

SPEECH BY MEC MAPULA MOKABA PHUKWANA DURING THE HANDING –OVER OF A SCHOOL AT SILWERSEE PRIMARY SCHOOL : MOPANI DISTRICT

29 AUGUST 2016

Programme director

Education is the only weapon we can use to break the cycle of poverty that continues to subject our people to a life without hope. It is also true that education is the only route out of poverty.

The Executive Mayor of Mopani District Municipality

The Mayor of Greater Tzaneen Municipality

The head of Department of Safety, Security and Liaison

Officials from sister departments

The principal of Silwersee School

The School Governing Body of Silversee

Parents and learners

Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

What gives me pleasure is to see the prophecy that was made in 1955 at Kliptown playing itself for all to see. When our fore bearers met in Kliptown in 1955 to map a way forward for this country, they said in the new South Africa they were visualising, doors of learning shall be opened to all. Indeed here we are today, opening the doors of learning to all.

Education has always been an integral part of policies and priorities of the South African government. And we all know the power of education in changing the economic status of any country and the positive spin-offs to families, communities and the nation.

Societies across the world pride themselves on their country's level of literacy. The higher the literacy level, the higher is the level of human development in the country. Well-functioning democratic national states rests on an educated populace.

We cannot confidently say our democracy is working well if we have a low literacy level. To understand the intricacies of democracy and enjoy its benefits, you need to be to have at least a minimum education. It is for that reason that the government have prioritised education. The handing-over of this school is symbolic in that while it addresses the educational needs of a community, it also goes a long way into strengthening our democracy.

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It touches me as a parent that it had to take our female officers such a bold and progressive initiative to rescue the future of black children. It truly emphasises the fact that when you educate a woman you educate a nation. These women could not fold their arms, look at the kids helplessly and continue to say Ag shame.

What these committed and patriotic public servants did is what I refer to as Reinventing Government. They understand that governments are operating on a limited financial budget and they felt obliged to assist the government. Government alone cannot do everything to satisfy the human needs.

We need such public private partnership, where private individuals, groups and companies come on board to help build our nation. I want to believe that these public servants like me and you, teachers, nurses, social workers and others could also initiate programs of this nature.

Such social upliftment for national benefit gives the contributor an internal pride and satisfaction. You feel that you are performing God's purpose for living. The book of **Acts chapter 20 verse 35**, advices us when it says:

I have given you an example that by working hard like this we should help the weak. We should remember the words that the Lord Jesus said, 'Giving gifts is more satisfying than receiving them.'

Such initiatives are not necessarily based on individual benefit. I am convinced that these proud officers who initiated this project does not necessarily have children of families in this particular school. They did this out of passion and love for their fellow human beings and country.

The fact that this school is in a farming settlement should disadvantage the surrounding communities. When we grew up we used to have debating sessions with ridiculous motions like ***"A township life is better than a rural life"***. Those living in the townships felt they can afford to look down upon rural inhabitants.

The dawn of democracy came taught us that people are the same with similar human needs. It does not matter whether you are in the rural or urban area, the need for knowledge through education is the same. Our Constitution guarantees our human rights including the right to education. One of the priorities of this government is rural development and land reform. As such, Silversee community has all the rights to benefit from rural development as well. They see silver and brightness to the future. Definitely, every cloud has a silver lining.

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These pride Women officials, are exercising what is entrenched in our own law of the land. This is a creative solution to South Africa' education crisis - it is a co-action, co-learning partnership between Schools, Business and the Department of Transport. It is an enabling social cohesion through partnerships, and empowering our learners and educators to become change leaders in their schools and communities.

When government introduced policies such as no-fee schools and national schools nutrition programmes, popularly known as feeding schemes, the objective is to increase access to education. We came with these policies so that no child should be deprived from accessing education on the basis of school fees or poverty. Despite these progressive initiatives poverty continues to be a challenge in terms of many learners still not affording school uniforms. We aware of this challenges and government in partnerships with individuals, business and NGO's are looking at solutions to ease such challenges.

The Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) initiative should be encouraged in all fronts. The amount of donations and sponsors that came forward and ensured that the schooling conditions of these learners are changed for better can still do more. I would like to make a humble plea to our donors that the school enrolment is not that big. Therefore, continuing with the spirit of PPP they should look into the possibility of adopting this school. And because you are many you can even adopt the school in terms of its grades. That will ensure that no learner is left out of education journey because of lack of uniform.

I would like to thank our Women officers for such a humbling initiative to end 2016 Women's month on such a high note. But I believe this action also qualifies to be a continuation of the legacy of our former president, Nelson Mandela. Making Everyday a Mandela Day. We all know he had a soft spot for poor children. All he wanted was to see their situation changing for the better. Seeing the conditions of these children today changing for the better, the old man should be smiling in heaven.

Let me also thank the principal and teachers of Silversee Primary School for having welcomed the initiative from our Women officers. Educators are people who also value conducive environment in order to adequately impart knowledge to our children. We all know that such initiatives are not smooth sailing, there were challenges along the way but ultimately our Proud Crop of the Nation ladies did it.

This country is looking up to these children as future leaders of tomorrow. So, we would be failing as stakeholders if we do not level the playing fields by ensuring that they receive education under conducive conditions.

In collusion Program Director, let us hold hands together and fight alcohol and substance abuse in our communities. Children drop out of school because of bad fashions such as Nyaope drugs and alcohol abuse. Our children's future is destroyed by drugs and alcohol abuse. We can no longer behave as if everything is normal as the community, let us unite and fight these destructive habits.

As we educate these children, let us do so with belief and hope that they will grow up to become responsible adults ready to take this country forward.

As the MEC for Transport, Safety, Security, I remind you that: Let's also work together with our CPF, CSF and Traffic Officers to assist our SAPS to enforce the Law. Mahatma Gandhi once said:

"You must be the change you wish to see in the world."

Simply translated in our language to say: ***"Ni fanela u vha tshanduko ine na tama u i vhona shangoni."***

NDO LIVHUWA!

Thank you!!!!