohort in South Africa.

Thus, those in positions of power must be mobilised as a unit to advance the cause for gender equality and women's empowerment.

The Support Network for Women Leaders endeavours to recognise and encourage female leaders in their critical role in our schooling ecosystem.

The thrust is to change the narrative that women in basic education teach while men manage schools.

We know there's a dichotomy between the number of women teachers and the number in senior management positions.

This year (2022), there are 392 773 teachers on the government payroll, of which a vast majority are women.

There are 278,858 female teachers (71%) and 113,915 male teachers (29%) in public schools in the country.

Sadly only 39% of school principals are women.

Only 8 025 female principals and 12 428 male principals are appointed permanently.

There's no excuse why women can't manage schools, be departmental heads and be deputy principals.

Even the pipeline of Principalship isn't looking great as they are only 6 065 (49%), whereas male teachers 6 428 (51%) are also deputy principals.

For departmental heads, there are 28 927 (65%) women vs 15 274 (35%) males.

Anyone who has been a teacher will tell you that most teaching and learning falls under the departmental heads, yet they earn less than principals.

Women teach, and men earn. It is sad but true.

These numbers are a sad indictment of us as an ANC-led government.

We have to do more for women teachers.

We must do more for the girl child.

We must do more for the next generation of women teachers.

Therefore, we introduced a support programme for Women Leaders in 2009 to encourage women teachers to take up space and be counted.

We also want to conscientise human resources practitioners in the sector and recruitment panels to ensure that women have an equal and fair chance to be leaders in basic education.

We conceptualised the Network to be an agency that gives women power, a feeling of stability in good or bad times and provides a safety net while navigating the leadership maelstrom.

Most importantly, this Network intends to empower and support women leaders in leading and managing their schools effectively and efficiently.

It is no coincidence that we hold this launch during August, which is already set aside to celebrate and honour women of all hues.

The origin of Women's Month can be traced back to the commemoration of the historic 09 August 1956 women's march to the Union Buildings.

Women led by leaders such as Lillian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Rahima Moosa and Sophia Williams-De Bruyn delivered petitions to the then Prime Minister - JG Strydom's office in the Union Buildings.

They demanded freedom and told the regime that they objected to the extension of the hated Dompas to women.

It was 20 000 of them, united with one voice: Enough is enough.

This year National Women's Day and Women's Month are celebrated under the theme: "Women's Socio-Economic Rights and Empowerment: Building Back Better for Women's Improved Resilience."

The theme is a call to action for all of society, Government and partners to take tangible steps forward in responding to the most persistent challenges affecting women's lives.

Sadly we hold this launch while, as women and as a country, we are reeling from the Krugersdorp 8 mass rape and recent crime statistics that show the extent of the depravity that is visited upon women.

The truth is that despite a favourable legislative environment and the Bill of Rights that protects us all, women remain under the man's thumb.

Krugersdorp 8 gang rape marks a moment of rupture in our homeland.

There's a declared war against women's bodies.

We have to fight just to be heard, to talk back, and talk louder.

We are struggling just to be recognised as human beings, forget equal treatment and equal opportunities.

Yet our Constitution protects us, but clearly, some amongst us, especially men, see the present laws protecting women as an ass.

Today, we, too, must proclaim that if that present legislative framework that protects us is against the bro code, then the law or the bro code is indeed an ass.

It beggars belief that men live in a parallel universe; they even have something called the bro code, as I mentioned.

The bro code is a friendship etiquette to be followed among men or, more specifically, among members of the bro subculture.

In its crude incarnation, it is known as bros before hoes. This is a well-known slang expression about how men should not abandon their male friends for women.

In other words, we are whores in the eyes of most male species.

This language, this subculture, gives rise to the rape culture.

Many expect some of us to raise our voices in response to the recent sexual assault allegations facing the Minister of Finance.

Of course, in the strongest terms, we condemn any attack on any woman, especially the vulnerable ones.

We have our own Sister's Code. We believe the victim first until the man has extricated himself from the rape allegations.

One feminist organisation explained the meaning of believing the victim first.

It says that believing victims does not mean that allegations of sexual violence should not be investigated.

Instead, it asks you to avoid the default response that people who speak up about sexual violence are lying.

This (believing the victim first) is critical, given that victims of sexual violence are often women and other marginalised people in our society.

As women and feminists, we must refuse for men to keep tinkering with our codes of behaviour because it is uncomfortable to those we know and respect.

Programme director, as women leaders and feminists, we must band together and push back against patriarchy whenever it raises its ugly head again.

The next frontier of struggle we must intensify and win is a war against patriarchy, gatekeepers of patriarchy and those who derive profits from our subjugation.

It's open season against women all over the world. It's time for pushback.

We call upon all women leaders, in particular those in education and all progressive trade unions in general, to be the force to be reckoned with in the fight against patriarchy, gender discrimination, and high levels of poverty.

Poverty, as I have argued before, still bears a face of a woman. A black woman, to be precise.

We meet today on the back of some good news: the country's unemployment rate decreased for the second consecutive quarter.

The country's unemployment rate improved marginally by 0.6 per cent from 34.5% in the first quarter to 33.9% in the second quarter.

Stats SA survey data indicates that 648,000 jobs were gained between the first quarter of 2022 and the second quarter of 2022.

The job numbers are encouraging, especially for women's entry into the workplace.

Evidence also shows that when women are economically empowered, it decreases their vulnerability to gender-based violence.

Programme director, we must refuse to throw away the baby with the bathwater.

We live in a constitutional democracy.

Our Constitution is the supreme law of the land.

Our Constitution protects and demands that our Government advances gender equality.

Our Constitution and Legislation are recognised as one of the most gender equal in the world; however, societal and cultural practices severely impact women's rights.

On 27 April this year, we celebrated 28 years of democracy, peace and prosperity.

In 2019, we also broke new ground with 46% women in the National Assembly and provincial legislatures and 50% women in the cabinet.

This represents a four per cent increase, up from 42 per cent after the 2014 elections.

The 46% women's representation in Parliament puts South Africa in the eighth position in the Inter-Parliamentary Union's (IPU) rankings for women's representation in lower houses or National Assembly.

Currently, Rwanda, Cuba and Bolivia have surpassed the 50% mark for women's representation in national parliaments.

The provincial legislature with the highest women representation is Mpumalanga, where half of the legislators are female.

The provincial legislature with the lowest gender representation is the Western Cape, where just 35.71 per cent of representatives are women.

Obviously, the African National Congress is not a leader of Government in the Western Cape.

All the speakers in the national and provincial legislatures are women.

The representation of women in provincial legislatures mirrors the national level at 46%: a thirteen-percentage point increase from 2014. This is the highest proportion of women since 2004.

The anomaly, of course, is that, in actual fact, more women voted in the last elections; that number stands at 55 per cent.

Is it time to pop champagne and celebrate? Not so fast. Yet, we can indeed celebrate these recent developments.

At the heart of women's struggles, today, here at home and internationally, remains the pervasive nature of patriarchy.

We must push for 50-50 in corporate boardrooms, schools, courts and political leadership, and all social, economic and political life structures.

It is about we install the proverbial "Women on Top."

As I have said before:

The sooner South Africa realises that there's a 50 per cent wealth of knowledge that is systematically and routinely excluded from key issues/positions that pertain to society, the sooner we will realise that any advance towards a normal and more cohesive society will remain elusive.

There's no reason for women in a constitutional democracy to fight to be included in the opinion-forming discourse, knowledge production,

political leadership and boardrooms, and the proverbial inheritance regime.

Yet, we must fight.

Yet, we must rebel.

The struggle is far from over.

We salute women in basic education.

We salute women in education leadership.

I wish this Network of women leaders prosperity and victories.

Please draw strength in knowing that the 1956 generation of women laid a solid foundation for all of us.

We pay tribute to women in the liberation struggle and the women of today.

Women of 1956 and countless others set the tone for gender equality and empowerment in a democratic South Africa.

Their brave actions inspired women to take their rightful place in Parliament, Government and civil society.

Through their sacrifices, we now live in a country which recognises women as equal citizens with equal rights and responsibilities, yet challenges abound.

Let's draw strength and work without ceasing to realise equal pay for equal play and equal pay for equal work.

In conclusion, I raise a toast to the trailblazers of women in sport, nicknamed Banyana Banyana South Africa women's national football team, for conquering mother Africa.

To the Champions, winners of the 2022 Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON).

We demand equal pay for equal play today.

I thank you.