



MEDIA STATEMENT

Attention: Journalists and News Editors

Issued by: Department of Women, Youth, and Persons with Disabilities

Date: 15 January 2024

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MINISTER SINDISIWE CHIKUNGA JOINS NATION-WIDE BACK-TO-SCHOOL CAMPAIGN IN UMSHWATHI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

DURBAN: Tomorrow, **Minister Sindisiwe Chikunga** in the Presidency responsible for **Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities** will be visiting schools in her parliamentary constituency area as part of the **Nation-wide Back-to-School Campaign**.

Deployed to the **uMshwathi Parliamentary Constituency Office**, Minister Chikunga will be joined by His Worship, **Mayor Cllr Zondi of uMshwathi Local Municipality**. This initiative aims to not only monitor the state of readiness of the basic education sector but equally motivate learners, educators, and communities as they embark on the 2025 academic year, while also congratulating the **Matric Class of 2024**.

The Minister extends her heartfelt congratulations to the Matric Class of 2024 for their outstanding achievements. The national pass rate reached a record high of **87.3%**, reflecting the dedication and resilience of learners and educators across the country.

Programme Details:

- **Date:** Thursday, 16 January 2025
- **Briefing Venue:** uMshwathi Local Municipality Council Chamber, New Hanover
- **Briefing Time:** 7:30
- **Programme of Schools to Be Visited:**
 - 8:30 – Georgenau Combined School, Wartberg
 - 10:30 – Cool Air Secondary School, Cool Air
 - 12:15 - Mphelandaba Secondary School, eKhamanzi

Minister Chikunga also **commends** the following **high schools in the uMshwathi Local Municipality** for their remarkable performance:

- **Sibongumusa High School:** 97.6%
- **Masijabule High School:** 94.8%
- **Ekupholeni High School:** 93.5%
- **Gobizembe High School:** 84.8%
- **Swayimane High School:** 65.2%

- **Matatane High School:** 64.4%
- **Goergenau High School:** 63.3%
- **Cool Air Secondary School:** 58.3%

As the Minister responsible for youth development concerns herself with the skilling, educating and development of young people. Minister Chikunga thus emphasizes the importance of supporting matriculants in their future endeavours. “It is important to prevent these young individuals from becoming part of the **NEET** (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) group. Through agencies like the **National Youth Development Agency (NYDA)** and in collaboration with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), we must ensure that these matriculants are exposed to **various post-schooling opportunities**”, says Minister Chikunga.

Reflecting on the achievements of learners with disabilities, Minister Chikunga acknowledges the significant challenges they face in accessing inclusive education. To address these hurdles, the Department of Women, Youth, and Persons with Disabilities (DWYPD) and the Department of Basic Education (DBE) have established a joint working group to enhance support and improve access for learners with special needs. Institutions of higher learning have made commendable progress in providing tailored support for students with disabilities, and the **National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS)** continues to ensure **fee-free education for students from households earning R600,000 or less annually**.

The number of **learners with special education needs** who wrote the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations increased to **6,470 in 2024, up from 5,288 in 2023**. This growth underscores the progress being made to support these learners, even as further efforts are needed to ensure their continued academic success and broader inclusion.

Special recognition is given to **Given Malaka**, an 18-year-old partially blind learner from Setotolwane Elsen Secondary School in Limpopo, and **Sisipho Danisa**, a 17-year-old deaf learner from North West Secondary School for the Deaf, for their remarkable achievements. Despite challenging conditions, Given became a top achiever and plans to study law at the University of Limpopo, while Sisipho, the first in her family to pass matric, aims to study law and business management at the University of Free State. Both exemplify resilience and inspire us all.

The historical intersections of oppression along race, class, and gender have shaped the lived realities of many South Africans, with young girls often bearing the brunt of these compounded inequalities. Achieving the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals**—particularly **Goal 4 (Quality Education)** and **Goal 5 (Gender Equality)**—requires targeted interventions to dismantle these systemic barriers and empower girl learners.

Minister Sindisiwe Chikunga welcomes the remarkable performance of girl learners in the 2024 National Senior Certificate (NSC) results, where **342,398 girls met the NSC requirements** compared to **272,031 boys**, securing **194,181 Bachelor passes** and **211,426 distinctions**, a testament to their resilience and determination.

Minister Chikunga equally acknowledges the grave national concern over the prevalence of teenage pregnancy, which continues to disrupt the education and futures of many young girls. This challenge is deeply intertwined with South Africa's fight against **gender-based violence (GBV)**, emphasizing the urgent need for interventions such as comprehensive sexuality education and strengthened support systems. Equally alarming is the issue of **sexual harassment by educators**, which compromises the safety and dignity of learners. Schools, as microcosms of society, are meant to be safe spaces for young people to learn, grow, and thrive without fear of exploitation or harm. Minister Chikunga highlighted the troubling fact that in KwaZulu-Natal, some educators accused of sexual misconduct have been suspended for over **57 months**, earning salaries while cases remain unresolved. These delays not only drain public resources, costing millions of rands, but also leave girl learners without closure or justice. She emphasized the importance of strengthening the justice system to ensure swift and decisive action against perpetrators, thereby restoring trust in the education sector.

The Minister reaffirms government's commitment to addressing these challenges through strengthened accountability mechanisms, comprehensive sexuality education, and policies like the **National Policy on the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy**. These efforts aim to ensure that every girl learner can thrive in a safe, supportive educational system that safeguards their futures and dignity.

Education remains an apex priority of the government's pro-poor policies aimed at overcoming poverty, inequality, and unemployment. This is reflected in the fact that education receives the biggest allocation of government's budget. **R480.6 billion allocated to Learning and Culture**, with **R303 billion dedicated to Basic Education**. The Class of 2024's exceptional results are a source of national pride, showcasing the resilience and determination of South Africa's learners. Their achievements inspire hope for a brighter future and underscore the transformative power of education in shaping a prosperous, equitable society.

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Issued by: Department of Women, Youth, and Persons with Disabilities

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