

**Baswa le Meetse Award Ceremony**  
**Speech by Mrs LB Hendricks, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry**  
**Birchood Hotel**  
**8 August 2008**

Programme Director  
Honourable Ministers, Chairperson of Portfolio Committee Mayors, Councillors  
Heads of Departments and Institutions  
Educators and Learners  
Ladies and Gentlemen

Dumelang

### **1. Introduction**

It is a great honour for me to be here today during Women's Month to celebrate the achievements of youth and acknowledge their role in management of water, forestry, sanitation and health and hygiene. As a mother my heart is fulfilled, I am proud, am walking tall as this is a testimony of good values instilled by mothers to their children which will never change. It is good to teach them good things whilst they are still young. They have internalised the importance of natural resources management, health and hygiene which is key to economic growth and development of our country. I cannot over-emphasise the role played by women in Building the Nation and a Better World, without women there is no life. The leaders we are proud of today were nurtured by Women, Igama Lamakhosikazi, Malibongwe!

The youth of 1976 sacrificed their lives for better education and freedom of our country, they committed themselves to be agents of social change for better life of all South Africans. They made a call for active participation of youth in the development of our country. The 'Young Peoples' Declaration' presented at the Third World Water Forum, that took place at Kyoto, Japan in 2003, also called for an investment in sustainable youth development programmes that will enable youth to be agents of social change and participate actively in water resource management, sanitation, health and hygiene, as well as participate in policy development processes, development of their communities and make informed decisions. The youth are our future leaders and they should start from a young age with awareness on the importance of water and the environment.

All government departments have an obligation to support our youth and implement youth development programmes. We have seen the implementation of various youth development programmes such as National Youth Service aimed at inculcating the culture of community service, and instilling a sense of pride and patriotism; and our very own 2020 Vision and Baswa le Meetse programmes. Through such initiatives our democratic government has made strides in the development of our youth.

In South Africa we are faced with huge challenge of being a water scarce country, my department has to ensure that there is enough water for economic growth and development. Most people are not aware of this challenge as they continue to waste and pollute our water resource, not practicing good hygiene which result the outbreak of water borne diseases. Water and the health of our people is key to development of our country, therefore my department is educating people about water conservation, and health and hygiene. We also take action against people and institutions for water pollution and illegal water use. It is important that we educate the youth in these areas not only for them to be responsible citizens but also for them to be aware of the importance of these issues as future leaders of the country. Through 2020 Vision and Baswa le Meetse we are making these learners ambassadors of water affairs and forestry so that they educate their own communities on these very important issues.

Furthermore we hope to stimulate the interest of youth in water related careers as there are a number of opportunities in this field, and it is an area that has been identified as having scarce skills. I would particularly like to see greater numbers of girls studying science and mathematics so that they too have the opportunity to enter this exciting field by becoming engineers and scientists. My department has made a commitment to

support learners that wish to pursue careers in Water, Sanitation and Forestry and we will track successful learners from Grade 6 so that by the time they enter Higher Education – they can be awarded bursaries, if they qualify.

Ladies and gentlemen we are here today to acknowledge and present awards to the national winners of Baswa Le Meetse 2008 who are national champions who will carry their titles with pride for life. Baswa Le Meetse acknowledges the role of youth in education and awareness campaigns promoting health and hygiene education. Through this project learners also demonstrate their knowledge attained from the resource materials provided by my department to schools. The awards start with competitions from district to national levels. The Grade 6 learners convey health and hygiene messages through drama, music, poetry, praise singing and poster development. Their projects are guided by the theme “Washing of Hands, Caring of Sanitation Facilities for Healthy Life”. Through this project we have reached 20 000 learners from its inception and provided 110 computers or 11 media classrooms to needy schools, installed 73 play pumps which provides water to needy schools as an intervention whilst the Department is still gearing up for the School Infrastructure Programme aimed at eradicating backlog in schools.

By using arts and culture I believe we are preserving one of the traditions that make us a great nation. From what we have seen today our private sector sponsors can see the benefits of their support and how greatly it is valued by the many young people who have had an opportunity to display their talents. These contributions will ensure that our nation develops; that our youth are empowered to achieve their potential; and that our environment is preserved – for both present and future generations. We are renowned praise singers, storytellers, actors and performers. Our abilities have been demonstrated in the physical renditions of choral music and stage plays. Our nation is hitting the world stage and today we see as the seeds of our strength displayed by our youth and I look forward to being entertained through spectacular performances with captivating and educating messages by aspirant actors, poets and artists of our country.

The success of these projects is enhanced by our collaboration with the Department of Education and we look forward to growing this relationship. We have developed educational resource materials that will enable them to teach water and sanitation activities in the classroom. Through this programme our children will learn the values of natural resource management and water management at early ages.

Schools participating in this programme should lead by example, they cannot be winners of this award and yet contradict the messages they promoting. One hundred schools have been identified as schools that will implement practical projects which will focus on addressing problems related to water use efficiency and water quality. Their implementation plans will be completed before the end of this year. In 2009 implementation will commence and my department will launch and publish their reports on how have they improved or solved the water quality or water use problems they identify. Resources and hands on support will be provided by my department, municipalities, the Department of Education and other sector partners to ensure that this project is a success. They will be schools of excellence terms of water resource management, health and hygiene. The success of this project will see us expanding it to include other schools.

Programme Director I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the following partners for their unwavering support:

- MTN for sponsoring five media classrooms worth R5 million, these media classrooms will enable learners from both rural and urban schools to access information, conduct research and interact with other learners internationally. It will give learners the opportunity to excel in their studies and become the leaders of tomorrow.
- ABSA for sponsoring R2,5 million for the provision of water services to schools and cash prizes.
- Playpumps International for sponsoring 200 playpumps which provide water to schools.

This support and these resources benefit schools and communities, and helps realises the Peoples Contract to create a ‘Better Life for all’. This partnership between different spheres of government, the private sector and communities shows what it takes to become a winning nation. I challenge others to follow this good example. Isandla sihlamba esinye – Please give them a round of applause.

I would like to extend my appreciation to:

- The educators and parents for supporting the learners from district up to national competitions. Learners you are all the best even if you have not made it for the first prize, be proud that you have made it so far. I am sure that you have enjoyed the opportunity to meet other learners from different provinces, you have made so many friends and learnt a lot.
- The organisers today's event – the staff of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, I appreciate the hard work they have put in.

In conclusion Programme Director, it is important for me to tell the audience gathered here today that this programme is close to my heart because I love children, I am always there to support and encourage them to look forward and strive for their goals. Despite challenges that some of them come from poor homes and circumstances they must not be discouraged from achieving their goals in life. Most of us who are regarded as successful in life today went through such difficulties and it was through education and hard work that we were able to achieve success.

Finally, I would like to thank all of you for attending this event and for joining us from across the country, to celebrate achievements of our children "Umntwana libhongo neqhayiya lesizwe, isizwe esisiso sibonwa ngokuvuyisana nempumelelo yabantwana".

***I thank you! Ke a leboga***