



**basic education**

Department:  
Basic Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**Keynote Address by the Minister of Basic Education, Mrs  
Angie Motshekga, MP, at the School Safety Community  
Imbizo in Ivory Park, Johannesburg**

**10 September 2022**

Programme Director

Johannesburg East Education District Director: Ms Shirley Molobi

Principals and SMTs

School Governing Body Associations

Representatives from Faith-Based Organisations

Organised Labour

Learner Organisations and Social Partners

Ladies and Gentleman

I greet you.

I am glad we are here today as a community united in our endeavour to keep our schools open, functioning and free from external environmental factors such as crime and grime.

We thank you all for attending this School Safety Community Imbizo thus placing the safety and security of our public schooling system at the centre of the work that we all do.

The issue of school safety is not an add-on to what we do as basic education.

Still, it is at the heart of improving learner outcomes and providing an enabling environment for optimal teaching and learning.

We have a constitutional obligation to provide basic education; thus, ensuring safety and security in our schools is embedded in the constitutional injunction to provide education.

Programme director Ivory Park is a densely populated residential area located here in Johannesburg.

Although smaller in comparison to other informal settlements, townships and suburbs, Ivory Park is a microcosm of modern post-apartheid South Africa.

Like some in South Africa's residential townships, this area battles high unemployment, dearth of service delivery at a municipal level like housing, water, refuse collection, electricity, and to some extent policing.

As a result of environmental factors plaguing Ivory Park, our schools have become a site of contestation.

Still community anger at low levels of service delivery spills over to our schools.

Sadly, some of our schools have become crime scenes and suffer from general neglect.

According to Gauteng Education Department (GDE), schools in Ivory Park are experiencing high school safety challenges such as gangsterism, which we know comes from the community.

The provincial Department says illicit drugs have reached the school premises, and our learners are not only users but also dealers.

Evidence exists of learners abusing alcohol, bullying others, and general ill-discipline is on the rise, and so is the increase in early unplanned and unwanted teenage pregnancies.

There's a disturbing phenomenon of rise in school vandalism and theft.

However, the response from some community members has not helped but fueled the fire by organising violent service delivery protests during which schooling is disrupted.

According to Police Minister Bheki Cele, South Africa recorded more than 900 service delivery protests in six months, from August (2021) to January 2020.

As we know, Ivory Park has a fair share of these protests, the majority of whom are genuine and peaceful protests.

Our problem as the education sector is when service delivery protesters use our schools as a bargaining chip to resolve political issues.

As a community of Ivory Park, I urge all community leaders to insulate schools from all sorts of service delivery protests implications.

It doesn't help that when principals convene parents' meetings to solve issues troubling schooling, there's generally poor attendance.

I must admit that our response to increasing levels of school disruption and general safety challenges has been less than ideal.

It is clear that we have fewer patrollers allocated to schools.

And the community has requested an increase in the deployment of female patrollers to assist girl learners in their hour of need.

I urge the responsible Department to pay school patrollers on time.

There's no excuse not to compensate people for doing community service, sacrificing their time and risking their lives.

I am told also that there's an increasing phenomenon that disrupts schooling related to the ancestral calling of specific learners.

Currently, no policy addresses the ancestral calling of learners guiding schools on what to do.

I am making a firm commitment to put together a team to develop a policy on this matter as it is a huge part of people exercising their constitutional rights to cultural practices.

I am also told that schools face an increasing number of learners who come from child-headed households.

We must, as a collective, focus on this emerging crisis and unleash the joint Government response of providing a social safety net for these learners.

I am convinced that these myriad problems of drugs, alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancies, and poor service delivery matters are a perfect storm here in Ivory Park.

Therefore, we can no longer discuss school safety in isolation.

School safety cannot be divorced from social ills such as drug peddling, teenage pregnancies and alcohol abuse tormenting our communities and, by extension, our learners.

As Government, we need a long-term plan to address the current socio-economic problems facing Ivory Park.

The people of Ivory Park deserve reliable energy; Eskom shall electrify homes to minimise fire accidents and improve people's lives and livelihoods.

The people of Ivory Park deserve a clean environment, running water and flowing drains; the City of Johannesburg must provide this service.

It is not a favour to the community but a constitutional right.

I know that the South African Human Rights Commission, since 2019, has been intimately involved in assisting the Ivory Park community in solving service delivery bottlenecks.

The Commission has long offered to play a mediatory role between the community, the City of Johannesburg, and other spheres of Government to reach practical and long-lasting solutions.

The people of Ivory Park deserve decent housing; the Gauteng Government shall ramp up its housing provisioning and move residents living in floodplains and overcrowded informal settlements to safety.

The People of Ivory Park deserve to sleep soundly at night and walk their neighbourhood in peace; hence the police must show no mercy to murderers, drug peddlers, thieves, saboteurs of economic infrastructure and other hoodlums.

For instance, in November 2021, police statistics showed that Ivory Park was amongst the 30 police stations hit by the high murder rate in the country.

We urge community members never to tire of reporting criminal activities to the police.

We urge all parents of school-going learners to be active in their schools and attend school governing bodies' meetings.

We demand our principals lead the implementation of existing policies to deal with school safety challenges, such as the National School Safety Framework (NSSF).

A key feature of this document (NSSF) is that it draws on the relationship between violence and other ecological factors relating to safe and caring schools by locating the school within its broader community.

As I said earlier, we should locate schools' safety within the overall functioning of the Ivory Park community.

The Framework provides a vital instrument through which minimum standards for safety at school can be established, implemented and monitored, and for which schools, districts and provinces can be held accountable.

The Framework aims to create a safe, violent, threat-free, supportive learning environment for learners, teachers, principals, school governing bodies and administration.

The broad objectives of this safety framework are to:

- Assist the school in understanding and identifying all security issues and threats;

- Guide schools to effectively respond to identified security issues and threats;
- Create reporting systems and manage reported incidents appropriately; and
- Help the school to monitor its progress over time.

Finally, the Framework includes a series of addendums, offering discrete, stand-alone training manuals and materials covering specific school safety aspects. These include:

- The School Bullying module;
- The Homophobia module;
- The Xenophobia module; and
- Additional gangs awareness material.

The low-hanging fruits of the Framework are the creation of safety committees in schools and the much vaunted joint initiative with the police known as Adopt a School programme.

In terms of the Protocol with the South African Police Service (SAPS), every police station must adopt a school to deal speedily with incidents of violence and criminality within school premises.

Other packages of interventions for high-risk schools must include crime awareness workshops and the provision of psychosocial services.



Thus, I call upon every school in this community to have a school safety committee and link up with the local police as adoptees.

The other related project is the Adopt a Cop programme which helps schools to have a dedicated cop on speed dial.

The programme is designed to curb school crime, such as bullying, the abuse of drugs, social ills like suicide, and general ill-discipline.

To harness the community's human resources, all schools must be active in the Community Police Forums as a collective endeavour to be the community's eyes and ears.

Furthermore, (adopt a school and adopt a cop) programmes seek to educate learners about crime and proactively eliminate crime in institutions of learning.

I appeal to the Gauteng Police Commissioner to designate a senior official at a provincial level to manage the roll-out of the Adopt a School and Cop programmes.

In the meantime, we call upon responsible authorities to ramp up the deployment of school patrollers in all identified hotspots.

Meanwhile, all schools in Ivory Park must strengthen the roll-out of sports, arts and cultures as part of the master plan to curb violence in local schools.

As we know, sports, arts, and culture teach discipline, offer learners a sense of purpose, and increase self-esteem.

As part of school safety, we must also implement the Protocol for the Management and Reporting of Sexual Abuse and Harassment in Schools.

The Protocol's purpose is to provide schooling communities with standard operating procedures to respond to reports of sexual abuse and harassment perpetrated against learners, teachers and other school staff.

This Protocol, therefore, ensures a safe, caring and enabling environment for learning and teaching, both inside and outside the classroom.

The Protocol prescribes an approach that enables teachers to identify, intervene, report and support all learners and school staff who are sexually abused or harassed in school.

On the other hand, it offers an appropriate response to perpetrators of sexual abuse and harassment.

Finally, we have the Alcohol and Drug Use Prevention and Management Programme in place throughout the country.

The programme is integrated into the school curriculum through the Life Orientation/Life Skills subject area.

This is supported by co-curricular activities implemented through Peer Education programmes.

The programme adopts a public health approach and involves interventions to create an enabling environment for policy implementation, prevention interventions, early detection and treatment, care and support.

The thrust of interventions by the Department is to prevent alcohol and drug use.

However, partnerships are set up with other government departments and non-governmental organisations to facilitate access to treatment, care and support where required.

Therefore, we must find a way to sponsor learners needing drug rehabilitation.

Thus, I support the recommendation that learners should not pay at SANCA to facilitate testing and drug rehabilitation.

In addition, we have finalised a Psychosocial Support Strategy to guide the institutionalisation of psychosocial support in the sector.

Programme Director, it is only through the combined efforts of school authorities, parents, community leaders and the Government that school violence can be addressed effectively.

These efforts must be located within a broader framework of an intensive social crime prevention strategy that addresses much of the violence beyond the reach of police and which occurs within the home environment.

We must rescue Ivory Park from gun-toting assassins, saboteurs, gun smugglers, drug peddlers and common thieves and murderers.

We must insulate our schools from the community's environmental factors that negatively affect teaching and learning.

We have to, at all costs, provide an enabling environment for our learners to partake in noble endeavour of learning so that they, too, can reach their full potential and grow up to be responsible members of society.

We have to do it together, now.

I thank you.