

Vuk'uzenzele

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Budget Speech unpacked



Nomathemba Simelane (36) from Tsakane in Gauteng is an unemployed mother of five who cares for her children with the help of the Child Support Grant she receives from the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA).

Presenting the 2023 Budget Speech, Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana recently announced that social grants will increase by at least five percent.

The increase means that

Simelane will, from 1 April 2023, receive R505 per child from R480 in 2022.

“The money I receive from SASSA helps me to buy the necessities such as groceries and school stationery for my children,” she said.

Simelane adds that life without the Child Support Grant would be difficult for her and her children.

“It is hard to be unemployed especially when you have children. I have been very unlucky in the job market,” she said.

Furthermore, Simelane said

“The money I receive from SASSA helps me buy the necessities like groceries and school stationery for my children.”

this year, she plans to use a portion of the grant to start a business so that she can get a better income.

Minister Godongwana said R66 billion has been allocated to the Department of Social Development over the medium term, with R36 bil-

lion to fund the extension of the COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant until 31 March 2024. An amount of R30 billion will be used for inflation-linked increases for other social grants.

The increases in social grants are as follows:

- The Old Age Grant will go up from R1 985 to R2 085
- The Old Age Grant for those over the age of 75 will increase from R2 005 to R2 105
- War Veterans Grant to increase to R2 105 from R2 005
- Disability Grant to go up from R1 985 to R2 085
- The Foster Care Grant increases from R1 070 to R1 125
- Care Dependency Grant to increase from R1 985 to R2 085.
- Child Support Grant and

Cont. on page 2

#RSABUDGET2023

2023/24 HIGHLIGHTS

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From page 1

Grant-in-Aid go from R480 to R505.

"In 2023/24...R400 million is allocated to SASSA to administer it. Government is still considering alternative options to provide appropriate social protection for the working-age population that can replace or complement the current grant," National Treasury said.

The child care and old age grants continue to receive the largest proportion of government's spending, with the State anticipating growth in beneficiaries over the next three years.

"Expenditure on social grants will increase from R233 billion in 2022/23 to R248.4 billion in 2025/26 due to increases in the number of recipients and the value of the grants.

"Excluding the COVID-19 SRD grant, social grant coverage is expected to increase from about 18.6 million beneficiaries in March 2023 to 19.6 million beneficiaries by March 2026," the department said.

Increase electricity supply

The government has also introduced a R9-billion tax relief programme to support South Africa's clean energy transition, increase electricity supply and limit the impact of consistently high fuel prices.

Minister Godongwana said the tax incentive available for businesses to promote renewable energy would be temporarily expanded to encourage rapid private investment to alleviate the energy crisis.

The current incentive allows businesses to deduct the costs of qualifying investments over a one-to-three-year period, which creates a cash flow benefit in the early years of a project.

"There will be no thresholds on the size of the projects that



qualify, and the incentive will be available for two years to stimulate investment in the short term," Minister Godongwana said.

To increase electricity generation, government is also proposing a rooftop solar incentive for individuals to invest in solar photovoltaics (PV).

The Minister said individuals will be able to receive a tax rebate to the value of 25% of the cost of any new and unused solar PV panels.

"To qualify, the solar panels must be purchased and installed at a private residence, and a certificate of compliance for the installation must be issued from 1 March 2023 to 29 February 2024."

Minister Godongwana said the rebate is only available for solar PV panels, and not inverters or batteries.

"It [the rebate] can be used to offset the individual's personal income tax liability for the 2023/24 tax year up to a maximum of R15 000 per individual."

For example, an individual who purchases 10 solar panels at a cost of R40 000 can reduce their personal income tax liability for the 2023/24 tax year by R10 000.

Support for small businesses

Minister Godongwana said to support businesses in distress due to the COVID-19



pandemic, a new business bounce-back scheme will be launched.

"Firstly, small business loan guarantees of R15 billion will be facilitated through participating banks and development finance institutions."

According to Minister Godongwana, this is to allow access for qualifying non-bank small and medium loan providers.

"Secondly, by April this year, we intend to introduce a business equity-linked loan guarantee support mechanism. We intend to bring the total support package through the bounce-back scheme to R20 billion.

National Treasury highlighted that economic development programmes and functions are expected to reach at least R774 million over the next three years.

tled farmers to sustain productivity, create jobs and reduce poverty over the next three years

- Over the medium term, at least R7.8 billion allocated to the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development will continue managing bio-security, increase agricultural production and manage natural resources.

Reaction from government Ministers

Government Ministers welcomed the 2023 Budget Speech, saying Minister Godongwana did his best to extricate the country from an economic conundrum.

"He has tried to cover all the corners from the electricity problems to the grants given to the [elderly] and children. He has tried to get a balance; to give everybody something in this budget," Home Affairs Minister Aaron Motsoaledi said.

Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development Minister Thoko Didiza echoed Minister Motsoaledi's sentiments, saying while the economic climate was not "an easy situation", the budget "was balanced."

Minister Didiza praised Minister Godongwana for being able to prioritise the issue of electricity and revitalise the rural economy.

Small Business Development Minister Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams said the budget was a step in the right direction for the township and rural economy.

"It has looked at all areas that affect small businesses. It is not just only about the allocations that go to small businesses but also issues such as infrastructure," she said.

Minister Ndabeni-Abrahams also welcomed Minister Godongwana's pronouncements on the Bounce-Back Loan Guarantee Scheme. **SAnews.gov.za**

The economic development function "allocates funding to departments and entities focused on promoting sustained and inclusive economic growth to address unemployment, poverty and inequality" with the bulk of the allocation going to goods and services, and capital expenditure.

Economic development programmes earmarked by the government for allocations include:

- R2.8 billion will be allocated to the Department of Small Business Development as part of the Township and Rural Entrepreneurship Fund to support 120 000 township and rural enterprises
- The Land Restitution Programme has been allocated R12.5 billion to allow the government to finalise outstanding restitution claims and support reset-



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We need to work harder to close the gap between men and women in the economy

South Africa recently joined the world in celebrating International Women's Day on 8 March. The day celebrated achievements and progress, but it was also a day to focus on what must still be done to achieve equal rights and opportunities for women.

At the centre of this effort is the economic empowerment of women. We must tackle the many challenges that stand in the way of women's full participation in economic activity.

From the beginning, we must ensure that girls and young women have equal access to education and an equal chance to succeed. They need to be able to pursue studies of their choice, especially in areas that have traditionally been the preserve of men. One of the achievements of the democratic South Africa dispensation is that girls and boys are equally represented in primary and secondary education. It is significant that last year, more females passed the matric exams and got more distinctions than their male counterparts. There are currently more female students enrolled at institutions of higher learning than males.

This is great progress. But it has yet to translate into the economy, where women are more likely to be unemployed than men. Around half of all women in South Africa are unemployed, including those who have given up looking for work. Moreover, on aver-



age, women still earn far less than men.

We must overcome the idea that a woman's place is in the home. Even women who have jobs are often expected to do housework and childcare, making it more difficult for them to find employment, earn a decent wage, be promoted or start a business.

This is the situation we are determined to change in South Africa and advocate for change across the world.

The economic empowerment of women is an important pillar of our struggle to end gender-based violence and femicide. We have recognised that unequal access to resources and economic opportunity makes it more difficult for women to escape situations of abuse and violence. On the occasion of International Women's Day, we call on men and women across society to strengthen the fight against gender-based violence.

Globally, South Africa is actively involved in the United Nations Women's Generation Equality campaign, which is mobilising countries and

people worldwide to achieve gender equality in this generation. South Africa is co-chairing the Action Coalition on Economic Justice and Rights as part of this initiative. Through this we are working for economic transformation that empowers and benefits women. Practically, this means improving access for women to financial services, business opportunities, land and technology.

On the African continent, we are supporting the adoption of a Protocol on Women in Trade to promote the participation of women in the African Continental Free Trade Area. This is a huge opportunity to enable women-owned businesses to benefit from the rapid growth in trade between African countries over the next few years.

South Africa needs to be ready to make use of the opportunities that arise on the continent. As a country, we must shift economic power into the hands of women through, among other things, earmarking 40% of all public

procurement for women-owned businesses. To achieve this, government has been providing training to women entrepreneurs so that they can tender for government work and successfully provide the goods and services that government needs. To date, we have trained more than 6,000 women-owned enterprises.

But that is only start. Our ambition is to open up opportunities for women businesses in the broader economy. We held the Women Economic Assembly for the first time in 2021, bringing women-owned businesses and established businesses together to explore partnerships and make deals. The second Women Economic Assembly was held last year.

From these events, opportunities for women-owned businesses are being created in several industries. These include agreements for women farmers to provide large retailers with produce ranging from dried chillies to chicken. A new black women-owned textile manufacturing plant began production in October last year with support from the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC). As part of the commitment of the motor industry to gender transformation, four new car dealerships owned by black women were also launched last year.

As I reported in the State of the Nation Address, the IDC has earmarked approximately R9 billion to invest in

women-led businesses. Other entities including the Public Investment Corporation and the National Empowerment Fund have also committed to establish special purpose vehicles to support women-owned businesses.

At the same time as we develop business opportunities, we need to ensure that women and men receive equal pay for work of equal value. Across the economy, women are paid on average less than their male counterparts doing similar work. Ending the gender wage gap must therefore be a priority of all social partners, especially government, business and labour, if we are to achieve an equal and just society.

There are other areas where government is working with partners to improve the economic position of women. The Presidential Employment Stimulus, for example, has provided work and employment opportunities to more than a million people since it was launched in 2020. Of these more than 60% were women. Similarly, of the 140,000 small-scale farmers to whom government provided vouchers to buy seeds, fertiliser and equipment, 68% were women.

These initiatives are making a real difference in women's lives. They are giving meaning to the commitments we've made through Generation Equality and other international and continental campaigns.

International Women's Day celebrated the achievements of women. But we must also recognise that the gap between the economic position of men and women is still huge. The day must be used to reaffirm our shared commitment to work even harder to narrow that gap and to, within a generation, get rid of it. **U**

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LETTER

Dear Vuk'uzenzele

I am 19 years old and I stay in Garankuwa, Pretoria.

I need Vuk'uzenzele to advise me on how I can change my life.

I have been using drugs since March 2020 and I am tired of living a life of drugs, I have had enough. Please help me to change my life so that I can become a better person.

Warm regards
Omphilebasetsana Motaung

REPLY

Dear Omphilebasetsana

Thank you for your letter.

Well done for taking the first step in starting a new life that will be free of drugs. The first step to receiving help for drug addiction is to visit your nearest Department of Social Development where a social worker will assist you on a way forward.

Furthermore, government has intensified its efforts to combat substance and alcohol abuse through intervention programmes in South Africa.

The Department of Social Development has rehabilitation centres that are equipped with qualified professionals and resources that help alcohol and substance abuse addicts to recover and provide families with the much-needed support.

In Cullinan, there is the Dr Fabian and Florence Rebeiro Treatment Centre, and they can be reached on 012 734 8300.

Good luck on your journey ahead.
Vuk'uzenzele

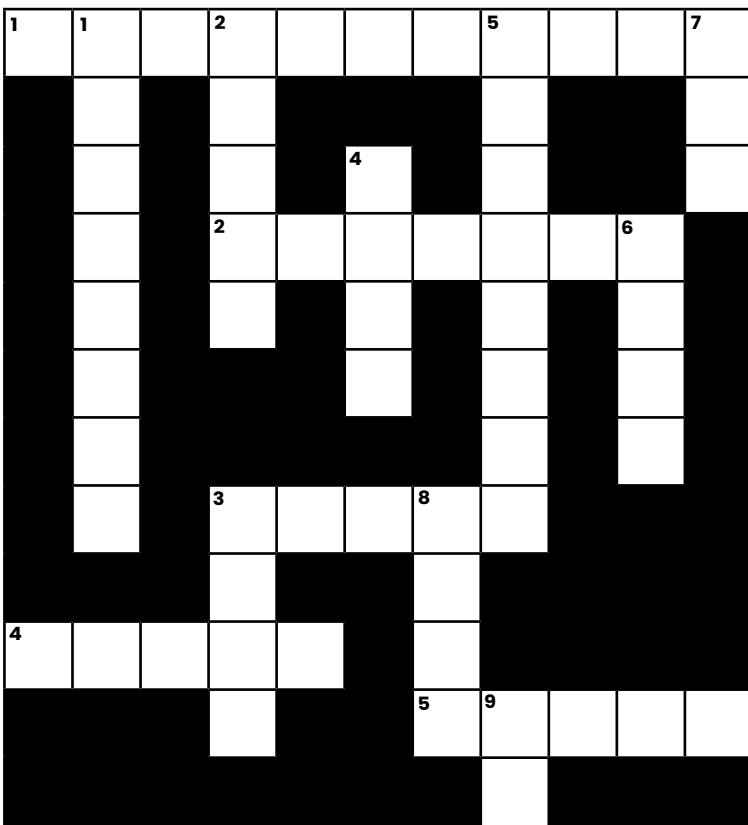
Crossword puzzle

Across

- To cause a person to doubt his/her sanity through the use of psychological manipulation.
- A serious viral infection impacting children which has necessitated a national vaccination drive.
- A plant with sweet, edible and fleshy fruit.
- Acronym for the Provincial Health Emergency Operations Centre in the Northern Cape, established to help with health and disaster management respectively.
- A person of the Muslim faith who has gone on a pilgrimage to Mecca.

Down

- South African name for an endangered scaly mammal which is primarily nocturnal, known elsewhere as an armadillo.
- A woolly-haired South American ruminant mammal which can be domesticated.
- Acronym for the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework.
- The place where the Budget Speech was delivered is called the Cape Town City ...?
- A cardinal number represented by 1 followed by 18 zeros.
- Surname of the Premier of the Northern Cape.
- A coastal tourism destination in the south of India.
- An affirmation or promise to tell the truth, strengthened by an appeal to a deity.
- Abbreviation for artificial intelligence.



Anti-Corruption Headlines 27 February 2023

- Five accused appeared in Kimberley Magistrates' Court facing nine counts of fraud for submitting **fraudulent VAT returns worth R16 million**.
- President Ramaphosa signed Proclamation R114 of 2023 to authorise the **SIU to investigate allegations of maladministration and corruption** in the Ilima/Letsema Project managed by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development.
- The Hawks and the Bloemfontein's Asset Forfeiture Unit **secured a preservation order** for a Standard Bank employee who issued a fraudulent bank card using another client's details **to transfer R1 million into their own account**.
- A shareholder at Aesh Refineries in Pretoria was arrested for **defrauding the company of R215 million**. The shareholder changed the company's bank account with SARS into his own without other shareholders knowledge.

Statistics:

- Previous week **1,370** NUMBER OF ARRESTS
- Previous week **8,121b** VALUE OF ASSETS
- Previous week **313** CONVICTIONS

Logos: #FightingCorruption, GovernmentZA, STRIVE SAFE, 2019 NDP, Let's grow South Africa together.

Vuk'uzenzele Newspaper

would like to hear from you about your views and opinions



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Government to increase spending on learning



Picture: Unsplash.com

Government is expected to spend at least R1.4 trillion over the next three years on higher and basic education and the sports, arts and culture function.

This is according to National Treasury documents presented alongside Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana's 2023 Budget Speech recently.

According to the Treasury documents, the Department of Basic Education's (DBE) spending is expected to rise from R39.4 billion in the coming financial year 2023/24, to R316.5 billion in 2024/25 and

reach some R331.2 billion in 2025/26.

"The basic education sector receives 66.9% of [the learning and culture] funding over the MTEF [Medium Term Expenditure Framework] period, of which compensation of employees accounts for just over half.

"Additional funding of R20 billion is allocated through the provincial equitable share, mainly to cover shortfalls in basic education compensation budgets. Funding for the national school nutrition programme grant is increased by R1.5 billion over the MTEF period to ensure that the meals

provided to learners meet nutritional requirements," National Treasury said.

The Early Childhood Development (ECD) function – which was transferred to the DBE from the Department of Social Development (DSD) – will be given a financial boost to serve more children.

"The [ECD] grant receives an additional R1.6 billion over the medium term to increase the number of children receiving the early childhood development subsidy, provide pre-registration support to early childhood development centres, and pilot a nutrition support programme and a

results-based delivery model where the service provider is only paid for the outputs delivered.

According to Treasury, additional funding of R198 million has been allocated in 2023/24 to enable provision of early childhood development resource packages, which include daily activity plans linked to the National Curriculum Framework.

"Over the MTEF period, R30 million is allocated to improve the [DBE's] oversight and capacity for managing the programme," Treasury said.

Some R283.3 million has also been allocated to the DBE to repair those schools damaged during the devastating April 2022 floods both in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape.

Furthermore, R1.5 billion is allocated over the next three years for Gauteng's school infrastructure improvement project.

Higher Education

Over the MTEF, the Department of Higher Education's (DHET) expenditure is expected to reach some R135.6 billion in 2023/24, R148.3 billion in 2024/25 and rise to R153.9 billion in 2025/26.

In 2023/24, at least R50 billion will be allocated to the

National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS).

DHET's second biggest spending point in 2023/24 is expected to be universities' subsidies coming in at some R44.4 billion while spending at Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges and Community Education and Training (CET) centres combined will reach at least R15 billion.

"The [DHET] has reprioritised R1.1 billion over the medium term to enable the community education and training (CET) sector to build its own infrastructure for learning and teaching, reducing its current reliance on basic education school infrastructure."

Expenditure for the post-school education and training sector increases at an average annual rate of 5 per cent over the medium term, supporting universities, TVET colleges, CET colleges and sector education and training authorities in delivering quality post-school education and training.

The National Treasury said Sports, Arts and Culture will receive some R35.7 billion over the MTEF to "support sports in schools and preserve, develop and promote cultural, heritage and linguistic diversity, and build social cohesion."

– SAnews.gov.za

Fight against crime receives financial boost

The fight against crime and corruption continues to intensify with Minister of Finance Enoch Godongwana allocating R14 billion towards this cause during his Budget Speech recently.

"The South African Police Service has been allocated R7.8 billion to appoint 5000 police trainees per year. The National Prosecuting Authority receives R1.3 billion to support the implementation of the recommendations of the State Capture Commission and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

"The Financial Intelligence Centre has been allocated an additional R265.3 million to



Picture: GCIS

tackle organised and financial crime. The Special Investigating Unit is allocated R100 million to initiate civil litigation

in the special tribunal, flowing from proclamations linked to the recommendations of the State Capture

Commission," said Minister Godongwana.

He added that the Department of Defence has been

allocated an additional R3.1 billion to enhance security on South Africa's borders.

"Two laws have been enacted to address the technical deficiencies in the legislative framework, namely the General Laws Amendment Act of 2022, and the Protection of Constitutional Democracy Against Terrorist and Related Activities Amendment Act.

"The laws address 15 of the 20 legislative deficiencies identified by FATF. The remaining five deficiencies will be addressed through regulations and practices that do not require legislation.

"We recognise the need to be more effective in implementing our laws, particularly in fighting organised and sophisticated crimes," he concluded.

– SAnews.gov.za

Provincial plans for 2023

More Matshediso

President Cyril Ramaphosa during his recent State of the Nation Address (SoNA) defined South Africa as a country that rises above adversity, capturing and igniting hope. The nine Premiers also shared plans in line with the SoNA through their 2023 State of the Province Addresses. These also focused on priority issues including the energy crisis, service delivery, climate change, job creation and healthcare.



Gauteng Premier Panyaza Lesufi stressed that:

- Fighting crime was a top priority, the province will be increasing its budget for fighting crime from R750 million to over R1 billion in the next three years.
- Starting from the 1st of April 2023, suburbs, townships, business districts, schools, and other public places will be connected with high-tech, face and car-recognition closed-circuit televisions (CCTVs).
- The province is also at an advanced stage of buying 180 drones that will gain access to areas that are difficult to patrol and police. These drones are equipped with technology that can capture the direction of a bullet and where they come from.
- The province has bought 400 new police cars so that from the 1st of May, every ward in Gauteng has a 24-hour patrol vehicle.
- 6 000 young men and women have been recruited to monitor and police Gauteng 24/7, they will be on the streets of Gauteng from the 1st of May 2023.



North West Premier Kaobitsa Bushy Maape announced:

- The Province has established a Steering Committee jointly with the Minister of Water and Sanitation Senzo Mhunu to urgently attend to water and sanitation challenges across the province.
- The Steering Committee has developed

a plan to deal with immediate water challenges, with priority being given to Ditsobotla, Naledi, Madibeng, Ramotshere Moiloa and others.

- The Provincial War Room on the water will be retained which forms part of the accelerated rapid service delivery approach announced in 2022.



Eastern Cape Premier Lubabalo Oscar Mabuyane presented that:

- Even in the toughest economic times, some sectors keep the provincial economy going, that keep employing new people and retaining existing jobs. The auto sector does this exceptionally well.
- The province recently established an auto sector aftermarket programme that will benefit 300-panel beaters and mechanics in the Eastern Cape.
- The programme will be rolled out by the Automotive Industry Development Center Eastern Cape (AIDC-EC), and it will focus on training, capacity building

and aftermarket funding over the next 3 years.

- The programme aims to capacitate panel beaters and mechanics to access the R40 billion annual spend by the insurance industry and the R100 million spent by Government Fleet.
- In the last few months, the East London Industrial Development Zone SOC Ltd (ELIDZ) has attracted R535 million in investment while the Coega SEZ has received corresponding investment value pledges of R557.7 million. Manufacturers in the ELIDZ created an additional 1200 jobs last year.



Mpumalanga Premier Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane said:

- In partnership with the Presidential Climate Commission, the Climate Investment Fund and the World Bank, Mpumalanga is exploring plans to diversify its local economies.
- This will reduce dependency on coal; re-skilling and upskilling the most vulnerable in the labour force; and support

small businesses and co-operatives in local communities to access emerging opportunities in the green economy sector.

- Through the Youth Development Fund, the province has in the current financial year approved 36 companies for funding, with a total amount of R92.3 million
- The province will set aside 30 percent of its Youth Development Fund to fund businesses owned by people with disabilities from rural areas.



KwaZulu-Natal Premier Nomusa Dube-Ncube offered:

- Kwa-Zulu Natal will be establishing an Energy War Room which includes government and strategic partners to oversee the province's response to the electricity crisis.
- By the end of March 2023, KZN will appoint a panel of energy experts to coordinate and help accelerate the implementation of the KZN Energy Master Plan.
- Building standards will be reviewed to ensure new houses are fitted with energy-saving equipment and that it is standard for RDP houses to be fitted with solar rooftops.
- All departments and municipalities will finalise registers of water infrastructure, hospitals, clinics, schools and key assets that will be exempted from load shedding.
- EThekweni Metro is at an advanced stage in implementing its energy generation capacity with the first phase covering 400 MW and increasing to 2000 MW by 2030.

Free State Premier Mxolisi Dukwana disclosed:

- The province's biggest task is to ensure that communities live in quality houses, are safe, and have access to healthcare and education.
- The province will spend R1.9 billion on upgrading and maintaining road infrastructure
- The Free State provincial government will be exploring the implementation of solutions such as 24-hour road construction.



Northern Cape Premier Zamani Saul conveyed that:

- The implementation of the Digital Call Centres for Emergency Medical Services in partnership with Vodacom in Upington and Kimberley has seen a drastic increase in the number of calls from an average of 3 000 to 10 000 calls per month.
- We also note the improvement from 45% to 85% in the management of calls for ambulances.
- Government in conjunction with the World Health Organisation has established the Health Informatics Unit and the Provincial Health Emergency Operations Centre (PHOEC). This will help to improve health management, data analysis, planning, emergency and disaster response.



Limpopo Premier Chupu Stanley Mathabatha said:

- The provision of healthcare and education services should be among the first to be insulated from electric power supply interruptions.
- Healthcare will be prioritised with the installation of solar power in hospitals and clinics in the province.
- The province will soon launch the Renewable Energy Strategy by Musina-Makhado SEZ in partnership with the United States Agency for International Development.
- The strategy serves as a blueprint to guide investments in our energy cluster, and also to promote sustainable development.

Western Cape Premier Alan Winde described:

- The Western Cape Government has set aside an R89 million emergency fund for ensuring that municipalities are resourced to ensure safe drinking water and working sewage infrastructure during load shedding.
- The money will be used to purchase backup generators for the treatment and supply of water services.
- The provincial treasury department will allocate just over R1 billion rand to respond to the energy crisis in the upcoming three-year budget period.



Get vaccinated against measles

As part of the measles immunisation drive, various provincial departments are working around the clock to ensure that children under the age of 15 are protected against this serious viral infection in youngsters.

The Department of Health, working closely with the sister departments of Basic Education and Social Development, provinces and various stakeholders have embarked on a nationwide child immunisation campaign to vaccinate children at schools, early childhood development centres and other public places.

According to the department, schools have been issuing consent forms to learners for parents and caregivers to sign to enable health workers to immunise learners.

"No learner will be immunised until his or her parents



Picture: Unsplash.com

or legal guardian has given permission through signing a consent form, and parents are strongly encouraged to provide this consent."

Last year the Department of Health confirmed that there is a measles outbreak in South Africa.

Measles is highly contagious

and is caused by a virus which mainly spreads through infectious airborne respiratory droplets from infected persons when coughing or sneezing.

The majority of the infected people are between the ages of one and 15, hence the campaign targets all children

between six months and 15 years.

The Department of Health stated that unimmunised children are at the highest risk of contracting measles and infecting other classmates and household members.

Measles symptoms include fever, red eyes, runny nose

and cough, typically appearing before the onset of the disease's characteristic rash.

Although often mild and self-limiting, some people, especially young children and pregnant women may develop complications such as diarrhoea, pneumonia, ear infections and eye complications resulting in admission to hospital and in severe cases death.

Another important vaccination is for HPV. The HPV vaccine protects girls from developing cervical cancer later in life.

The department has stressed that the measles and HPV vaccines are safe and effective.

Measles vaccines are free of charge at public health facilities, whilst HPV vaccination is offered to Grade 5 girl learners aged nine and older in public schools through the school-based campaign.

– SAnews.gov.za

Help for first-time university students

Lia Naidoo

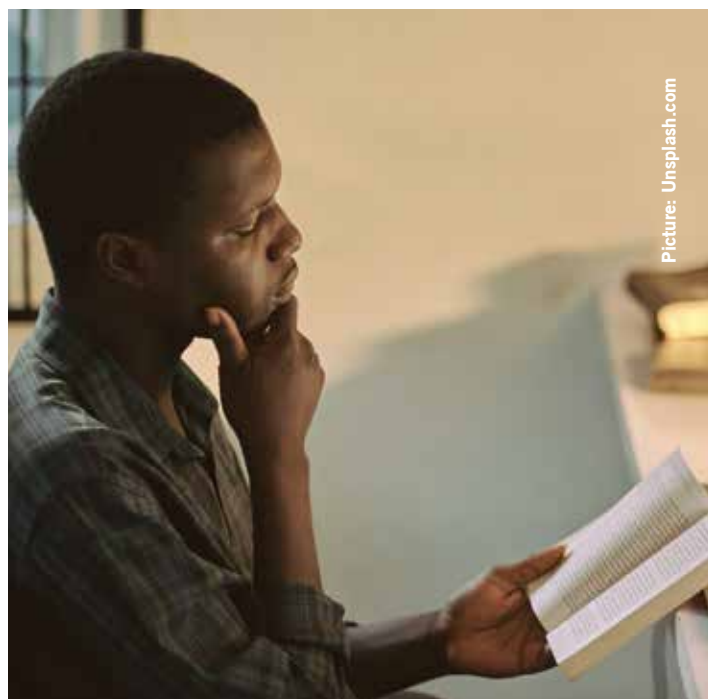
Molately Shirley Tala (23) is a third-year chemical engineering student at the University of Pretoria. She is appealing to first-year students at a higher education institution to seek help when they struggle to adjust to university life especially after attending a rural high school.

"I come from a rural area and a disadvantaged background. I had to walk for about five kilometers to and from school every morning," said Tala who is from Lephalale in Limpopo.

She adds that the high school she went to had no computers or internet access.

"University life moves very fast and it can be emotionally overwhelming."

Tala says it is common for first-year university students to feel isolated and confused in a new environment.



Picture: Unsplash.com

Tala advises all first-year students to contact tutors and academic advisors to assist them in drawing out study rosters and time management plans.

"I ensured that I booked myself into the Faculty Student Advisor services at the University of Pretoria to help me cope with the workload."

Tala explains that being away from home is another strug-

gle for first-year students. She acknowledges that the lack of a solid support structure can be overwhelming and lead to mental distress.

"First year-students should make use of the university's emotional support services when they feel lost and alone."

Furthermore, regular contact with friends and family eases the process of coping with the 'homesick' feeling.

For Tala, another major challenge that university students encounter is adjusting to the financial demands that come with the transition from a rural to an urban environment.

"Many students are encouraged to make use of financial support services such as the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS).

"I rely on financial support from NSFAS, it is helpful because tuition fees, accommodation and food are expensive," says Tala.

Seeking help

Students in higher education institutions also have the option of receiving assistance from HIGHER HEALTH.

This is a national agency that seeks to inspire the success of students that attend 26 public universities and 50 state Technical Vocational Education and Training colleges by improving their mental health and well-being.

Briefing the media on the state of readiness for the post-school

education and training sector for the 2023 academic year, Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology Blade Nzimande said a conducive environment for learning was important.

"All institutions, working with HIGHER HEALTH, sought to provide safe workplaces and learning spaces for staff and students," said Minister Nzimande.

For students who prefer to keep their identity anonymous and speak to a professional in times of need, the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) is available 24/7. There is continuous counselling provided to students. 📞

For more information contact Higher Health Helpline **0800 36 36 36** or UP Helpline **0800 747 747** and www.sadag.org.za. Higher health can be reached at www.higherhealth.ac.za

Online voter registration starts on a high note



on the 3rd of March.

The campaign forms part of a multi-faceted year-long campaign by the Commission to encourage and facilitate eligible South Africans to register to vote.

The IEC highlighted that on the back of the campaign over 220 000 eligible South Africans visited the IEC Voter Portal.

The campaign was in preparation for the 2024 National and Provincial Elections.

South Africans aged 16 years and older, who have a South African identity document (ID), smart ID card, or valid temporary ID, are encouraged to use the Electoral Commission's Voter Portal to register

to vote for all future elections at <https://registertovote.elections.org.za>.

The campaign is aimed particularly at the unregistered youth, so that they can vote in the 2024 National and Provincial Elections and all future elections.

"This crucial campaign is designed to educate eligible South African citizens about the importance of voter registration so that they can vote, and the ease with which they can do so online," explained Sy Mamabolo, Chief Electoral Officer of the IEC.

Mamabolo said one of the commission's objectives is to get the 14 million South Africans who are eligible to vote but not registered, particularly those between the ages of 16

and 29, to register and vote in the upcoming general elections.

"We urge all eligible citizens to take advantage of this online facility and take the first step towards electing public representatives of their choice. Your vote is your voice," Mamabolo stressed.

How to register to vote

Eligible voters can register online in just a few easy steps:

- Go to <https://registertovote.elections.org.za>
- Click "Register to Vote Now" and accept the terms of use
- Enter your personal details
- Enter the One-Time Pin sent to your cell phone
- Search for your address or, if

you are at home, use the current location on your device

- Take a photo of your ID OR submit a scan of your ID
- You will receive an SMS within 24 hours confirming your successful registration.

To register, you must be 16 years or older and have a valid South African ID (though you must be 18 to vote). You only need to register once to vote in all elections once you're 18 years of age.

Voters who are already registered and have moved since the last elections, can also check and update their address on the same portal.

– [SAnews.gov.za](https://www.sanews.gov.za)

South Africans have heeded the call to visit the Independent Electoral Commission's (IEC) Voter Portal to register online to vote.

The IEC recently held an intensive two-week online voter registration campaign, themed Your Vote Is Your Voice. The campaign ended

To check your registration status within 24 hours of registration, SMS your ID number to **32810** (R1 per SMS) or check online at <https://www.elections.org.za/pw/voter/voter-information>.

Inspiring a culture of reading in primary schools

AVBOB AND Oxford University Press is calling for South Africans to nominate schools which will be eligible to receive one of 260 trolley libraries equipped with books written in one South African language. **Nominations close on the 14th of April.**

AVBOB and the Oxford University Press will be launching Year two of the AVBOB Road to Literary Trolley Library campaign.

The campaign aims to instill a culture of reading and contribute to improving numeracy skills of primary schools in South Africa.

The campaign will give away 260 trolley libraries equipped with books donated by Oxford University Press Southern Africa, representing 11 official South African languages, numeracy books and other learning resources, to deserving

primary schools and education non-profit organisations (NPOs).

Kebo Mosweusweu, AVBOB General Manager of Shared Value and Sustainability highlighted that this year's campaign included books written in the mother tongue of South African learners.

"Teaching in a mother tongue language helps to reduce dropout rates and makes education more accessible and engaging for learners. Through this year's campaign, we aim to further reinforce our commitment to instilling a love of reading to primary school learners, nationally," said Mosweusweu.

Hanri Pieterse, Managing Director of Oxford University Press Southern Africa said a good reader needs a developed written vocabulary to read with meaning.

"This is why a child must learn how to read in their mother tongue. When they do, they develop this written vocabulary more easily as the words they read match the words they hear and speak".

Oxford University Press Southern Africa is South Africa's leading literacy publisher and has donated 130 000 books in all 11 official languages for this campaign.

In 2022, 180 trolley libraries

were given to the nominated recipients and in 2023 that number has increased by 80 to 260 trolley libraries. The trolley libraries are sturdy structures, fitted with wheels, used to store the books which are being manufactured by AVBOB Industries in Bloemfontein.

Last year, each trolley library was equipped with 430 books whereas in 2023, each trolley will be delivered with 500 books. Each AVBOB Road to Literacy trolley library has a value of R50 000. The total investment value for 2023 competition is R13 million, which is an increase from R10 million in 2022.

How to nominate a school?

Calls for nominations for this year's campaign will open on 01 March and close on the 14th of April. The public are encouraged to take part in this initiative by submitting electro-

nic nominations, as to why their choice of school or educational NPO deserves to win a trolley library equipped with books.

To nominate a school or an educational NPO, the nominator must include the desired language for the library so that the winners can receive books in their preferred language. Nominators can nominate deserving primary schools or educational NPOs who serve learners in Grade R – 7. The annual South African Library Week will be celebrated 20 - 26 March 2023 under the theme; Libraries: telling powerful stories. – [SAnews.gov.za](https://www.sanews.gov.za)

Please visit: https://clickmel.zero-data.co.za/RTL_PR to nominate your chosen beneficiary. #salw2023 #powerfullibrarystories



Crossword puzzle answers refer to page 4.

Across 1.GASLIGHTING 2.MEASLES 3.MELON 4.PHOEC 5.HAJJI
Down 1.AARDVARK 2.LLAMA 3.MTEF 4.HALL 5.TRILLION 6.SAUL
7.GOA 8.OATH 9.AI