

**Address by the Sedibeng District Municipality Executive Mayor: Cllr Mahole Simon Mofokeng on the occasion of the Sedibeng Heritage Stakeholders Consultation held on the 26<sup>th</sup> September 2012.**

Programme Directors:  
Our Distinguished Guests  
Ladies and Gentlemen  
Setjhaba sa Sedibeng

Allow me to lead this august occasion by welcoming you all to this very important day in the history Sedibeng Region. We are meeting here today, to chart the way forward in the manner in which we will from now on be celebrating, commemorating and observing the rich history and heritage of Sedibeng.

It is this rich history and heritage which make this beautiful Region, a place of heroes and heroines, an area which gave so much for the hard fought democracy to be realized. It is therefore not correct to deal with it in a piecemeal fashion we have been doing in the past.

We have done our best under the circumstances. As a Region, we have placed the efforts of our heroes and heroines in the centre stage. No stone was left unturned as celebrated, commemorated and observed the moments in our history which shaped our country.

Programme Director

It is in the light of the 2012-17 IDP which together with the second generation of the Sedibeng Growth and Development Strategy have just been adopted by your Municipality that we are meeting here today. These consultations are geared to culminate in the Sedibeng Heritage Summit, which will serve to guide the nature and character of our Heritage offering here in Sedibeng.

It is the outcome of the Sedibeng Heritage Summit that we will develop and finalize the alignment of our heritage offerings with the second generation Sedibeng Growth and Development Strategy and the 2012-17 IDP. In this manner, we will be able to march together in step with our communities into the future.

Programme Director

Allow me to digress a little here, in all our commemorative events, from the Vaal Uprisings to the Boipatong Massacre, our communities are asking us the same question: What then are we doing to improve the lot of the survivors and children of our heroes and heroines?

A caring nation will be seen to be caring in a manner in which it treats its heroes. The answer to this question will feature greatly in this consultation today, leading to its resolution at the Sedibeng Heritage Summit which will be held on the 27-28<sup>th</sup> October this year.

In this manner, we can then align the outcome to our IDP going forward. Allow me also to bring this august body up to speed regarding our vision. Sedibeng District Municipality together with its constituent local municipalities, are committed to become a Vaal Metropolitan River City. A Smart City which will take its rightful place in the competitive Gauteng Global City Region.

In achieving this vision, the foundations of which are firmly in place, we cannot be expected to be doing the same things in the same manner expecting different results. It is for this reason that the manner in which we carry out and observe our heritage offerings, needs to change.

One does not need to be a rocket scientist to come to this conclusion. Take a look at the Mangaung Cultural Festival, which is about to unfold next week. The entire country will be flocking to the Free State, brought together by their thousands, to celebrate nothing more than the coming of spring. Historically and in terms of heritage and culture, we have a great deal of activities, events and significance to celebrate than Mangaung.

What then is stopping us? Will it be too much to ask for us to package Sedibeng's Heritage in this manner? What will be the extent of economical spin-offs for packaging Sedibeng in this way? Are we not a hop, skip and jump away from the economic hub of Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni and Tshwane?

It is the answer to these questions at the Sedibeng Heritage Summit which will ensure that we package our Heritage offering in a manner which will enhance the Vaal Metropolitan River City, the Smart city, thereby providing lasting benefits to the sons and daughters of our heroes and heroines.

In 1906 a student in Columbia, Pixley. K. Seme, who was later to become a leading light in the ANC and history of South Africa, wrote his thesis along the Regeneration of Africa which earned him George William Curtis medal, which was the highest Honour by the Columbia University.

*"The regeneration of Africa means that a new and unique civilization is soon to be added to the world. The African is not a proletarian in the world of science and art. He has precious creations of his own, of ivory, of copper and of gold, fine, plaited willow-ware, and weapons of superior workmanship. Civilization resembles an organic being in its development - it is born, it perishes, and it can propagate itself.*

*More particularly it resembles a plant, it takes root in the teeming earth, and when the seeds fall in other soils, new varieties sprout up. The most thoroughly spiritual and humanistic - indeed a regeneration moral and eternal!"*

It is with this quotation in mind that we as the community of Sedibeng, needs to find our feet and lead the necessary regeneration of our Heritage in a manner which creates economies of scale. We can and we will. It is therefore no longer a question of is but more a question of when.

As it is customary for the Sedibeng District Municipality, we look to you to give us the benefit of your wisdom so that our plans reflect the essence of the people we serve, the people of Sedibeng.

The SDM has done very well in promoting National and Regional Historical days in line with its Key Performance Area of 'Realising Human Potential'. The deliverable is now included in the second generation of the Growth and Development Strategy (GDS-02) as a flagship project and will therefore continue to be driven by the District Municipality.

In delivery of this mandate, we take note of the high cost involved in many of these events and this must be balanced out against hardcore service delivery issues that also need to be prioritized.

Such an evaluation and prioritization exercise can only take place in consultation with all the relevant stakeholders and role-players that include heritage interest groups, representatives of survivors and or their families, heritage academic experts, National and Provincial Arts Departments, Culture and Heritage Departments, the District and its three Local Municipalities and the people of Sedibeng.

This engagement could be facilitated by a Heritage Summit that puts our Heritage Programmes in context and looks at our research programmes as well as the implications it has on effectively hosting our identified commemorative events.

The main objectives of the proposed Heritage Summit are:

To open a dialogue regarding Heritage Programmes in the Sedibeng Region with you, our Heritage Stakeholders.

To develop a strategic approach on Heritage issues with the main view of developing a new approach in celebrating Commemorative Events.

To utilize the rich Heritage Resources of the Sedibeng Region to instil cultural pride within the community of the Sedibeng Region thereby promoting Nation building, social cohesion and inclusivity.

To create an awareness of our Cultural Heritage in the whole of the Sedibeng Region and South Africa.

To source funding opportunities for Cultural and Heritage capital projects and hosting of Commemorative Events.

In this regard, the Heritage Department plans to coordinate and host a 2 days Heritage Summit ideally in October 2012.

The Heritage Summit will be attended by invited Heritage Stakeholders that will be further described under partnerships.

It is proposed that the programme should contain the following:

Overview of the Sedibeng District Municipality and the Comprehensive Heritage Programme aligned with National and Provincial deliverables.

The Council approved GDS-02 and 2012/2013 IDP and SDBIP deliverables of the Heritage Department including implementation of identified Commemorative events.

Presentation and discussion to develop cost effective guidelines on facilitating community participation in the implementation of identified commemorative days in our Region in a more sustainable manner, in line with Circular 58 from National Treasury, amongst others.

In this manner, through this consultation and the Sedibeng Heritage Summit, we will be able to package the following:

The Historical Massacres which took place in Sedibeng beginning with the Anglo-Boer War, which led to the indiscriminate killing of the people of all races and the dispersal of the African communities living on the banks of the Vaal River up to the Boipatong Massacre which led to the day of the Elections being set when a deadlock was reached in CODESA.

The Signing of the Peace Treaty of Vereeniging in 1902

Azikhwelwa Bus Boycotts in 1955

The Sharpeville Massacre in 1960

The Vaal Uprising in 1984

The Gobizitwana Beerhall Massacre in 1989

The Lefhiedi Family Massacre in 1992

The Boipatong Massacre in 1992  
The Nangalembe Night Vigil Massacre in 1993  
The massacre of people at the Sebokeng Hostel in 1994  
The history of the Eikenhof Four  
The Delmas Treason Trial  
The Sharpeville Six

The effect that these historical events and massacres had on the entire country towards raising the tempo towards our freedom is enormous and still rings in the hearts and minds of our communities.

The proposed Heritage Summit is intended to bring together under one roof, the survivors of these historical events, the role players of these important developments in our country, to develop a strategy going forward with a view to set the ball rolling for Nation Building and social cohesion.

Through these efforts and your participation, Sedibeng District Municipality hopes to unleash the Human Potential of our communities as we build bridges by Consolidating our Histories towards Unity in Diversity.

In conclusion, I wish to thank all the participants in this important consultation here in Sedibeng. I hope that your engagement will serve to enrich the outcome of the Sedibeng Heritage Summit which will be held in October next month. I look forward to seeing all of you there.

I Thank You.