

**Speech by MEC Martha Bartlett
Handing over of Cheque to the Boitumelo Special School Soccer
Team
Monday, 25 February 2019**

The Northern Cape Department of Education recognises the value of school sport and physical education to provide the foundations necessary for the holistic development of the learner in support of the academic curriculum.

School sport is the bedrock of sports in the country. The department has taken a conscious decision to encourage learners to participate in a variety of sport activities. Participation in sport has many important benefits. Sport can unite our people, build families and communities.

Sport provides challenges and adventures, fills vacuums and gives meaning and a sense of purpose to people's lives. Participation, irrespective of the level at which it occurs, can build self-respect, self-esteem, confidence and enhance the leadership capabilities of learners. Sport is definitely one of the greatest things man has ever created.

It's also a powerful tool that breaks down all the barriers and helps us feel good about ourselves, both physically and mentally. Sport is quite beneficial for children too: by playing sports children develop physical skills, exercise, make new friends, have fun, learn to be a team member, learn about play fair, improve self-esteem, etc.

The enhancement of physical and mental development of children is certainly the most important contribution of sports, but the list of values your child may learn and acquire through sports does not end here. Other positive aspects are numerous, which reveals the true beauty of sport.

Sports can also be used to reduce the social stigma experienced by marginalised groups, including people with disabilities and people with HIV and AIDS. By encouraging these individuals to participate in sport activities with other community members, a shared space and experience is created that helps break down negative perceptions and enables people to focus on what they have in common.

This is an important step in enhancing these individuals' self-concept and emotional health. Hence sport has the ability to overcome social barriers and also to empower individuals by helping to reduce social exclusion and promote lifelong learning.

Emerging evidence highlights the impact of sport in creating stronger communities and addressing issues of community safety, including reductions in anti-social behaviour and reductions in the propensity to commit crime. Sport is a socially acceptable way for the youth to spend their time and energy without getting into trouble on the streets. It offers them an attractive alternative to overcome the root problems associated with crime, violence and drug usage.

It therefore stands to reason that cooperation in sporting activities will enable learners to grow and develop in an enabling environment that will teach them genuinely to “believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity”, as we say in the Preamble to the Constitution.

It is for these reasons that the Northern Cape Department of Education will continue to support the development all of sporting codes and ensure the participation of learners and educators.

We congratulate and wish the Boitumelo Special School Soccer Team well, who will represent South Africa at the Special Olympics in Abu Dhabi from 7-21 March 2019.

Today, we are handing over a Cheque of R40000 to assist and provide in your immediate needs to prepare for the Special Olympics.

Indeed a child in sport, is a child out of court!

Let us take hands in ensuring a brighter future for our children towards the realisation of their dreams and aspirations through sport and education.

I thank you!