

Baswa le Meetse (Youth in Water) Awards
Speech by Ms BP Sonjica, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry
Gallagher Estate, Midrand
10 March 2006

Programme Director
Deputy President
Deputy Ministers of Education, Science and Technology
Eastern Cape MEC for the Department of Agriculture, Honourable Mr Gugile Nkwinti who made a special trip to be here today
Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee and the members of the Portfolio Committee on Water Affairs and Forestry
Honourable Members of Parliament
Members of the Diplomatic Missions
Principals, Educators, Parents, Learners and
Honoured Guests

Molweni, Good Afternoon

I am very delighted to be here today with the Deputy President and all of you, to honour our children and celebrate their achievements. Today, I will not say much, the Deputy President will do the main address. Mine is just to give you an overview of why we are gathered here today.

We are here to announce the national winners, the champions who participated in the Baswa Le Meetse Awards 2006. We will also launch the educational resource materials and award those educators who participated in the development and testing of the materials. The learners are eligible to grand prizes that will benefit them and their communities.

This auspicious event is one of the activities of the first ever Sanitation Week campaign that we launched on Tuesday, 7 March 2006 in Tarkastad, in the Eastern Cape. I want you to note that the Sanitation Week campaign is a new initiative which is as a result of the UN Resolution in Dakar, in December 2004 where a decision was taken to raise the profile of sanitation. An observation was made that the focus is always on water and that sanitation is treated as a backyard business yet central to people's health and being. It was a big and bold step by the Dakar Conference to make sanitation part of the mainstream of the programmes of governments

The Sanitation Week campaign is first South Africa and it is the first in the history of the World.

Sanitation Week is aimed at raising the profile of sanitation, health and hygiene. Our theme this year is "Washing of Hands for a Healthy Life"

Baswa Le Meetse is one of the sub-programmes of the "2020 Vision Programme" of our Department. "Vision 2020 is a school based education programme which seeks to educate the broader society about water and sanitation related issues. We took a conscious approach to create awareness around water and sanitation through children to ensure sustainability, among other things. We are collaborating with the Department of Education through this programme in order to ensure that water and sanitation is integrated into the curriculum for sustainability and continuity.

The Outcomes Based Education encourages learners to do projects that stimulate their minds and be solution orientated. This is the context within which my Department initiated projects such as Baswa Le Meetse. The project targets Grade 6 learners who convey education messages through arts medium to their communities. This year they were guided by the theme "Washing of Hands, Use and Care of Sanitation Facilities for a Healthy Life".

The award recognises the role of youth in education and awareness campaigns. We first run competitions in the districts and these culminate to the national event.

Today we will be entertained, through spectacular performances, with captivating and educating messages by aspirant actors, poets and artists of our land. The Baswa le Meetse awards have become an inspirational and symbolic feature in our calendar as they encapsulate the links between water, sanitation, arts, culture and the youth.

We are committed to nurture the children's talent and encourage them to choose careers in the water sector. Through this initiative, Deputy President, we hope that the talents and potential of our children to be engineers and scientists would be unleashed. Through this initiative, we hope to equip our country with appropriate skills that will contribute to ASGISA which is very close to your heart.

Programme director let me thank the Ministers of Education, Health, Arts and Culture, Science and Technology, Environmental Affairs. To the educators, the parents and the sponsors – your support in this project and others is highly appreciated and thank you for making it a success.

I thank you.