

**REMARKS DELIVERED BY THE KWAZULU-NATL MEC FOR
EDUCATION, MS MBALI FRAZER, DURING THE MTN
FOUNDATION SPECIAL SCHOOLS ICT LAUNCH HELD AT
THE VN NAIK SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF - NEWLANDS WEST,
DURBAN ON 8 JUNE 2023**

Programme Director

Officials from the Department of Education

Representatives from the MTN Foundation

Principals and educators

SGB representatives

Members of the fourth estate, the media

Learners

Ladies and gentlemen

Sanibonani

As I stand here, I'm inspired by the words our President, His Excellency, Cyril Ramaphosa, who said:

“Education is the cornerstone of a just and inclusive society. It empowers individuals to break free from the

chains of poverty and inequality and build a better future for themselves and their communities.”

These words resonate deeply with the purpose of this occasion as we celebrate an important milestone in our collective mission to provide inclusive and equitable education to learners with special needs.

As the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, we are thrilled about this transformative initiative we are witnessing today.

Thanks to the partnership the MTN Foundation, our learners in S Dass Special School, the VN Naik School for the Deaf, as well as the DayDawn Training Centre will now have access to sophisticated modern technology that will no doubt have a significant impact on their learning outcomes.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is through education that we unlock the potential within each individual, enabling them to transform their lives and contribute meaningfully to their communities and society as a whole.

However, it is vital that we recognise the unique needs of every learner, particularly those with special needs, and ensure that they are not left behind as the world moves into the Fourth Industrial Revolution Era.

Programme Director, the provision of quality and accessible public special school education remains one of our top priorities as an ANC-led government in the 2023/24 financial year, as the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education we allocated a substantial amount of R1.6 billion for this purpose.

This budget includes the Learners with Profound Intellectual Disabilities Grant, amounting to R34.5 million, which will support inclusive education for learners with intellectual disabilities in care centres and public special schools

Additionally, our budget caters for the procurement of LTSM resources, specialised equipment, assistive devices, and support materials for support care centres.

We have also allocated funds for the purchase of buses in 2023/24 to facilitate the transportation of learners enrolled in special schools, aligning with our learner transport policy.

Furthermore, we are actively creating job opportunities by filling positions for support staff such as drivers, hostel mothers, and cleaners, utilising an amount of R10 million set aside for job creation this financial year.

I know it sounds like a lot of money, but I'd be remiss if I don't acknowledge that it is simply not enough to meet the needs of our learners with special educational needs across the province.

As Government, our resources are currently strained and that is why partnerships such as this one between our Department and the MTN Foundation are crucial in addressing the educational needs of learners with special needs.

It is through these collaborations and collective effort that we can bridge the digital divide and provide equal opportunities for all our learners.

Programme Director, on behalf of the people of KwaZulu-Natal, I want to say “**SIYABONGA KAKHULU**” to the MTN Foundation for their generous donation worth a staggering R6 million.

This contribution serves as a powerful symbol of this organisation's consistent commitment to enhancing the quality

of education in South Africa. It also serves as a shining example of corporate social responsibility and the power of working together for a common goal.

The state-of-the-art multimedia centres that were customised and equipped by the MTN Foundation in our three schools will serve as hubs of innovation and knowledge, enabling our learners to explore the vast digital landscape and harness its potential for growth and development.

Principals, I'm sure you are just as thrilled with the school connectivity's digital access and digital literacy programme that encompasses a comprehensive range of initiatives which include maintenance, support, as well as ICT training for educators and learners.

Such initiatives are critical in enhancing special education and promoting inclusive and equitable practices within our education system because when we say ***no child should be left behind***, we mean special education learners should also have access to all the necessary resources they need to succeed.

I'm also particularly excited about the e-Education platform which will provide learners with access to curriculum-aligned educational content from Grade R to Grade 12.

This digital platform will serve as a valuable resource, empowering our learners with special needs to engage with educational materials tailored to their unique requirements thus enabling them to reach their full potential.

Furthermore, this initiative will greatly assist the Department of Education in our ongoing efforts to improve the performance of learners with special education needs across all grades.

The infusion of technology and digital literacy skills will undoubtedly enhance their educational journey, equipping them with the tools they need to succeed in an increasingly digital world.

SGB Representatives, allow me to make a simple appeal to you and all the communities surrounding the S Dass Special School, the VN Naik School for the Deaf, as well as the DayDawn Training Centre – please protect these facilities and the

equipment from criminals who out to destroy the future of our learners.

Before I sit down, I just want to emphasise that this partnership with the MTN Foundation is not only a stepping stone towards digital empowerment but also a catalyst for improved performance among learners with special education needs.

By equipping our schools with the latest technology, we are removing barriers and creating an environment that fosters learning, innovation, and growth.

Let us continue to nurture these vital partnerships between government and the private sector, for it is through collaboration and shared commitment that we can truly transform lives and build a society where every learner is exposed to opportunities to help them reach for their dreams.

I leave you with the words from an American author and disability rights advocate, Helen Keller, who once remarked:

“Until the great mass of the people shall be filled with the sense of responsibility for each other’s welfare, social justice can never be attained.”

She further said: ***“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”***

May this partnership be a shining example to inspire others to join us in this noble cause.

Ngiyabonga