

# Libode mud school revamped

PRETORIA: Learners of Sonata Primary School in Libode in the Eastern Cape will no longer endure heavy rains and storms with only a leaking roof as protection - a situation which made it almost impossible to learn.

Following an intervention from mining group AngloGold Ashanti, the dilapidated mud structure, set up in 1994, has been transformed into a quality school with six new classrooms, an administration block, 12 toilets where there was none and a soup kitchen to the value of R2.2 million.

Speaking at the opening of the school, Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga said the investment on the part of AngloGold Ashanti has advanced government's drive to eradicate mud schools and inappropriate and unsafe structures.

Motshekga said the new classrooms, administration block and toilets will improve the quality of life and education of the children and teachers.

"It will contribute to their constitutional right to dignity. Education is our apex priority. Apart from improving the economic and health prospects of citizens, a sound basic education is vital for building an informed citizenry, requisite for creating a truly democratic society, founded on the principles of the Constitution," said Motshekga

The Department of Basic Education is still trying to eradicate mud schools in the province, with 50 schools set to be built during this financial year.

The minister said her department has put in place measures to address the ailing infrastructure backlog in schools.

She said the Accelerated School Infrastructure Delivery Initiative (ASIDI), which supplements provincial school infrastructure programmes, was one such measure.

"Through ASIDI, we aim to bring all schools to the level of optimum learning and teaching. ASIDI should help us to eradicate basic safety backlogs in schools without water, sanitation and electricity, and to replace all schools constructed from inappropriate material."

ASIDI, she added, was part of the National School Build Programme, which has already delivered another 13 schools in the Eastern Cape alone.

"We have pledged to deliver 49 schools to the region by the end of March [2014]. We currently stand at 17. The outstanding schools are at 85% completion on average. Current challenges include the liquidation of one of the contractors who was building 12 schools and the termination of another contract."

In the new financial year, the department aims to build an additional 200 schools, provide water and sanitation to 873.448 schools, and electricity to 369 schools.

The minister also called for more partners to come into to play to improve the country's education.

"We need increased investment in school infrastructure. But government cannot do it alone. We need the private sector and other role-players," added Motshekga.

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