



**small business
development**

Department:
Small Business Development
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SHINING STAR AFRICA AWARDS DINNER
KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY MINISTER STELLA NDABENI-ABRAHAMS
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Programme Director, Nominees, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am truly honoured to be here at the Shining Star Africa Awards for the second edition. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the organizer of this remarkable event, Mr Daniel Blessington, CEO and founder, along with his dedicated partners.

As the Minister of Small Business Development, I am committed to collaborating with all stakeholders in the entrepreneurship ecosystem, and with the entrepreneurs themselves, especially the youth. I know our future prosperity is in good hands looking at the incredible young talent in this room.

Programme Director, entrepreneurship is critical to overcome Africa's historic path dependency. Africa's infrastructure and institutions were geared towards extraction, first of people and then of minerals.

So, while Africans have contributed massively to the development of countries in Europe and the US, they were in effect prevented from contributing to the development of their own continent. From the time of its violent occupation by the colonial powers, the arts and entrepreneurship in Africa were suppressed. Africans were denied their cultural identity and forced to adopt that of their colonial masters.

We know this strategy of suppressing African culture didn't work. African slaves instead changed American culture – think of music genres like the Blues or Jazz. Africans resisted colonization and apartheid through various forms of cultural struggle which kept the dream of freedom alive. As we stand here tonight, we must remember these cultural heroes and sheroes – people like Miriam Makeba, Fela Kuti, Hugh Masekela, Steve Biko, Nadine Gordimer, Chinua Achebe to mention but a few.

We now have political freedom but haven't yet achieved real economic freedom. To achieve this, we need to change the structure of the economy, and place innovation

and entrepreneurship at the centre. This is a priority of this 7th Administration led by the new GNU.

As the Department of Small Business Development, we are actively building the eco-system to enable this growth in entrepreneurship. We have put new legislation in place – the National Small Enterprise Amendment Act – which for the first-time levels the playing field for micro, small and medium enterprises. This includes establishing a Small Enterprise Ombud to support entrepreneurs resolve disputes with large corporates and government around issues of non-payment and failing to honour contractual obligations. The new act also establishes our new one-stop shop MSME support agency, the Small Enterprise Development and Finance Agency (SEDFA).

We are tackling market concentration and opening supply chains for small enterprises, especially black-owned, women-owned and youth-owned enterprises. We will also support MSMEs access export markets, including within the continent itself enabled through the AfCFTA.

We are addressing the R350 billion credit gap and have just developed an MSME and Co-operatives Funding Policy aimed at creating a Fund of Funds which will aggregate and derisk funding for entrepreneurs and startups. We also have our own direct lending, wholesale lending, blended finance and grants which we provide as the DSBD portfolio, mostly through Sefa.

We have been scaling our business skills and incubation support, and through Seda have established 110 incubators, with another 12 under development. We are also building infrastructure, especially in townships and rural areas, for entrepreneurs to work and trade.

Programme Director, you can see we are serious about building the necessary support eco-system for entrepreneurs. We cannot do this alone as government and have entered into various strategic partnerships with stakeholders in the ecosystem. We are committed to working with all entrepreneurship support organisations who share our vision of innovation and entrepreneurship-driven growth. We will especially partner with organisations who empower our youth.

This Shining Star Awards Africa has showcased the incredible talent and creativity we have in our communities by bringing together diverse forms of art under one roof. This

event not only celebrates our achievements but also inspires us to reach even higher as we strive for excellence and global competitiveness.

To the nominees, you are a true inspiration to us all. Soak in tonight's celebration and recognition. It is thoroughly deserved.

I thank you.