

MEDIA STATEMENT

14 May 2026

DEPUTY MINISTER DR MIMMY GONDWE URGES INCREASED ENROLMENT IN CET COLLEGES TO ADDRESS THE HIGH RATE OF NATIONAL ADULT ILLITERACY

The Deputy Minister for Higher Education and Training, Dr Mimmy Gondwe, has urged out-of-school youth and adults, particularly those in rural and marginalised communities, to enrol at their local Community Education and Training (CET) colleges to improve education and literacy skills.

Deputy Minister Gondwe spoke at the launch of the **National Adult Literacy for Empowerment Campaign 2026 - 2030** at Lovedale TVET College in King Williams Town, Eastern Cape, on Tuesday, 12 May 2026. The event marked the start of a bold, multi-stakeholder national effort to combat adult illiteracy.

The campaign, themed “**Empowering Communities through Literacy for Inclusive Development**”, is led by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in partnership with the Mining Qualifications Authority (MQA), W&R SETA, Services SETA, Old Mutual, the National House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders, and other strategic partners.

It seeks to address the challenge of approximately **3.8 million functionally illiterate** adults in South Africa by empowering one million adult learners by 2030, with a particular focus on rural, mining, and marginalised communities in the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, and North-West provinces.

The initiative will implement a comprehensive literacy programme that extends beyond basic reading and writing, including:

- **Basic Literacy and Numeracy** in local languages
- **Digital Literacy** (supported by NEMISA)
- **Financial Literacy** (in partnership with Old Mutual)
- **Civic Education and Life Skills** (supported by Higher Health)
- **Entrepreneurship Literacy** (supported by Allan and Gill Gray Philanthropy SA)
- **Workplace Literacy** (supported by MQA and other SETAs)

Deputy Minister Gondwe emphasised that CET colleges are key to the success of the national drive against illiteracy.

“CET colleges have long been overlooked, despite their potential as centres for lifelong learning and skills development. Many face challenges and continue to operate under difficult conditions. I believe a whole-of-society approach is needed to support these important community learning institutions,” said Deputy Minister Gondwe.

The campaign aims to reach nearly **8,000 learners** across the four identified priority provinces during the 2026 pilot phase.

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