

**Speech to be rendered by the MEC for Education, Mrs Reginah Mhaule at the Launch of School Libraries at Tenteleni Primary School on 21 September 2015**

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Programme Director and Acting District Director, Mr. Albert Mdaka

The Executive Mayor of Mbombela Local Municipality, Cllr SP Mathonsi

Eduscimat Business Development Executive, Mrs. Maureen Mphatsoe

SGB Chairperson from Tenteleni primary school, Mr. CS Ncongwane

SGB Chairperson from Sitintile Secondary School, Mr. JF Nkabinde

Members of the SGB for both schools

Provincial Chairperson Mpumalanga Writers Association, Mr. TM Mongwe

Members of Senior Management

Mgwenya Circuit Manager, Ms. Nomsa Mhlongo

Principals from both Schools

Educators,

Non-Teaching Staff

Learners

Ladies and Gentlemen,

## **Sanibonani**

I am really happy to be amongst you today as this is a special day for us to spread our knowledge base and fight the battle for reading, writing and calculating. Let me forthrightly thank you for making your time to attend this event so that we can together change the tides of history.

“Literacy is a key lever of change and a practical tool of empowerment on each of the three main pillars of sustainable development: economic development, social development and environmental protection,” said former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan.

It is thus a great pleasure to be part of the public-private partnership that is intent on eradicating illiteracy and banish it to the books of history while at the same time offering sustainable development at all fronts. Seeing government and the private sector engaged hand in hand in an effort to bring real change and meaning to the lives of our people really brings hope for a better future.

## **The 1000 School Libraries Campaign**

We are here today as part of the 1000 school libraries campaign which was launched by the Minister for Basic Education, Mrs. Angie Motshekga at Uvuyo primary school in Dobsonville in Soweto on 22 July 2015. This campaign seeks to built, refurbish and resource 1000 school libraries per year. We are happy to say that in the province,

Sitintile secondary and Tenteleni primary are beneficiaries of this campaign.

The 1000 school libraries campaign has given us an opportunity to rally energies with other activities for the month of September such as National Spelling Bee, Drop All and Read, Early Grade Reading Assessment, Book Week and International Literacy Day to conscientise communities about the promotion of reading and support for libraries.

### **The 2012 General Household Survey**

It is really a matter of concern that there are great numbers of people who are illiterate in the country this is indeed a sad story but doing something about it is very comforting.

According to the 2012 General Household Survey (GHS) conducted by Statistics South Africa (StatsSA), adults over the age of 15, whose level of education was lower than Grade 7, were asked whether or not they are able to, have some difficulty, or have a lot of difficulty in writing their name, reading, filling in a form, writing a letter, calculating monetary change or reading road signs.

The survey found about 2.643 million people in South Africa who have some or a lot of difficulty reading, or are unable to read. This corresponds to almost 7% of the adult population.

It is this sad development that spurs us on as government and the private sector to forge ahead with the eradication of illiteracy. It is thus our intention to change this situation for the better and all our efforts feed into that.

## **MEC Book Club**

As part of an initiative to inspire reading and the freeing of the mind, we have since 21 July 2015 requested all citizens of Mpumalanga to make time every day to read a book.

In this endeavour, the Mpumalanga Department of Education has collaborated with various institutions and organisations including Vodacom, Shuter and Shooter and the Nelson Mandela Foundation to mount an aggressive Reading Campaign.

Part of this campaign was the establishment of the MEC's Book Club in which I prescribe three books to be read by members of the club who in turn publish their reviews on the departmental website page.

This act is designed to inspire and share the reading journey bringing a whole new perspective and insight to the reading experience. It is also our view that having the opportunity to analyze writing with fellow readers can only help one gain a greater understanding of the writing and reading process.

On top of that, the Department of Education has collaborated with Ilanga Mall with regards to the Book Flood, a campaign to ensure that individuals, organisations and companies donate books and other reading materials such as magazines to be distributed to schools.

To conscientise our communities about the importance of reading and literacy, we have celebrated the International Literacy Day on the 08 September 2015 at KaMhlushwa Primary School focusing on the Drop All and Read campaign at schools and home. This campaign was also extended to the religious and civic communities for buy in.

## **Gratitude to MEC Mahlangu-Mabena and Mayor Mathonsi**

Public libraries are considered fundamental to the development and upliftment of communities. Access to libraries creates and sustains a reading culture. The value of libraries in terms of support of literacy, education, and the principle of lifelong learning forms an integral part of our modern democracy.

To ensure the provision of these services, the Department of Culture, Sport and Recreation and the Mbombela Local Municipality have committed to improving public library access in all communities, developing and sustaining a culture of reading and the provision of access to information for all.

It is in that light that I want to express my gratitude to the MEC for Culture, Sport and Recreation, Mrs. Norah Mahlangu-Mabena in absentia and the sterling work that her Department is doing in resourcing community libraries.

The Mpumalanga Department of Education also welcomes the collaboration between the two departments in the promotion of literacy and support to community libraries.

We are thus happy that in keeping with the campaign to elevate reading to greater heights, the Department of Culture, Sport and Recreation is a key player because it has a role in almost all of these literacy factors, from access to libraries, reading materials and training to promotion and cooperation.

I also want to thank the Executive Mayor, Councillor Mathonsi for the support that the Mbombela Local Municipality has given to libraries and the campaigns mounted to promote literacy and the culture of reading within this locality.

It is in this regard that I want to appeal to both the MEC for Culture, Sport and Recreation and the Executive Mayor to carry on with the promotion of literacy and related campaigns within their spheres of influence to enable this movement to spread throughout the province and the nation.

MEC for Culture, Sport and Recreation, Mrs. Norah Mahlangu-Mabena in absentia and Executive Mayor Mathonsi, please keep the doors of our community libraries open for the promotion of the culture of reading.

### **Give Credit to Eduscimat**

Programme Director, earlier on I alluded to the great public-private partnership taking off in this part of the nation. I am really excited that civil society and business have come to the party with regards to the business of teaching and learning.

It gives me pleasure to acknowledge the great patriotic deed that Eduscimat has played in the construction of a Maths and Science laboratory in this school. We are grateful to Eduscimat for this generous deed and we are quite convinced that the laboratory will change the teaching and learning of science and mathematics at Tenteleni. It is now up to the teachers and the learners to come to the party and do their own part.

I just want to plead with the learners to take good advantage of this facility as it can make their dreams of being scientist and professionals in the medical, engineering fields possible. We now expect good results from this school because of the state of the art laboratory which will make teaching and learning not only practical but fun as well. Please take good care of the facility and don't vandalize it for the sake of those who are coming after you.

Mrs. Mphatsoe please convey our sincere gratitude to the whole of Eduscimat staff and management. As the Mpumalanga Department of Education, we are pleased to collaborate and work with you in other projects and we are deeply indebted in your generosity. Please continue with your good deeds as this leaves a positive legacy for our communities and children.

## **Conclusion**

Nelson Mandela once said:

*“Education is the great engine of personal development.*

*It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine that a child of farm workers can become the president of a great nation.*

*It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another”*

On this note, I want to thank the Executive Mayor and our colleagues from Culture, Sport and Recreation.

Our gratitude also go to our sponsors and Eduscimat in particular who have contributed in the construction of the laboratory.

Indeed, as articulated by government, *Today is better than yesterday and tomorrow will be better than today. Working together we can do more.*

I see light at the end of the tunnel.

**Ngiyabonga.**