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# Speech Delivered by the Executive Mayor of BCMM, Cllr Xola Pakati, during the Official Opening of the Children’s Library and the Launch of the Harambee Project

**20 March 2018**

**Programme Director, Sipho Kilani**

**Fellow Councillors from our City**

**Municipal officials**

**Members of the community and parents**

**Representatives from Harambee and other partners**

**Members of Media**

**Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon!**

It is with great pleasure and honour that we get to speak in this very crucial gathering which is an official launch of the Harambee Accelerated Youth Employment Project and the opening of the Children’s Library.

We are very grateful for your presence here and it shows that you value education and the creation of a new, qualitatively different South Africa. Former President Nelson Mandela whose centenary we are celebrating this year provided a very profound view of education when he said;

“Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mineworkers can become the head of the mines, that a child of farm workers can become president of a great nation.”

This understanding is the reason why the governing organisation has made education an apex priority for the entire government. It is for this reason that we have decided that it is prudent to play our part in the overall achievement of this objective.

Early Childhood Development is a domain that is often ignored in many areas of our country even though it is the one that is most important. We always witness with sadness the fact that the Eastern Cape comes number last in the matric pass rate when compared to other provinces.

The easy and very problematic solution to this is the deployment of a huge chunk of our fiscus to another matric cohort whilst ignoring other phases of the basic education system. It should be understood clearly that we are not saying that matriculants should not be supported but we need to place a lot of emphasis to early childhood development and foundation phase if we are to truly improve our basic education outcomes.

We are very biased towards Early Childhood Development as the municipality as it is key to the foundation of our future. This is why we prioritised the creation of the Children’s library into these standards we are seeing today. It is also for this reason that the Mayoral Library legacy project prioritises the creation of a reading culture amongst our children and the youth.

It is becoming increasingly clear that government funds alone cannot be able to completely resolve the funding needs of our education and this is why we welcome the support of various partners in tackling the challenge of education.

**Fellow Councillors**,

There is no denying that giving the right education and foundation for our young people plays a significant role in reducing many social ills in our society. This therefore means that when a nation is properly educated, the nation benefits as there will be progress.

We therefore want to request business leaders and non-governmental organisations to starting viewing education using our lenses and start thinking about it as a social investment. We further want to urge business to see value in investing in the societies that they are located in. Their businesses ought to be active corporate agents working for the resolution of our challenges as a nation. This brings me to the point on the importance of the Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator Project for our city.

Despite a recent decrease in our unemployment rate as a city, the figures remain high and it is for this reason this project is very important for us. The recently released Statsa’s Quarterly Labour Force Survey results shows that our unemployment as a city has decreased by 5.1 percent. This means that our official unemployment rate decreased from 34.1 percent to 29 percent. This is improved even if you consider it on a year to year basis as the unemployment rate at this point last year was 33.4 percent.

Our city has also seen significant improvements on the expanded definition of unemployment as it decreased by 4.3 percent on a quarter to quarter basis and by 2.4 on year to year. This takes the expanded unemployment definition of the metro to 33.7 percent. Whilst these numbers are high, the decreases show work in progress. We are taking major steps that will make our economy to be properly industrialised.

Unemployment is particularly high amongst our young people and the Memorandum of Agreement that we have signed with Harambee will see a variety of interventions that are designed to assist our youth people towards being employed. A hub has been created where the youth will benefit from high quality work readiness programmes.

The programme also deals with many risks that are always raised by employers in taking first time workers. This Youth Accelerated Employment project will therefore assist in bridging the gap between school and the workplace for many of our young people. It is therefore a clever and more economical way of dealing with the challenge of work experience, which is sometimes a hindrance for young people seeking to work for the first time.

This programme has our full blessings as a city as it is in line with our programme of properly industrialising the city and thus creating a hive of economic activity. There is no better way of convincing people to invest in our city than telling them that we have people that have been prepared to work in various environments.

So, as we go around the country and the world trying to lobby investors to come to our city we will eventually be able to tell them that our people have been properly readied for the workplace. We will therefore not only be speaking about being the only city with a river port, with an award winning IDZ but we will also be telling them that we have a capable workforce.

Let us all support this partnership which creates a decisive link between education and work readiness. Let it be a success and let it change the circumstances of our youth for the better.

**I thank you!**