



South Africa celebrates World Literacy Day

Nearly five million South Africans are illiterate. According to the Minister of Education, about 54% of the population have not completed an adequate level of education. Marking the challenges still faced both in South Africa and abroad, World Literacy Day on Tuesday 08 September 2009 will create an opportunity for such issues to be addressed.

First declared in 1966, World Literacy Day serves to remind the international community of the importance of literacy and learning globally and, with both South Africa and the African continent struggling to eradicate illiteracy, 08 September has become a significant reminder of the need to overcome issues surrounding the basic tenets of reading and writing.

“95% of the world’s illiterate people live in developing countries,” comments Yvonne Chaka Chaka, UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador and literacy spokeswoman. “As Africans we have monumental obstacles to overcome in terms of both eradicating illiteracy and providing adequate education. 21 African nations have adult literacy rates below 50% and, in Sub-Saharan Africa alone, about 45 million children don’t go to school.”

Recent years have seen a number of initiatives formed to counter inadequate education and overcome illiteracy from the government, the private sector and United Nations agencies such as UNICEF. UNICEF’s Schools for Africa programme, aims to increase access to basic education for children throughout Africa whilst the SA government has also provided local support for SA’s illiterate adults through the *Kha Ri Gude* (‘Let us Learn’) programme, a mass literacy campaign which aims to reduce illiteracy by 50% by the year 2010.

A host of prominent celebrities have also pledged their support to tackling illiteracy, including noted UNICEF Goodwill Ambassadors, Gavin Rajah and Yvonne Chaka-Chaka, television star Jo-Anne Strauss, and renowned businessman Cyril Ramaphosa. These celebrities are aligned with initiatives from the private sector, most notably the Montblanc Signature for Good campaign, run by luxury goods retailer, Montblanc.

Montblanc, which has a longstanding commitment to the culture of writing, recently released the Signature For Good Special Edition collection, a specially-designed range of writing



instruments, jewellery and accessories of which part of the proceeds go to UNICEF's Schools for Africa programme.

"Whether you are able to volunteer as an educator for *Kha Ri Gude*, donate directly to UNICEF or purchase a pen in support of literacy in Africa, we encourage South Africans to play a part in overcoming illiteracy and providing education," notes Chaka Chaka. "The culture of reading and writing is one of the oldest achievements of mankind and we need to ensure we provide these basic skills to those who need it most."

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Notes to Editor

Yvonne Chaka Chaka is available for interviews
Statistics quoted are as per UNICEF South Africa and the South African Ministry of Education

How to get involved

Volunteer a venue or as an educator for the Kha Ri Gude project

If you have a venue for the workshops which you'd like to offer free of charge or extra time you'd be willing to donate as a volunteer educator, contact the Kha Ri Gude call centre on 0800 20 29 33.

Purchase a Montblanc Special Edition product

Visit any of the Montblanc boutiques in South Africa and purchase a product from the Signature for Good Special Edition. Part of the proceeds will be donated to UNICEF's Schools for Africa programme. For more information, call 011 317 2600.

Donate to UNICEF directly

Visit www.unicef.org/southafrica and click 'Donate Now'.

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