**#BUYABOOK – The South African Book Development Council (SABDC) leads the way.**

**National Book Week Women’s Day Celebration**

Elitha van der Sandt, CEO of the South African Book Development Council (SABDC), led the National Book Week’s Women’s Month celebrations with a message that “reading girls grow into leading women.”

Elitha van der Sandt was speaking as host at a book reading and book-buying event sponsored by the boutique investment banking group, Musa Capital held at Exclusive Books in Rosebank. In attendance were 40 girls from the Leshata Secondary School in Orange Farm and their caregivers.

The event was part of the Buy-A-Book Campaign anchored by National Book Week (NBW), which takes place on September 07-13, 2015. With more than half of South African households not having a single leisure book in their home, this year’s NBW campaign calls upon individuals and businesses to “Buy-A-Book’” and donate it to someone who does not have a book. “Having as few as 20 books in the home has a significant impact in propelling a child to higher levels of education,” says a 20-year study across 27 countries.”

Leading by example, The SABDC donated R9250 in Book Tokens to ensure the youth and their caregivers could enjoy the pleasure of buying their own brand new book.

The NBW is an annual campaign of the SABDC aimed at uncovering the thrill and magic of reading books. It is guided by the idea that when the nation learns to share the joy of reading books, the country as a whole benefits as this leads to empowered, self reliant communities.

Surrounded by a glorious horde of books on display, van der Sandt challenged the gathered girls to rise and one day become leaders of our country, “because that’s what we do as girls and women, we lead. We have a leading role to play in the transformation of our country”.

Sitting attentively on couches and crouched on bean-bags, the girls in their blue school uniforms listened to inspirational messages from various speakers. These included odds-beating tales of personal achievement from Rocky Ralebipi-Simela, CEO of the National Library of South Africa. “I grew up in a family where we had no more than five books. Now I’m responsible for making sure everybody has access to books through the public library system.” Ralebipi-Simela told the gathering of young women that education comes to us through stories. “So reading has to be a big part of what you intend to do in life,” she said.

NBW ambassador, businesswoman and award-winning writer of “Happiness Is a Four letter Word”, Cynthia Jele read excerpts from The Big Crush, a title from the Fundza series of popular local books. This was followed by a question and answer session with the wide-eyed girls quizzing Jele about her life and work, some even shared their own stories.

SABC1’s kids’ programme, Yo-TV presenter Karabo Bonco brought a light-hearted streak to the proceedings too. She joked, listened and spoke about why books are important to her. Seventh grader, Francina Zwane told everyone that she wants to be an author like Jele. “I started writing in 2013. I wrote a poem. I showed my cousin and she liked it. I like writing my feelings down when I can’t talk to someone. If you tell some people when you’re hurt, they go and tell other people about your personal things. Writing makes me feel safe. When I write I don’t feel depressed,” she said.

All the while Funda Bala, the NBW mascot stood wobbling nearby, watching and waiting for a chance to join in the fun. Intent on guiding the girls and their caregivers to discover the pleasure of book shopping, Funda Bala and Cynthia then gave each girl a R250 Book Token sponsored by the SABDC.

The girls walked the rows of the bookshop and discovered the pleasure of the book shopping and buying process. Soon, the intimidation fell away as they found a book or two to buy. Some picked books on account of the cover’s picture appeal; others were drawn by the books’ insightful blurbs or familiar rumors of a thrilling story.

On the other hand, Siphiwokuhle chose to buy a leather bound bible. Others were buying dictionaries for themselves or books for their siblings at home.

Pointing out the girls’ sudden soaring confidence as evidence, van der Sandt thanked Cynthia Parrish of Musa Capital for their support saying, “You’ve become a big part of what we do at National Book Week.”

Parrish spoke about how programmes like the NBW gives meaning to her company. She underscored her message to the girls with a motivational tone. “We must salute and emulate those women who laid the foundation and be encouraged by their example, knowing that as women we are powerful,” she said.

This September, the nation will experience the thrilling joy of books as the SABDC continues to call on individuals, families and corporates to Buy-A-Book during National Book Week from 7-13 September.

Supported by the theme “#GOINGPLACES South Africans will see the National Book Week tour bus stopping in five provinces this year; namely, Gauteng, North West, Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape from 07-13 September 2015.

Join the journey and lets make South Africa a reading nation and bring more books in households.

To find out more about NBW programmes around the Country, visit our facebook for regular updates.

* [www.facebook.com/NationalBookWeekSA](http://www.facebook.com/NationalBookWeekSA)
* Twitter: @NBW\_SA
* Instagram: @nationalbookweeksa

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