



Member of the Executive Council
for Social Development
FREE STATE PROVINCE

**SPEECH BY THE MEC: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, THE HONOURABLE
MRS. OUMA TSOPO (MPL) ON THE OCCASION OF THE GALA EVENING FOR THE
ORIENTATION OF MASUPATSELA YOUTH PIONEERS HELD AT THE NAVALHILL
LODGE, 17TH OF OCTOBER 2008**

Programme Director;

**Deputy Chairperson of the Free State Youth Commission, Ms. Sindiswa
Magwandana;**

The Chief of Staff in the office of the Minister Zola Skweyiya, Mr. Vukani Mthintso;

The Head of Department, Dr. Maharaswa;

Executive, Senior Management and the staff of the Department;

Officials from other government Departments and local municipalities;

Members of Provincial Masupatsela Steering Committee;

The facilitators of the orientation programme;

Our most distinguished guests, the Masupatsela Pioneers;

Members of the Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

**“BUSINESS UNUSUAL: ALL HANDS ON DECK TO SPEED UP ACCESS TO SOCIAL
SERVICES AND WAGE WAR ON POVERTY”**

In his last words before he was hanged by the Apartheid government in 1979, one of the greatest sons to come of this land, Solomon Mahlangu who was only 23 years old said, “...Mom and dad tell my people that I love them...that my blood will nourish the tree that bears the fruits of freedom”. Solomon Mahlangu was about the same age as most of you but he distinguished himself as a patriotic person who did not only die for his people, but for a just course of freedom. Today, we are reaping the fruits from a tree that was nourished by the blood of a young patriotic martyr, a tree of freedom. The challenge facing us today is how many young persons, during this age and era, who are prepared to live and die for this country and let their blood to keep on nourishing the tree that bears the fruit of freedom. There is no better demonstration and explanation of a patriotic person than what Solomon Mahlangu did for his people and their land in the face of

adversity. This is the very same spirit of Solomon Mahlangu which defines the Masupatsela Pioneers and their course for many years ago and many years to come.

The Masupatsela is a noble course which was initiated by another greatest son of Africa, Duma Nokwe under the guidance of the late Mama Kate Molale. Mama Kate Molale is a well-known activist of the struggle and was elected Secretary of the Sophiatown ANC branch in 1954. She played an important role in organising the pioneer organization in Sophiatown, then known and still known as Masupatsela (guides). The Sophiatown guides played an important role in the resistance towards repression and oppression by the Apartheid government. This resistance included boycotts to Bantu Education and stay-aways in the quest for better wages and greater access to social amenities. Mama Kate also taught the Masupatsela and other children within the community the true and inclusive history of our country, based on African heroes. She further prepared them for a life of struggle which defined the order of that time. She is well known for giving instructions in the big rallies to the Masupatsela who wore black, green and gold uniform carrying placards. The Masupatselas also played an important role of managing the crowd as Marshalls, bringing water to the thirsty, singing the freedom songs, selling posters and pamphlets, assisting the frail and the aged.

In paying homage to the Masupatsela Youth Pioneer Movement, the editorial of *Umrabulo*, Volume number 13 of December 2001, nostalgically retorted "... to the combatants of our glorious people's army, Umkhonto we Sizwe, the Spear of the Nation. You cut the trail that we follow today. You are the pioneers of our freedom, the Masupatsela of our dignity. Through resolute struggles, preparedness to sacrifice and determination to serve your people, you have set the examples that we strive to emulate. We salute those who paid the supreme sacrifice, that fell in the field of battle: you are the warriors who have given us freedom and dignity, and your spirit lives on among us. In the words of Solomon Mahlangu, your blood has indeed nourished the sweet fruits of freedom. You did not die in vain: our dignity is a living monument to your historic sacrifice".

The spirit of Masupatsela was carried over also in exile and one of the products of this pioneer movement is the late Mkhululi Nando Nkobi who became a Major in the South African National Defence Force's Gauteng Command Headquarters Unit after returning from exile in 1994. The Masupatsela in exile were mainly the learners who were studying

at the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College. They were known as Masupatsela a Walter Sisulu. The Arusha Conference of 01 to 04 December 1987 in Tanzania was also closed with a message from Masupatsela a Walter Sisulu who were learning in Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College, Tanzania. Ladies and gentlemen, the spirit of Masupatsela is as old as our culture and customs, hence we cannot abandon it now. I am happy to tell you that part of your curriculum will teach you more on the history of Masupatsela and South Africa in general, as part of your Module 1, South Africa and Social Transformation.

CHALLENGES FACING YOUTH OF TODAY

Programme Director, the challenges that faced the young people during the era of Masupatsela a Kate Molale and Masupatsela a Walter Sisulu are different from the challenges that are facing the young people of today. Today we have freedom that these past Masupatselas fought and died for. Whereas these previous young people fought to free us, the current young people must fight the social ills that are threatening the very same freedom which Solomon Mahlangu and other gallant heroes died for.

I was very disturbed by what I experienced in the past three months when I moved all over the Free State during the launching of the food banks. What became most common to me among the young people was the high levels of school drop-out rate, high teenage pregnancy rate, high levels of alcohol abuse, unemployment and high levels of poverty.

DEPARTMENTAL INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

We need to review, strengthen and improve our programmes on the interventions to the young people. Logic tells you that a hungry stomach will do anything to feel itself hence we will not make any great impact on crime prevention, if we do not first and foremost address the issues of substance and alcohol abuse, school drop-out, teenage pregnancy, HIV and AIDS, unemployment and poverty amongst the youth. These are the social challenges that the youth of today are faced with. The government has developed various strategies to intervene in all these social problems and there are also resources that have been allocated towards these services. I am also happy to inform this house that we, the Department of Social Development, are currently reviewing our

Youth Development services to target the most deserving communities, the poorest Municipalities in the Free State and we have prioritized 11 of these including some of the poorest communities that are not part of these Municipalities. In redefining Youth Development and intervention strategies, we will be paying a special attention to income-generating projects, skills development and entrepreneurship programmes. By these, we will be contributing in poverty eradication and developing our youth. It is however not possible for the government to effectively make an impact on these services without the participation of the young people themselves. Unfortunately, unlike the youth of the past, today's young people are not prepared to serve their fellow beings without some form of remuneration. Also unfortunately, our resources cannot afford to pay everyone. The question that comes to my mind is why the youth of today can't serve their people without payment if the youth of yester years have done it without payment. I am very happy at the same time, that we have you, the young people of today who have demonstrated that you are willing to sacrifice yourselves for the people of our country.

Yes indeed, if you are a Lesupatsela you must be willing to provide your services without any form of remuneration. You have shown that you are to be counted among the heroes and heroines of this land by virtue of your application to be part of Masupatsela. Masupatsela is roughly translated as those who lead or show the way. This implies you are the leaders and are also expected to conduct yourselves as such.

SELECTION

You must also count yourself as lucky that you have an opportunity to participate in this programme considering that you were selected out of the total of 2 374 applicants. This is the reason I am expecting nothing else but the best from you and I must emphasize, nothing else but the best. I must indicate that the process of selecting you was as transparent and as inclusive as possible. However, the selectors went through an excruciating process themselves as most of the entrants were deserving cases in their own right. So don't waste this opportunity as someone else could have been in your place. In the final analysis this is how the selection process translated in terms of District representation:

| DISTRICT | ACTUAL | MALE | FEMALE | Persons With Disabilities |
|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|
| Lejweleputswa | 110 | 55 | 55 | 5 |
| Thabo Mofutsanyane | 106 | 33 | 73 | 3 |
| Motheo | 50 | 18 | 32 | 2 |
| Fezile Dabi | 40 | 17 | 23 | 3 |
| Xhariep | 30 | 13 | 17 | 3 |
| TOTAL | 336 (100%) | 136 (46%) | 200 (54%) | 16 (5%) |

I am excited that you have made yourselves available as social activists and hoping that you will also be exemplary in your communities. Many young people will do anything to be involved in this programme and it is an opportunity that you must grab and use it to your best of your abilities. This is a chance that comes once in life time and the ball is in your court and it is up to you how you use it.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the core business of this programme is not different from the Masupatsela of the 1950s to 1980s, it is also based on the principles of patriotism. It will be expected of you to defend the Democratic Constitution of our country, to uphold and defend the principles of Democracy and to play an active role in shaping the future of our country. I am confident that with your involvement, poverty and suffering will be the things of the past.

EXPECTATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

This programme is aimed at promoting activism, patriotism and social cohesion amongst you, the youth, as well as to intervene to your situation through skills development and improve it by linking you to sustainable opportunities. This commitment was demonstrated by selecting you from the 11 poorest Municipalities within the Free State province and further poorest communities from the additional 5 municipalities. The approach is based on the National Youth Service Model which focuses on three pillars which are Community involvement, skills development and exit opportunities. You will have an opportunity to be trained by the Universities of Venda and Fort Hare while simultaneously practising what you have learnt through community profiles and facilitation of the Early Childhood Development Centers.

THEME

The theme for you, the Masupatsela Pioneers of today is, "Youth, the agents of change". This change is a deliberate action towards a better society and it is not a mistake that this theme was chosen as we are putting to you a responsibility of ensuring that there is change from the way our youth are currently thinking, behaving and conducting themselves. You need to show them the way but also teach them about proper behaviour, so that they can become responsible adults. The future is in your hands and it is you who must ensure that you steer this nation to change for the better. You are therefore the agents of change for the attainment of an ideal of a better life for all.

CALL FOR THE YOUTH TO VOTE

I have already spoken about our democratic principles, being a responsible young person and the difference that you can make by upholding and defending our Democracy. One of the mechanisms of maintaining our Democratic dispensation in South Africa is by deciding who must represent you, as the young person of South Africa, in the structures of governance and in developing policies that will intervene in your life situations. Fortunately, this decision is your right and it is also enshrined in our Constitution. Many people have died for this right and please do not deny yourselves this right by not voting in the upcoming elections. Masupatsela will not only vote but they will also lead others towards the polling stations.

Programme Director, there is only one party that has progressively addressed the issues of all the sectors in the society, the African National Congress. The implementation of this Masupatsela Youth Pioneer Programme is still in its infancy stage and it is you who give us the mandate of rolling it out, you can give us this mandate by voting for the ANC and we will make sure that there is continuity on our interventions on the situation of the young people. Come 2009, I am positive that you will all vote.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, we will be launching this programme on 31 October 2008 in Petrus Steyn. The details for the launch will be communicated to you at a later stage.

I want you to stay focused and committed on your orientation over the next two days. I know that you have competent facilitators in Don and Langi and please, do not disappoint them. The approach of your orientation will be edu-tainment and you must really have fun. Once again, this is an opportunity that you must utilise to the best of your abilities and I am expecting the best from all of you.

Now it is the time for you to lead and show the way, whilst changing other young people to be productive and progressive members of the society. You are Masupatsela, the agents of change.

May God Bless Africa, Bless All its children and may your good mercy fall on all of them. Shower them with your blessings and may lady luck be on their side, always!

I thank you.