

Women's Month Memorial Lecture

Speech – MEC Mac Jack

NCDOE Provincial Office

Wednesday, 15 August 2019

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The Head of Department of Education;

The Executive Management of the Department of Education;

The Senior and Middle Management of the Department of Education;

Staff Members of the Department of Education;

Most importantly our Woman,

Colleagues, Women in particular - this is your day - "You strike a woman, you strike a rock."

Please receive our familial greetings as we lower the Flag of the Department of Education, an Official Symbol of the Government of the Republic of South Africa in honour of the fallen uncelebrated heroines, from all corners of these Province whom their death has robbed the working women of South Africa of a passionate, dedicated teachers and administrators, whom their role in the Province, will be sorely missed!!! The Department salutes and send its best wishes to all women on

this very special calendar month rightfully reserved for their honour. In many ways this symbolizes triumph of human spirit over evil. Those women, who have walked the talk, will normally echo the words of the song “It Wasn’t Easy – by Cece Winans”.

Chair of the session, allow me to take the audience through the lyrics of this song:

“Don't think for a moment - never felt the pain - You can't imagine - The hurt and the shame - They put the nails through my hands - Pierced my side please understand - It wasn't easy - But it was worth it - It wasn't easy - I didn't have to do it - But I did it anyway - Cause I really love you - So much I took your place - I died for your sins - Yes, I'm the one - Don't take it lightly what I've done - It wasn't easy - But it was worth it - It wasn't easy... - I left my throne - My purpose was the cross - Shed innocent blood I paid the cost”.

Have you ever wondered why we celebrate Women’s Day on the 9th August in South Africa? It has nothing to do with honouring women just because we need another “Mother’s Day”, this day commemorates the 9 August 1956 when women participating in a national march petitioned against pass laws. It has its origins in the struggles of working class women against their working conditions, exploitation, oppression, poverty, inequality and discrimination against women - let us not lose

sight of this day as the day we celebrate and deepen the struggles of women.

Last year we also celebrated the centenary of the birth of Cde. Ma Albertina Sisulu whom as a nurse, identified herself firmly with the struggles of working women, fought for the unity of men and women in the struggle for a just society, and dedicated herself to education for the less privileged girl and boy children. She was the only woman present when the ANC Youth League was formed; she led women in the mass campaigns of the 50s through to the 80s, when she took the helm of leadership in the United Democratic Front (UDF).

The sixty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 11 to 22 March 2019. The **Priority theme was** “Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls”; and the **Reviewed theme was** “Women’s empowerment and the link to sustainable development”

We are proud of the role the government has played over the past 25 years in promoting the struggle of women. The 2019 Report on Status of Women in Economy states valuable information in the report that:

- Girls and women have made significant gains in education, but that girls and young women are not well represented in the maths, science, technology and engineering fields; that women are not reaching the top levels of their fields of study at the same rate as men are; that the rural girl child is not getting the same quality of education infrastructure or content that she deserves and needs; and that often women do not get jobs in the fields that they are qualified in.
- We know that while women are entering the labour market in bigger numbers, the unemployment rate for women is higher than that of men; the women are usually employed in lower pays jobs, and even when we are in the same jobs as men, somehow it is justified that we get a lower pay; there are particular sectors, often lower paid, more individualised and less well organised by the labour movement where women are concentrated - we know women are employed on the farms, as domestic workers; the work is often changed to be casual work as women enter into that type of work.
- Apart from jobs, women struggle to find their place in the economy, whether as small business entrepreneurs; as mining industrialists; as executive managers. The equity ratio at top management of 20 per cent women and 80 per cent men shows how far we have to go. But we also have experience that a woman in management does not

necessarily result in a more favourable working environment for women, as we have seen in Germiston at the TopBet, where a woman manager, on finding a drop of blood in the women's bathroom, gathered all the women workers, asked which of them was menstruating and then got the three women who admitted that they were to be strip searched to see who was responsible for that drop of blood. A human being, male and female, with empathy, would have ensured the blood was cleaned up, and that additional sanitary products were available for women who are “caught short” at work.

- We know that the brunt of poverty bears down hard on women, that the debt of women is higher than that of men and that many women are dependent on the social grants to mitigate poverty and keep their families fed and clothed.
- We also know that women's access to finances, banking facilities, as well as to ownership of property and land excludes many women from economic inclusion. This is made worse by patriarchal inheritance patterns so that even where a family or household has a house, has land, when the father of the household dies, we often find that the mother of the household.
- The Report also focused on violence against women. No women, elderly or young, or a girl, who is scared to walk

down the street on her own, who knows she is not safe at home, or at work or in the community, can feel confident to stand up in her community, in the workplace, in her organisations, or in political life of our country to raise up her voice and highlight her issues. In Giyani, a single man has terrorised the community by raping women that no girl or young women walks anywhere except in a large group.

This is the lives of working women in South Africa. We must dig deeper to understand why this is experience of women, not just here but across the capitalist world, and hence focus on a long term strategy to secure total socio-economic and political emancipation of women and gender equality.

## **UNDERSTANDING GENDER**

“Woman’s fate is bound up with that of the exploited male. It is important that we clarify our understanding of gender relations. This is imperative in order to understand gender oppression and develop strategies to eradicate this form of oppression. Too, often, the concept of gender and sex are used interchangeably while in essence they are quite different. The most common misunderstanding of concept of gender is that it simply means addressing men and women’s concerns equally. This effectively ignores unequal power gender power relations, and undermines the central objective, which is the emancipation of women.

Sex refers to biological difference between men and women. Gender on the other hand refers to socially constructed and culturally defined differences between men and women. It is therefore not natural but created through socialisation using institutions such as the family, the church, religion education and schools, the state and the economy. In addition gender relations refer to the unequal power relationship between men and women.

Gender role exist in all spheres of society with the gender division of labour in the family. Gender roles are expectations of how men and women should behave in particular socially defined ways. For example men are supposed to be natural leaders, decision makers and providers; women are expected to be caregivers, supporters and followers of men.

While gender relations are defined at particular moment in the history of human kind, we are concerned with gender relations under patriarchal relations. Patriarchy refers to the system of male domination and control at all level of society. Patriarchy has a material basis in the sexual division of labour, exploitation of women's unpaid labour and their subordination in the household. It is supported by the patriarchal ideology that sees women as inferior to men. In terms of this sexual hierarchy men and women are accorded different roles. For instance, women role is conceived as being a nurturer and caregiver, while men

are entrusted with decision-making. Patriarchy manifests itself in all aspects of society including the economy, political institutions and ideologies, the legal system, religion, social and cultural institutions, such as the family, the media, education systems and so forth. The nature of patriarchal relations varies from society to society. At the same time women's oppression takes various forms depending on race, class, religion, marital status and age.

Under apartheid, race, gender and class oppression were combined intricate system of oppression. The racial and gender form of colonial domination masks its underlying economic logic – the exploitation of the black working class. Race and gender oppression are not about mere prejudice, but ultimately about using power and control in the interest of capital. Apartheid capitalism also benefited from women's oppression in that large numbers of African women worked as domestic workers and cleaners under extremely exploitative conditions. Furthermore, women's unpaid labour in the rural areas enabled bosses to pay extremely low wages to migrant workers.

Apartheid laws set out limited and impoverished roles for African women. In particular, as they enforced migrant labour, they defined the role of African women in society and the economy. At the same time, the colonial system in South Africa, as throughout the continent, intensified the gender



oppression found in pre-colonial systems. The combination of colonial and customary oppression denied women basic social and economic rights in the family and the community. Many women were barred from living in cities, owning land, family planning, inheriting, borrowing money or participating in political and social struggles. The system led to widespread abuse of women, both inside and outside the family. African women were confronted by triple oppression – oppression on the basis of their, race, gender and class. Black working class women bore the brunt of apartheid and patriarchal oppression.

Women's emancipation is therefore a central feature of the struggle against apartheid. As Samora Machel stated that women's emancipation is "not an act of charity but a precondition for the liberation of society". Our society cannot be free if half the population is still oppressed.

Women should be empowered to challenge the system of patriarchy. While it is important to recognise that men have an important role in the struggle for gender equality, the leading role of women should always be emphasised – this however, should not be confused with making gender issues a 'women's issue'.

In order to consciously combat sexism and gender oppression in our organisational policies and strategies and in broader society these must be infused with a **gender consciousness**.

A 'gendered perspective' aims to mainstream and integrate gender struggles, rather than seeing these struggles as women issue that are treated in a separate and isolated way. A gendered perspective has the strategic objective of the fundamental transformation of society and unequal power relations. It also means a gender analysis is applied at all levels with regard to policies, programmes, planning strategy and evaluation. However, a gendered perspective still recognises the central role of women's leadership.

It is also important to emphasise the fact that the struggle to transform gender relations will benefit both men and women by creating an enabling environment for all to realise their full human potential. Gender equality will also bring visible benefits to society by drawing in half of the population into productive activity. Gender equality however, cannot be realised without conscious strategies to redress unequal power relations between men and women in organisations and in the broader society. As emphasised above, the NDR aims to bring an end to this form of oppression.

## **ASSESSING THE CURRENT SITUATION**

The ushering in of a new democratic dispensation and the adoption of a progressive Constitution, have brought visible changes for the majority of the formerly oppressed. The Constitution outlaws discrimination of women and calls for

measures to redress past imbalances in terms of race, sex and disability and other prohibited grounds of discrimination. The adoption of the Employment Equity Act will go a long way in overcoming discrimination and inequality within the workplace. In addition, the Promotion of Equality and Prohibition of Discrimination Act will also contribute towards gender equity in all spheres of society. Thus legislative measures are now in place to address all forms of discrimination and inequality. Linked to this, the provision of basic service such as water and health care has brought visible relief for millions of people, especially women in the rural areas.

Yet, despite these advances gender inequality remains entrenched in our society. To understand this, it is important to analyse gender relations in the labour market and within the organisation. It is also important to analyse the impact of economic and social policies on gender relations in contemporary South Africa. In general, access to basic service is still skewed in racial, gender and geographic terms. Further, the majority of the poor are women particularly African women. Women tend to be vulnerable to the HIV/AIDS pandemic and job losses. The unpaid labour continues unabated.

## **State of Gender Relations in the Labour Market**

The labour market is still segmented in terms of race and gender. It is characterised by a sexual division of labour in which women are largely associated with domesticity and servicing, while men are associated with science, machinery and technology. Women, particularly black women are concentrated in low paid-jobs, the service sector and face wage discrimination. They tend to be concentrated in vulnerable sectors such as domestic work and the farms as well as in survivalist activities in the informal sector.

Males particularly white males dominate the upper echelons of the labour market. As a result of inherited wage inequities and the fact that women are concentrated in low paid jobs, women's share of income is substantially lower than men. Discrimination also takes the form of differences in the valuing of men and women's jobs translating in wage disparity. The majority of the unemployed are women particularly black women.

Women also face hardship in accessing and sustaining their participation in the labour market. The majority of women have to juggle careers and domestic responsibility such as cooking and taking care of children. The shortage of childcare facilities and the sexual division of labour in the home impose serious burdens on women. Maternity leave and pay provision are also

inadequate, and in some cases even the legislated minimum is not complied with.

## Gender Relations within the Department of Education

Women constitute the majority of the Departmental staff members, management structure are predominantly male from administration to the schools. In addition, employment patterns in the Department reproduce the sexual division of labour in society. As shown in the table below most influential positions, such as Executive, Senior and Middle Management are overwhelmingly male-dominated, while the majority of women employed in the Department are at the administrative level or school positions.

School Based - Educators															
Disitric	Principal			Deputy Principal			HOD			Teacher			Grand Total		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
Frances Baard	26	98	124	72	68	140	257	116	373	1 739	628	2 367	2 094	910	3 004
JT Gaetsewe	64	87	151	35	41	76	186	86	272	1 287	547	1 834	1 572	761	2 333
Namaqua	26	38	64	7	10	17	48	36	84	404	152	556	485	236	721
Pixley ka Seme	35	52	87	21	33	54	108	64	172	767	330	1 097	931	479	1 410
ZF Mgcawu	28	62	90	37	30	67	134	84	218	989	380	1 369	1 188	556	1 744
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>516</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>354</b>	<b>733</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>1 119</b>	<b>5 186</b>	<b>2 037</b>	<b>7 223</b>	<b>6 270</b>	<b>2 942</b>	<b>9 212</b>

Male-dominated image and culture of the Department sometimes take the form of women not being taken seriously, and translate into a glib, lip service commitment to gender issues, and a general lack of sensitivity to women's particular organisational needs. Further, women are confronted with resistance at home and experience discouragement and abuse from their partners who feel threatened by the fact that their wives partners are leaders / managers and becoming more assertive, and would like to see them remaining in the home. Some of these attitudes are perpetuated by males in the Department.

The role of sexual harassment in discouraging participation cannot be discounted. Many women are completely discouraged from contesting for management positions since they are immediately "approached" by male managers and feel that they are not treated as colleagues but as sex objects.

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

This Gender Policy need to be put in place from the premise that gender inequality will not disappear on its own accord. There is a need for conscious strategies to eliminate gender inequality within the Department and broader society. This will take the form of specific measures to promote women management and plans to address inequality in the workplace. The development and empowerment of women

workers and the elimination of discrimination and stereotyping are central goals in building gender equality. The measure of gender equality is women's full and equal participation at all levels of the Department.

### **Sexual Harassment**

The Public Service Code of Conduct on Sexual Harassment must be popularised and implemented throughout the Department. This includes education and awareness raising, training of sexual harassment officers and the development of proper procedures.

### **Violence Against Women**

Despite the gains made in South Africa over the past 25 years, women continue to face deep inequalities and oppression as well as enduring struggles against patriarchy. Together we must continue to act to ensure that women and men in our country can live as equal beneficiaries of development. It is only through the women's full and equal participation in all areas of public and private life that we can achieve a sustainable, peaceful and just society as enshrined in our Constitution.

### **Department of Education Special Programmes and Employee Health and Wellness Programme**

The Department's Special Programmes and the Employee Health and Wellness Programme must be a catalyst for

change. The Special Programme should be regarded as the driving force in developing strategies for implementation. The Special Programme should take a hands-on approach, and should therefore:

- have the power to take initiatives and should have a direct input into driving decision making;
- co-ordinate the development of further policies (where there are gaps);
- co-ordinate the implementation of policies through a gender analysis approach;
- monitor and evaluate progress with regard to the implementation of plan of action in the promotion of gender equality;
- Serve as a educational programme on matters of gender transformation;
- Develop the Departmental Gender Transformation Plan;
- Priorities and targets of the Gender Programme to be incorporated into the Gender Plan of Action;
- Ensure that the Plan of Action should also speak to the monitoring and evaluation component;
- Serve as an advocacy group for the successful implementation of policies.



- Submit through the Gender Co-ordinators, reports on progress on the implementation of the Plan of Action.
- Assess plan of action and take corrective measures.

### **Priorities and Setting of Targets**

After a Plan of Action has been developed, the Policy Document must follow with clear priorities, timeframes and budgets. This should then be integrated into the overall Departmental three-year plan and budget. It is important that we priorities activities and allocate adequate resources to achieve our broad aims. The plan must also determine capacity building mechanisms including partnerships with Labour Service Organisations and/or Women's Organisations to achieve targets.

### **Fellow Colleagues,**

It is 101 years since the formation of the Bantu Women's League and 101 years since the birth of that great stalwart of our movement, Mama Albertina Sisulu.

We mark these historic events not merely to recall the extraordinary path that the women of our country have walked over many decades of oppression, repression, discrimination and exploitation.

We mark these historic events not only to applaud the outstanding contributions that millions of women have made to the achievement of our non-racial and non-sexist democracy.

We mark these historic events so that we may be reminded, as we look to the future, that no matter how great the challenges we face, no matter how difficult the problems that we must overcome, by working together – women and men, young and old, black and white – we will prevail.

Guided by the revolutionary vision of Charlotte Maxeke, inspired by the courage and commitment of Albertina Sisulu and fortified by the daily struggles of millions of South African women, we will surely succeed to build a society in which the daughters of our nation will live in peace, dignity, security and comfort.

I thank you.