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Department of Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA RELEASE--8 AUGUST 2008

MINISTER OF EDUCATION HONOURS THE ITHUBA WRITING PROJECT AUTHORS

The Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, will celebrate and honour 140 educators who have authored new learning materials in home languages to advance literacy for learners in grades 4-6 through the South African-U.S partnership, the "Ithuba Writing Project".

Partners from South Africa and the U.S. will join the ceremony on Friday, 8 August 2008, at 14:30 for 15:00 at the University of Pretoria's (UP) Auditorium, Faculty of Education, Groenkloof Campus.

The Ithuba Writing Project is a collaborative partnership between the South African Government (Department of Education) and United States Government through USAID to improve the reading abilities of South African learners. The name ITHUBA means "opportunity" in isiZulu. The project is implemented in South Africa by the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) collaborating with South African NGOs--READ Educational Trust and The Molteno Project, supported by the University of Pretoria and the University of Limpopo.

The Minister has said, "The Department of Education is committed to improve reading and writing skills and ensure that South African learners can read fluently by the third Grade and also write in their indigenous languages."

The Ithuba Writing Project has not only paved the way to improve learners' reading abilities but was also aimed at providing a model for material development and increasing the technology skills of classroom educators; and ensuring print-rich classrooms in South Africa and creating an innovative model of writing instruction that is unique to South Africa.

Through the project, the educators were trained to author supplemental reading materials in ways that are relevant and engaging. The materials cover three learning areas: Life Orientation, Mathematics and Natural Sciences. Educators have written these books in all 11 official languages, with a particular focus on the four most marginalized languages: isiSwati, isiNdebele, Tshivenda and Xitsonga.

By the end of the project, 2.3 million books and educators' guides will be printed in South Africa and delivered to schools countrywide. The Minister aims to use the ceremony to recognise the dedication of authoring educators from Mpumalanga, Limpopo and Gauteng.

The educational expertise from the Department of Education, academia and non-governmental organisations partnered to ensure that the materials produced were suitable for Intermediate Phase learners and that they were in line with the National Curriculum Statement of the Department of Education.

Minister Pandor will be joined by USAID's Deputy Regional Mission Director, Leslie Reed; Vice Chancellor of the University of Texas at San Antonio, President Ricardo Romo; Vice-Principal of the University of Pretoria, Professor Nthabiseng Ogude; National Director of the READ Educational Trust, Cynthia Hugo; and CEO of The Molteno Project, Masenyi Dikotla.

For more information on the Ithuba Certification ceremony, please contact:

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