

Basic Education officially in charge of ECD

Social Development Minister, Lindiwe Zulu, says the handover of the Early Childhood Development (ECD) function to the Department of Basic Education is an opportunity to start dismantling intergenerational poverty in the country.



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“As the history of the ECD sector has been unfolding since the dawn of our democracy, working within inclusive intergovernmental coordinating mechanisms, and in consultation with the sector, the children and parents, the departments of Social Development and Basic Education are continuing to shape this sector’s outcomes.

“The golden thread that weaves the ECD sector together is the importance of our ECD practitioners, inclusive of ECD teachers, administrators and support staff,” said Zulu at a ceremony to mark the handover on Friday, 1 April 2022.

The handover is a culmination of years of work and cooperation from stakeholders from the two departments.

Ahead of Friday’s ceremony, Basic Education Minister, Angie Motshekga, had said the function shift would go a long way in improving the national education outcomes.



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“We know from international evidence that education systems will contribute to development only when they function optimally, and their component parts are focused on quality improvement, and aligned to ensure accountability for learning outcomes from early childhood and foundations to the more senior grades.

“The migration of ECD provides us an opportunity to craft and implement innovative strategies to strengthen foundational learning, looking at the continuum from birth to early grades.”

Investing in the future

Zulu on Friday stressed that ploughing resources into ECD was more than just consumption, saying it was a necessary “economic investment”.

Zulu said she is confident that in the interest of the children, the two departments will, from this point onwards, renew their commitments and encourage similar commitments from across society in the many years that lie ahead.

“We recognise the tireless contributions and work of civil society organisations in facilitating access to early learning and development opportunities for children in communities that were grossly neglected and marginalised by the pre-democracy establishment.”



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Zulu said countless policy and legislative developments were born from the coordination and collaboration initiatives that this government has been leading in the past 28 years.

“As was set out in the RDP [Reconstruction and Development Plan] in 1994, and noting that this area is a work in progress, significant ground has been covered regarding the formalisation of the qualifications of these professionals.”

Over the past two years, while government continued with measures to address, prevent and combat the spread of Covid-19, Zulu said the Department of Social Development appreciated the inputs of civil society partners, who are representing the majority of the ECD sector.

“Our constructive engagements and occasionally difficult discussions have been invaluable to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the sector.

“One of government’s largest interventions, in support of the ECD sector, is the ECD Employment Stimulus Relief Fund (ECD-ESRF) that we introduced in 2020 as an emergency relief intervention to support the ECD sector to recover from the effects of Covid-19,” Zulu said.