



**basic education**

Department:  
Basic Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**Keynote Address by the Basic Education Minister, Mrs Angie Motshekga, MP, at the Launch of Read to Reach your Dreams Campaign held at Ethiopian Church, Steelpark, Vereeniging**

**3rd October 2021**

Programme Director, Bro. Sandile Zondi, General Secretary of ECSA

Rt. Rev. Dr. J. S. Luphuwana (Bishop)

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Family and Friends

It is a great honour for me to address the Ethiopian Church of South Africa (ECSA).

As I stand here before you, I am filled with joy and gratitude.

This Church is an institution steeped in the culture of service to humanity.

Your exploits in the space of social justice speak for themselves.

In your own words, you say amongst ECSA's tenets of faith is the firm belief that Christianity shall conquer spiritual and educational and economic challenges.

Therefore, it is fitting that we converge today in a church environment to talk about the importance of literacy in society because the Church, in all its manifestation, plays a critical role in the life of this nation.

Although, as a country, we pride ourselves on being a secular state, the freedom of religion is guaranteed by our Constitution.

It is foundational to the fundamental rights of our people to choose, opt-in or opt-out as they wish.

It is possible to argue that the freedom of choice and freedom of expression of which the right to religion is subordinated is actually the linchpin of our democracy.

The role of this Church and many others in the life of our nation is commendable.

Not only do you provide spiritual nourishment to the soul, but you are actively involved in matters of social justice and projects aimed at lessening the burden of the poor while empowering all people to reach their potential.

This brings me to today's launch of the *Read to Reach your Dreams Campaign* championed by the Ethiopian Church of South Africa (ECSA), in partnership with the Basic Education's *Read to Lead Campaign*.

At the heart of the *Read to Lead Campaign* is to ensure that all young learners have access to stimulating environments to support their literacy and numeracy endeavours.

As you know, the President has given us the mandate to ensure that all South African children can read for meaning by their tenth birthday.

We have to ensure that all children and adults read beyond the curriculum, i.e. read for pleasure and widen their knowledge of everyday life.

In terms of the National Development Plan (NDP) vision 2030, our children's reading levels should be comparable with those in similar levels of economic development and with similar levels of access to education, if not better.

As Basic Education Department, we have to ensure that all children have access to a wide range of engaging reading materials in schools, homes and communities, particularly in their home languages.

We have to ensure that all parents and caregivers support their children's reading development.

In this regard, we urge society to contribute towards the establishment of a reading culture.

This is a “Thuma Mina” call to action as expounded by His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa for South Africa to become a reading nation, thus a leading country.

Thus, this Church’s flagship literacy programme is in line with our vision as it aims to accelerate our efforts of encouraging reading beyond the curriculum across society.

The programme will offer literacy development to young learners and devotional/pastoral support to the school community.

This programme is part of a holistic approach to the development of learners through material and church support through bursaries to improve learners’ school experience and sustain their livelihoods.

One of the pillars of the *Read to Reach your Dreams Campaign* is to serve and transform the social life of our communities.

The aim is to enhance a positive learning environment and instil the spirit of Ubuntu and social cohesion amongst learners.

This will obviously be done by offering literacy and reading enhancement programmes through the Church’s facilities such as the Church’s Library and human capital in general.

The partnership between the *Read to Lead Campaign* and the *Read to Reach your Dreams Campaign* is in line with our mission of calling upon all South Africans, across all sectors, to join its efforts of promoting reading.

Therefore, the *Read to Reach your Dreams Campaign* directly responds to the call to get all communities involved.

We congratulate the Church for its pioneering spirit in launching a literacy programme of this size.

We cannot underestimate the role of this Church because you administer the Word of God to thousands, if not millions of souls every day.

As Government, we welcome this partnership and call for men and women of the cloth to join us in the reading revolution.

In pursuit of realising our long term goal, "A Reading Nation is a Leading Nation," we have come to a conscious realisation that a

learner's ability to read, write and calculate is considered an essential toolkit in pursuing success and in managing life in general.

However, literacy or the ability to read is considered a foundational skill.

Research shows that learners with higher reading competency perform better even in Mathematics.

For this reason, UNESCO declared literacy as a human right and a tool of personal empowerment.

Programme Director; to illustrate the importance of reading, let highlight the extent of the reading crisis.

The 2016 National Reading Survey commissioned by the South African Book Development Council (SABDC) revealed a lack of reading in South African homes:

- 73% of South Africans over the age of 16 were not interested in reading books;
- 50% of households did not own a single leisure reading book, and that,
- Less than 10% of the population were committed readers.

Bishop and congregants, allow me to report on what we are doing in the literacy space as Government.

In our quest to improve reading for comprehension across the curriculum, throughout society, in 2019, we launched the National Reading Coalition (NRC).

The NRC is an innovative vehicle to deal head-on with the reading for the meaning challenge that involves civil society and Government.

Its raison d'être is to support reading improvement across the country; hence we extend an invitation to the Church to join the coalition.

The NRC's main tasks are establishing reading clubs, training teachers, and material development in Reading, Numeracy and Literacy.

They also have to mobilise resources and expertise to enhance quality teaching and learning in the reading, numeracy, and literacy space.



The NRC has developed and advocated a national plan that aligns and coordinates various initiatives that support existing initiatives, including the *'Read to Lead' Campaign*.

Subsequently, we have launched a comprehensive “cradle to the grave,” Integrated National Reading Sector Plan.

The spanking new Integrated National Reading Sector Plan aligns with our policy lodestar, the *National Development Plan (NDP)* that seeks to achieve critical developmental milestones by 2030.

The NDP envisions that by 2030, schools will provide all learners with quality education, especially in Literacy, Mathematics and Science.

The National Reading Sector Plan is an overarching evidence-based strategy that will alter the country's entire reading and literacy landscape.

It complements rather than replaces all existing literacy initiatives, including the *Read to Lead Campaign*, the Primary School Reading Improvement Plan (PSRIP), and other reading/literacy initiatives.

The main thrust of our comprehensive National Reading Sector Plan is to ensure reading for meaning across the curriculum, in all grades, and in all schools throughout the country.

Our plan is to ensure that we teach all our learners to read well and read for meaning.

By 2024, the plan would have been successfully implemented throughout the system, meaning: wall-to-wall coverage, circuit by circuit, district by district, and school by school.

This National Reading Sector Plan is supported by teachers and subject advisors trained on reading methodologies.

All our learners would have been provided with a minimum reading pack for improving their literacy levels.

We would have mobilised civil society across the nook and cranny of our country to be part of this reading revolution.

Thus it aligns nicely with the programme we are launching today.

Furthermore, we appeal for more partners to extend the library provisioning in the underserviced areas under our *Read to Lead Campaign*.

In our public messaging, we emphasised the importance of literacy not as a portion of education but as the core of education.

I am happy to report that we have launched the President's Reading Circle – Let the Nation Read – a virtual book inspired by the President.

Through virtual platforms, the President's Reading Circle hosts a book discussion/event on the last Thursday of every month to encourage reading and promote dialogue around topical and social issues that emerge from the stories.

We encourage everybody to join it by registering on [www.nrc.org.za](http://www.nrc.org.za)

Bishop, before I retire from this platform, I am also happy to report that the much-vaunted Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme (PES) enters its second phase.

We have secured funding from Treasury to provide 287 000 unemployed young people with employment and training opportunities in the education sector.

The initiative seeks to mitigate the devastating economic challenges brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Interestingly, a significant number of the Educator Assistants, 22 000 of them, will be placed as Reading Champions.

During the PES's first phase, these young people were instrumental in supporting our teachers and learners by creating stimulating classroom environments conducive to reading development.

Finally, I am glad the Church has invested in early learning through the Early Childhood Centre (ECD) launch we witnessed today.

As the Basic Education sector, we are on the cusp of something bold and exciting concerning the function shift of the Early Childhood Development centres from the Department of Social Development to the Basic Education.

Since the cabinet decision was made a few years back, much work has been accomplished.

The cabinet decision allows the Basic Education Department to assume complete control: registration, curriculum design and provision, funding, and management of all ECDs.

The decision to effect a function shift to Basic Education aligns with international trends and UNESCO ECD guidelines.

In August, we launched the first-of-its-kind ECD national census, highlighting opportunities to broaden access to quality learning for every South African child.

The ECD Census 2021 data and indicators will also establish a baseline for assessing the quality of learning (for registered and unregistered ECDs) through play in South Africa.

The ECD Census 2021 marks the first public activity of the Department of Basic Education in preparing for the relaunch of a much improved, reimagined and integrated ECD sector.

I am happy to report that the new, much improved, reimagined and integrated; ECD sector is set for official launch in 2022 under the auspices of the Basic Education Department.

Bishop, please extend our gratitude to all partners who contributed to the launch apart from the Church.

These include the National Library of South Africa, Vivlia, Macmillan and Van Schaik Publishers, and many companies and individuals who pledged their support during the Golf Day and Cocktail Evening events.

I thank you.