

10% IMPROVEMENT FOR CLASS OF 2010



SADTU Provincial Chairperson, Mr Solwako Mahlangu, the MEC for Education, Mrs Reginah Mhaule with Bonginkosi Manzini, who obtained 100% for both Mathematics and Physical Science.



Editorial

In December 2010 Premier DD Mabuza, Members of the Executive Council and Executive Mayors inaugurated a historic moment for the provincial government and the people of the province when they signed the service delivery agreements. By this act they committed themselves to ensure that come the time when political principals are evaluated they would be held accountable.

The service delivery agreements are based on the five government priorities. These are:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive rural development strategy linked to rural and agrarian reform and food security;
- Create decent work and sustainable livelihoods;
- Strengthen the skills and human resource base (education);
- Improve the health profile of all people in the province;
- Intensify the fight against crime and corruption

And the twelve outcomes are:

- Improved quality of basic education;
- A long and healthy life for all South Africans;
- All people in South Africa are secure and feel safe;
- Decent employment through inclusive growth;
- Skilled and capable workforce to support an inclusive growth path;
- An efficient, competitive and responsive economic infrastructure network;
- vibrant, equitable, sustainable rural communities with food security for all;
- sustainable human settlements and an improved quality of household life;
- a responsive, accountable, effective local government system;

- environmental assets and natural resources that are well protected and continually enhanced;
- a better Africa and a better world as a result of our contributions to global relations
- an efficient and development orientated public service and empowered, fair and inclusive citizenship.

The signing of these agreements follows closely on the footsteps of President Jacob Zuma signing similar agreements with ministers and it is quite clear that the new administration is determined to make political principals accountable.

Another important development in the province is the intense process of developing an Economic Growth Path which also follows closely on the National Economic Growth Path. Intense discussions are currently underway led by the Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism which involve all stakeholders including the private sector to chart an economic growth path for the province based on the 2008 Provincial Growth and Development Strategy (PGDS).

In his closing remarks at the Economic Growth Path retreat, Premier DD Mabuza said "The PGDS should provide direction and scope for province-wide development programmes and projects, within the context of a long-term perspective; taking into consideration the resources, economic, political, social and natural environmental constraints and opportunities. It should be a vehicle to address the legacies of the apartheid space economy, promote sustainable development and ensure poverty reduction and employment creation."

Lebona Mosia

Letters to the editor

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AWARDING EXCELLENCE IN GRADE 12 RESULTS



The TOP 10 learners in the Province
 Back row: Mnisi B, Mogane JT, Stoltz E, English D, Van Zyl R
 Front row: Serfontein M, Themba NM, Khoza BM, Smith N and Mkhabela NM

will be awarding honours to this morning have really burned the midnight oil, sacrificed negative habits, tendencies and life styles and dedicated time to studies.”

The top learners who were awarded accolades all received laptops, printers and laptop bags courtesy of BHP Billiton. On top of these they also got trophies and merit certificates for their feat.

SASOL pledged to donate Seven Thousand Rand to each learner who passed Mathematics and Physical Science outstandingly. There are five learners who obtained 100% in Mathematics and Five who obtained 100 % in Physical Science in the Province, all these learners would share a donation totaling R70 000 from SASOL.

Bonginkosi Mnisi from Makhosana Manzini High School in Bohlabela District obtained 100% in both Mathematics and Physics and took home R14 000 together with a computer and a laptop made possible by Hima Copy Sentrum.

The Department of Education in Mpumalanga province and the 55 842 learners sitting for their final 2010 matriculation examinations have indeed made its people proud by achieving a 56.8% pass rate.

This is a massive 10% improvement compared to the 47.9% in the previous year. This is in line with MEC Regina Mhaule and her department’s vision of achieving a 70% plus pass rate by 2014.

To celebrate this great achievement top achieving learners were given accolades for their excellence in the grade 12 examinations. The top ten learners, top learners per subject, top ten schools, best achieving Circuit and District were awarded at an occasion held at Sikhwahlane Secondary School in the Nkomazi Municipality, Ehlanzeni District on 17 January 2011.

Sikhwahlane Secondary School is located in one of the poorest areas in the Province, but did not use the socio-economic background as a justification for failure. The school was chosen to host the awards ceremony because it is the most improved quintal one school in the country following the 2010 Grade 12 results. The school improved its pass rate from 71.1 % in 2009 to 97, 7 % in the 2010 Grade 12 results.

The MEC for Education, Mrs Regina Mhaule said, “Once more, our gratitude goes to all individuals and organizations who made this possible, our beloved educators, parents, learners and stakeholders alike, without you this would have been a mission impossible”.

She continued “let us continue to rally side by side and make Mpumalanga a shining Province. We must all make a commitment to improve the results by 10% this year and make an effort to achieve it”.

The excited and thrilled MEC added, “the 2010 results must motivate us to want to do more and working together we can achieve this objective (i.e. improving the results by 10% in all grades).The learners and schools that we

Robert Gumede Family Foundation-Scholarship Programme pledged to give 20 learners full scholarships. The beneficiaries of these scholarships will be categorized in accordance with municipal boundaries. Two (2) beneficiaries will be from Umjindi Municipality, 8 from Nkomazi Municipality and 10 from Mbombela Municipality.

Premier DD Mabuza applauded the ‘Class of 2010’ by saying that “they really had a bad year but they still managed to keep their heads high and produce results we never thought possible. We are indeed happy with the results these learners have hoisted high the province’s flag”.



MEC Regina Mhaule (left) and MEC Pinky Phosa (right) with Debbie English (middle) one of the best learners in the Province

DEPUTY PRESIDENTS VISIT NKOMAZI



Children of Ntunda overjoyed by having an opportunity to take a picture with the Deputy President

Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe has emphasised the importance of agricultural support to improve the lives of communities living in poverty. The Deputy President said this during his visit to Ntunda Village in the Nkomazi area on 30 October 2010, as part of the Government War on Poverty Campaign. Ntunda Village is said to be one of the most poverty stricken areas in the Province.

Motlanthe was speaking during a meeting with the community where he visited several poor households and also launched the Ntunda Water Purification Plant. He was accompanied by Mpumalanga Premier David Mabuza, Ministers of Rural Development and Land Reform Gugile Nkwinti, Social Development Edna Molewa and Water

and Environment Buyelwa Sonjica and several MECs. Motlanthe heard from the community, which comprises about 5 000 people, that there was no clinic, there is high unemployment, lack of skills development and a lack of access to information about government development initiatives. The delegation visited 39 households in the village.

As they visited each house and problems were identified, Motlanthe ensured that each one was directed to the relevant MEC. Later, while addressing the community he said: "The progress in water supply and the clinic that we promised to build are going to be evaluated in January". He further said that he would personally

visit the area to ensure progress is made.

Motlanthe said he was impressed by the way the villagers were trying to better their lives, but that they needed the government's help, be it at national, provincial or local level. "In most of the households we visited, we saw one specific talent which needs to be enhanced by the government and its parastatals. For example, many of the men here are able brick makers, so the municipality must help them in starting a brick-making project that can benefit the whole community."

He also tasked the provincial government with ensuring that young people got the opportunity to visit the nearby Mlumati campus of the Ehlanzeni FET College so that they could learn about skills development courses and bursaries available to further their studies. "All matriculants in this area should be able to continue with their studies after secondary schooling" he said. He further promised the village small-scale farmers that the government would investigate the lack of water supply for their sugarcane fields and said it would also provide much-needed technical support.

The Deputy President said accountability for commitments is essential and a focus on implementing promises on issues of service delivery is urgently needed if acceleration of progress is to happen to improve the lives of disadvantaged communities.



The Deputy President and the Premier interacting with the community of Ntunda, Nkomazi



Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe officially opening the Water Treatment Plant in Ntunda



Premier David Mabuza listening to the needs of the community

COGTA SIGNS MOU WITH FINANCE TO JERK UP MUNICIPAL SUPPORT



MEC for Finance, Ms Pinky Phosa and former MEC for COGTA Norman Mokoena signing the MOU Road

Improvement of service delivery at the third sphere of government has been given a new shape following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Departments of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) and Finance. The signing of the MOU is prescribed in the Municipal Finance Management Act of 2003 (Act No 56 of 2003). The Act gives credence to both departments to support

municipalities. In terms of section 52 (subsection 1 & 2), the Provincial Treasury will take responsibility for the monitoring and assessment of the service delivery budget and implementation plan (SDBIP) while the Cooperative and Traditional Affairs Department will concentrate on the monitoring of municipal performance agreements among others.

Former MEC for COGTA Mr Norman Mokoena signed the MOU on behalf of COGTA while MEC for Finance, Ms Pinky Phosa signed it on behalf of the Department of Finance. In his address, Mr. Mokoena said the deal would help ensure that municipalities are able to function adequately on their own. "We are very concerned over the growing number of municipalities that are placed under Administration for being dysfunctional. Our aim is to create an environment where municipalities will be able to manage their affairs on their own and thereby assisting us to realize our vision of achieving clean audits for all municipalities by 2014," Mr Mokoena said.

Although the number of municipalities with qualified audit report from the Auditor-General has been reduced over the years, however, Mr Mokoena says COGTA is determined to assist all municipalities to produce unqualified audit reports. "We have identified 11 municipalities in need of financial management support and our aim, now that we have signed the MOU, is to develop a financial turn-around strategy for these municipalities."

MEC for Finance, Ms Phosa says the signing of the MOU goes beyond improving the internal system of the municipalities for proper functionality. She says the signing will go a long way in enhancing service delivery to electorates by ensuring that urgent and effective implementation of resolutions contained in the memorandum takes place. "As we append our signatures on this document, we give effect to another process of ensuring implementation of its resolutions," she said. The signing of the MOU is the latest intervention strategy aimed at supporting municipalities to improve municipalities. Earlier this year, the department held a Local Government Lekgotla to develop a Turn Around Strategy to help improve service delivery in municipalities. This was later followed by the implementation of the strategies in the municipalities.

Pixley Ka Seme Municipality's executive powers restored



The former MEC for Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), Mr. Norman Mokoena invoked the spirit of Pixley Ka Isaka Seme when he announced that the Provincial Executive Council has withdrawn the administration and returned all powers back to the Pixley Ka Seme Local Municipality. This follows after the municipality was placed under administration on 25 February 2009 in terms of Section 139 (1) (b) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act No.108 of 1996) as amended.

MEC Mokoena indicated that the municipality has made significant strides in addressing the

challenges that it had faced since it was put under administration. He added that there had been extensive engagements with all stakeholders in the municipality. "The Executive Council is convinced that with the interventions that we have put in place, a fertile ground has been laid for the democratically elected representatives of the Pixley Ka Seme Local Municipality to resume their responsibilities with the requisite selfless dedication demanded of all elected representatives" said Mokoena.

Most of the grievances that led to the outbreak of unrests and the abuse of the system were related to the absence of policy frameworks or the ineffectiveness of those policy frameworks that existed. All the relevant and required policies have been developed and put in place. A realistic Integrated Development Plan with achievable objectives within financial abilities of the municipality has been developed.

There continues to be a shortage of skills in the technical and engineering department. The Provincial Government is working with the municipality and will continue to seek advice and assistance from the relevant professionals.

MEC Mokoena explained at length the functions of the Mayoral Committee, Speaker and the Code of Conduct for Councilors. He expressed his appreciation to all stakeholders who worked with the Provincial Government and the team of Administrators whilst the municipality was still under administration. "As we return all powers that were assumed by the province to the municipality, we will continue to provide the necessary hands on support. We urge the municipality to continue engaging the community on all matters affecting the municipality," said Mokoena. He urged the leadership of the municipality to always be guided by the principles that Pixley Ka Isaka Seme stood for.

The decision to remove the municipality from Administration was welcomed by the opposition parties in the Pixley Ka Seme municipality. Democratic Alliance Councillor, Paul De Kock said that the lifting of the Administration would restore stakeholders confidence in the municipality. He however said that there were still some serious issues that needed to be dealt with as a matter of urgency, such as the issue of the houses belonging to councillors that were burnt during the unrests. He also emphasise the need for councillors to revitalise the quarterly feedback meetings with their constituencies. "

THE MARAPYANE TO LEFISO ROAD NOW OFFICIALLY OPENED



MEC Clifford Mkasi (centre) flanked by delegates officially opening the new road.

MEC for Public Works, Roads and Transport Dr Clifford Mkasi officially opened the D2927 road between Marapyane and Lefiso in the Dr JS Moroka Local Municipality during the Transport Month on 31 October 2010. The MEC also donated animal drawn carts and bicycles to rural learners as part of the National drive to cater for learners who walk less than 6 kilometers to school which is a project called Shova' Kalula. The event was held at Lefiswane Clinic in the Nkangala region.

MEC Mkasi told the community of Marapyane who attended the event that government will always ensure that the people's needs are put first. "Roads Infrastructure will always be our focal point in the department since this is the core mandate of our department. The department of Public works, Roads and Transport will always do road network needs assessment in terms of maintenance rehabilitation and upgrading as well as new construction."

MEC Mkasi donated 1643 bicycles to identified schools around the Dr JS Moroka Local Municipality and Thembisile Hani Local Municipality and further donated eleven animal drawn-carts to the community in the same municipalities.

Two of the beneficiaries of the Animal Drawn Carts were excited to have received the drawn carts. Christina Mahhanyele a resident from the Thembisile Hani Local Municipality and Lufuno Sekgwela from the Dr J.S. Moroka Local Municipality both said the animal drawn carts will assist them in many ways. "We are going to



One of the beneficiaries who received an animal drawn cart taking the ride with the MEC

ensure that our communities are assisted with carrying wood and water. Although we have been given the animal drawn carts we are not their custodians they belong to the community. We are just happy to serve the community" they said.

MEC Mkasi proceeded to the official opening of the 14.3km road between Marapyane and Lefiso which cost a total of R66 573 million. MEC Mkasi spoke to some of the drivers who were the first people to drive on the road after it was officially opened requesting them to

always stay vigilant on the road, not to drink and drive and to always stick to the speed limit.

The project has bolstered the local economy as a total of 112 job opportunities were created with the locals making up the majority of labourers. The department contracted a local contractor to complete phase one of the project, which is 7.1km. Phase two which is 7.2km was done by the department's construction unit. The construction started in July 2007 and was completed in October 2010.

SENIOR CITIZENS EXCEL AT GOLDEN GAMES



Senior citizens from all provinces attended the Golden Games

Richards Bay - Mpumalanga senior citizens exhibited amazing sporting skills at the recent National Golden Games Championships in Richards Bay

Team Mpumalanga has three medals to show for their splendid exhibition. Marika Berrange, Isaac Mosia and

Esther Sibisa claimed gold, silver and bronze medals in Jukskei and Rugby ball throw respectively. Berrange won a gold medal in Jukskei, while Mosia and Sibisa won silver and bronze in the male and female category of Rugby ball throw. The trio ensured that Mpumalanga was among the medal winners at the tournament.

The Golden Games are aimed at geriatrics and featured 18 sporting codes such as duck walk, dress-up race, passing the ball, 100m run, 200m run, 400m run, 500m brisk walk, 800m run, 400m relay sprint, rugby ball throw, ring the stick, ball pass and kick, ball relay, goal shooting, pegging washing pegs, soccer and jukskei.

At the tournament, winning is secondary. It is more about participation and promotion of active ageing for senior citizens. Team Mpumalanga managed to live up to



Senior citizens from Team Mpumalanga participating in Jukskei

that aspect of the tournament. They sung, danced and importantly, put their best foot forward in the field.

This was the province's second participation in the games, having debuted in 2009 in Eastern Cape with the inaugural tournament held in the Western Cape in 2008. If you are interested in taking up the programme or you know someone who might be interested, please call 013 766 5255.

MPUMALANGA SCOOPS SILVER AT THE NATIONAL INDIGENOUS GAMES



Contestants battle it out in a game of intonga

Johannesburg – Mpumalanga continued to make strides in the National Indigenous Games when they obtained second position.

The Indigenous Games were hosted by Gauteng Province at the University of Johannesburg in October. The games are aimed at promoting cultural activities that appeal to vast sectors of South African communities and to also deepen social cohesion within these communities.

The Indigenous Games were officially launched in 2001 and have been developed and implemented in all the nine provinces. Mpumalanga province promotes indigenous games in all the 18 municipalities in the province through the Siyadlala Mass Participation Programme for both young and old. All people who are interested in participating in the games are encouraged to join hubs in their municipalities where they will be introduced and coached in various codes.

Mpumalanga went into the games with the aim of improving their previous position, which was third. Through hard work, all 93 athletes and technical officials helped the province to achieve a silver medal. The games were played in nine codes which are: Diketo, Kgati, Morabaraba, Incuva, Jukskei, Khokho, Intonga, Dibeke and Drie Stokies.

Former MEC for Culture, Sport and Recreation, Mr Vusi Shongwe congratulated Team Mpumalanga for their good performance in the National Indigenous Games. He said the team showed that indeed Mpumalanga is a province of achievers and urged them to start preparing for the next year edition of the games so that they could clinch gold.

“We want to see all our people participating in indigenous games and our officials and coordinators of the Siyadlala Mass Participation Programme are ready to teach all people more in particular young ones about these games which have been played for centuries by our people,” MEC Shongwe said.

People in the province who are interested in indigenous games can contact the Manager for Sport and Recreation: Mr Frans Motau on (013) 766 5225.



Athletes in an intence game of Morabaraba

Department of Finance heaves awards of accounting and reporting excellence



MEC Pinky Phosa and HOD Mandla Mazibuko holding the Awards

The Mpumalanga Department of Finance has taken accountability to a new level and was duly recognised with the Annual Public Sector Reporting Award for the best annual report for the 2009/10 financial report.

The Awards for Pursuit of Excellence in Departmental Annual Reports are a significant achievement that points

to effectiveness of the systems to ensure accountability, transparency and openness. The department has not only managed to scoop the best annual report prize in Mpumalanga but also got a nod for the highest overall score among national and provincial departments in the country.

“At a time when the world, at last, seems to recover from the global financial crisis,...it is appropriate and praiseworthy that the Department of Finance has taken accountability to new levels”, said Prof Dieter Gloeck, Executive President of Southern African Institute of Government Auditors

(SAIGA) during the Annual Public Sector Reporting Award ceremony on November 12, 2010 at the Winkler.

Prof Dieter Gloeck commended progress made since the establishment of the awards, more so after many

departments received the score of 90 percent and above. “If we take into account the requirements set by National Treasury in respect of reporting and annual financial statements, there has been a steadily increase from year to year, and with this the awards gains even more in stature.

“Percentages of 95 and above are far beyond the limits of a distinction and a great achievement, no matter from which perspective you look it,” said Prof Gloeck.

The MEC of Finance, Mrs Pinky Phosa extended a word of gratitude and appreciation to the HOD and his team, the Chairperson of the Audit Committee and his team and all the key stakeholders who were instrumental in assisting the department to obtain this significant achievement.

“Your individual and collective contribution are profoundly appreciated”, said MEC Phosa. MEC added that: “Our biggest challenge would be to maintain the status quo, and also make sure that all Departments, Municipalities and Public Entities obtain a clean audit opinion in order to realize the objective of Operation Clean Audit by 2014”.

This was the ninth year since the Southern African Institute of Government Auditors (SAIGA) introduced a series of important awards in the public sector to recognize the pursuit of excellence in annual reports published by all provincial and national departments.

DEDICATED TEACHERS GET AWARDS

In honour of the professionalism and dedication they display on their respective teaching fraternity, Mpumalanga teachers got awards for their sterling work done in the transformation of lives and helping young people to realise their potential.

The MEC for Education, Mrs. Reginah Mhaule described the awarded teachers as the true example of the kind and calibre of educators that the nation sought to have. “We are proud and lack a million words to appreciate the good work that these teachers continue to do,” said the MEC.

The MEC also urged teachers to take advantage of development programmes offered by the government to improve their personal capacities. “We further urge all teachers to make an effort to take advantage of the capacity building programmes that the Department of Education has put in place for their self development,” added Mrs. Mhaule.

The MEC further elaborated that the Department of Education has recently launched the teacher laptop initiative that stands to benefit 29 231 teachers in the Province aimed at closing the gap that exists between the learners of this age and their teachers. “Our learners have proved to be comfortable with these technological gadgets, doing stuff that we don’t understand such as ‘mixit’, ‘twitter’, e-mailing, SMS-ing, MMS-ing.” “These learners are technically ahead of us in usage of these gadgets as most of them learn to use these gadgets on their own without being work-shopped or taught,” commented MEC.

The ceremony that took place just three days after the World Teachers’ Day celebrated on the 05 October, is a government initiative introduced to reward and acknowledge the work done by teachers.

The 2010 winners in each category have been awarded bursaries to the value of R30 000 by the EDTP SETA to further their studies in their field of specialization. The Department of Education extends its appreciation and congratulates all the provincial winners and the other participants. This is the way to go and may the learners be the real winners in the classrooms.

The winners in the different categories were: The team that comprises of Letseng T, Mhlanga M, Banton B, Candasamy J and Pennington F from Sasolia Primary School in Gert Sibande District was victorious in the Excellence in Primary School Teaching category.

Mr Lebyane S.S. from ML Nkuna Secondary School in Bohlabela District won the Excellence in Secondary School Teaching.

Ms Thanga FS from Luvolwethu Primary School in Ehlanzeni won the Excellence in Grade R Teaching category.

Ms Seale Thembeni from Ntsie PALC in Bohlabela District won the Excellence in Adult Basic Education category.

Mr Nkosi Zacharia Thulani from Mlondoloz Primary School in Gert Sibande won the Excellence in Primary School Leadership category.

Mr Ntimane Zacheus Goodwill from School: Sigweje Senior Secondary School in Ehlanzeni District won in the Excellence in Secondary School Leadership category.

Ms Khoza Lindiwe Makamuni from Mpithi Primary School in Bohlabela District won the Excellence in Inclusive Education and Special Needs Teaching category.

Ms Nunn Gwendoline Mary from Sasolia Primary School from Gert Sibande won the Lifetime Achievement award. She currently has 42 years unbroken experience with the Department of Education and is regarded as the most senior teacher and a mother figure at the school.



A DAY FOR THE YOUNG AND OLD



Life will never be the same for 20 children from Ntsha bothlale Edu Care Centre in Majakaneng under the Dr JS Moroka Local Municipality. This improvement came when the MEC for Health and Social Development Ms Dikeledi Mahlangu accompanied by the Executive Mayor of Dr JS Moroka Local Municipality, Ina Masombuka handed tables, chairs and carpets to the centre during an event to celebrate the International Day for older persons. This day formed part of the Social Development Month activities.

The theme for 2010 was **“Older Persons and the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals”**. It is aimed at creating an enabling environment for older persons it also seeks to deal effectively with the plight of older persons by establishing a framework aimed at the empowerment and protection of older persons, promotion and

maintenance of their status, rights, well-being as well as safety and security.

MEC Mahlangu, visited to two centers for children at Majakaneng to improve the conditions there. She said that the relationship between children and older persons is that ‘growing older should be

a period when a person’s contribution to society is acknowledged and valued’. Older persons make valuable contributions to households and society as a whole. They look after children, people with disabilities and those that are affected and infected by HIV and AIDS.

Ms. Ethelworth Phatlane, manager for the Ntsha Bothlale Edu Care Centre said “Life for these children will no longer be the same again. They used to sit on the floors and had no toys or tables, this is the best gift ever and we shall forever be grateful. Whenever you are coming this side MEC, pass by the shops and get these kids something to eat”. “I will” MEC Mahlangu responded to Ethelworth.

Mrs Mashabela, manager for El Shadday Edu Care Centre that caters for 82 kids, was also excited

when the MEC paid them a visit to check on the progress of the centre as the Department of Social Development is also funding it.

MEC Mahlangu reiterated her continued love and support for the elderly. “It feels like a dream that someone stands in front of me and say I love you, I do not remember when was the last time I heard these words but hearing them coming from our children is amazing and fulfilling” said Dorah Makhubela one of the grannies who attended the event.

Gogo Sophy Mahlangu, was so excited about the attention they were receiving on the day. She said “I could not miss this occasion for the world, we feel very special that there is a day especially for us, I am very happy”.



SERVICE CLOSER TO PEOPLE

Soeknong Tears of joy were flowing down Ms. Emelia Mokone’s cheeks when she received food and blankets after years of what she called “living in extreme poverty” during the official opening of Soeknong Branch Office of the Department of Social Development on 23 October 2010.

MEC for Health and Social Development, Dikeledi Mahlangu accompanied by the Executive Mayor of the Bushbuckridge Local Municipality, Executive Mayor Milton Morema handed food parcels and blankets to the Hlatshwayo and Mokone families. These are child headed families and rely on Social Grants of less than R500 per month. The families were identified by local social workers with representatives from local structures including the

municipality and traditional leaders.

Ms. Selina Mugano, a neighbour of the Mokone family said “the kids used to make bricks for people in the community so that they can get food to eat”.

“It still feels like a dream that today we have proper food and blankets, I thought that this would be the kind of life we are going to live forever” said Ms. Mokone, a sister of five kids.

The Executive Mayor further committed the municipality will provide houses and school uniforms to the two families. MEC Mahlangu further also promised to provide furniture (beds, fridges

and other items) for the two households once the municipality has provided the houses.

“We are aware of the level of poverty that is faced by people every day that is why we strive to reach as many families and provide assistance in every way possible, it is not possible to reach everybody at the same time but we hope to reach as many families as possible. The office we are opening today is one way of bringing Social Development services closer to the people in an effort to curb the plight of poverty” said MEC Mahlangu.



YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE



The youth does not take agriculture as a proper profession and rather prefer glamorous careers associated with cosmopolitan city life.

In a bid to change this, the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Land Administration (DARDLA) is giving opportunities to the youth to make careers in the agricultural sector.

The KwaMhlanga Young Farmers is one of the youth groups that have taken these opportunities with both hands, charting a better future not just for themselves but for their communities.

Based at KwaMhlanga in the Nkangala District, the KwaMhlanga Young Farmers, who share a common interest in agriculture, decided to organise themselves

into a formal structure in pursuit of a better life. Initially, this youth had interests as divided as the north and south ends of the poles, but found each other through their impatience with the intractable unemployment. Confronting their situation, these youth attended courses together and this is where they came to know each other and where seeds to pursue agriculture were first planted.

Very much alive to the issue of youth development and in tune with the developmental needs of the KwaMhlanga Young Farmers, DARDLA provided fencing for the kraals and an office for the youth project. This was followed in 2008 with the buying of 123 goats, additional fence to divide the camps and a bakkie in 2009. To broaden their horizons, the youth group bought sheep last year to diversify their project.

The youth group believes that although the project is still in its infancy, it is giving them hope to look forward to a better future. They say the project is not profitable at the moment but if they worked harder and exercised patience they are going to emerge victorious.

To keep the project going, the local communities have proved a stable market where the goats and sheep are sold. Auctions are another market which the young farmers have exploited and have not been disappointed. Their immediate goal now is to work harder to break

the limits of these two markets into others including to export to other countries.

Although the project has lost eight of its sixteen founding members, the remaining youth are determined to ensure that the Department's investment in their project was not in vain.

MEC for DARDLA, Meshack Malinga, said investing in youth projects involved in agriculture is demonstrative of the Department's commitment that the youth is at the top shelf of our priorities.

"Development in agriculture cannot go ahead and leave the youth behind. The youth is the future of the agricultural sector. Agriculture is not for old people. The youth must learn from the old and then take the sector forward," Malinga said.



SOIL IS GOLD FOR FARMERS

Farmers from Shabalala and Nyongane around Hazyview as well as learners from Ketsulwati High School and Jerusalem High School were encouraged to take care of the soil through the LandCare activities recently held.

Soil erosion is a major contributor to the loss of productive land for food production and it is a huge environmental threat to the sustainability of agriculture. But soil erosion also affects ordinary people with their backyard vegetable gardens and plant beds.

"During the last 40 years, nearly one-third of the world's arable land has been lost by erosion and continues to be lost at a rate of more than 10 million hectares per year. At the same time, the food demand worldwide is increasing, while food productivity is beginning to decline. In South Africa it is estimated that the annual soil loss is estimated at approximately three to four hundred million tonnes; this is nearly three tonnes for each hectare of land," commented Mr. Love Shabane from the national Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

Soil Erosion occurs when wind or heavy rains or water sweep up the topsoil from an area of land. It is the topsoil that supports plant life and when the top soil is no longer there, plant-life will also stop existing on that particular land.

The Mpumalanga Department of Agriculture Rural

Development and Land Administration (DARDLA) encourage everybody to participate in Land Care, by advising communities on how to prevent soil erosion. This is done "by planting more trees, vegetables, flowers, shrubs and other plants. When soil is anchored, this will prevent soil from blowing away or being washed away", comments Mr. Komaphi the Agricultural Manager for DARDLA in Mbombela Municipality. "Communities should also move their animals around every day to avoid over-grazing."

The Department encouraged the use of contour farming when farming on sloped areas. Contour farming is the planting of crops along the natural contours of the land instead of straight rows. The furrows or channels that are made with a plow follow the contour of the land and each furrow channels serves as a dam, preventing the water from easily sinking into the soil.

Other methods that people can implement in order to avoid soil erosion include constructing surface runoff barriers such as the edging and gabions that are made with bricks or stones. These barriers assist in limiting water runoff. When water runoff is minimized, the soil is less likely to be carried away by groundwater runoff.

The application of mulch can also be used in order to retain moisture and also help prevent soil erosion. "Mulch is a cover that is placed on soil and is made of natural elements such as leaves and grass," said Mr.

Komaphi during his presentation to the farmers and the learners. "Topsoil is less likely to be washed away when it is covered by mulch. Mulch is also commonly used in flower beds."

One of the students a grade 11 learner, Justice Mdhuli from Jerusalem High also takes part in the Junior LandCare programme at his school. Mdhuli is very excited about studying agriculture and says that the grade 10 to grade 12 agriculture classes have started a vegetable garden at the beginning of the year. "So far the veggies we produced were shared amongst ourselves and other underprivileged students", said Mdhuli. Mdhuli also promises to use the information they received during the LandCare Day in their garden in order to increase their production.



HOUSES TO THE NEEDY



MEC for Human Settlement, Siphosezwe Masongo (left) and Deputy Minister for Human Settlement Ms Zoleka Kota-Fredericks (right) with Mr. Raymond Khozo (center) who was one of recipients of a house.

Thulamahashe – He is a disabled man who lived alone in a one-roomed house for most of his life. Adding to his predicament is the fact that on a daily basis he had to do everything by himself, sitting in a wheel chair. This is the story of 56-year-old Mr. Raymond Khozo from Thulamahashe in the Bushbuckridge Local Municipality whose life became troubled since his wife left him several years ago.

This was Mr. Khozo's life until Ms Constance Nkuna came to his rescue and took responsibility to cook,

clean, bath and wheel Mr. Khozo around. "I'm guided by the belief that we all need to love God and take care of our neighbours," she says. Ms Nkuna describes how frustrating it must have been for Mr. Khozo to do everything.

After years of suffering, 2010 will be the year that Mr. Khozo will remember best when he recently received a four-roomed house when Deputy Minister of Human Settlement Ms Zoleka Kota-Fredericks accompanied by MEC for Human Settlement Mr. Siphosezwe Masongo and the Mayor of Bushbuckridge Cllr. Milton Morema

people like Mr. Khozo stand to benefit from this initiative. "The government understands what many communities are going through and we are working around the clock to address the issues facing these people, especially in the housing sector," said the Deputy Minister. She further praised Ms Nkuna and urged people to imitate her in making a difference in other people's lives. "This Country can be truly a wonderful place if all of us had the kind of heart Ms Nkuna has. The launch of the PHP in the area saw another handovers being made to other several people around the area.



officially handed him the keys to his house. The visit by the delegates was part of the launch of the People's Housing Process (PHP) in the area. Struggling to put his emotions into words, Khozo said "I'm very happy today." Adding to his jubilation was the fact that he also received a new refrigerator, stove and a new wheelchair.

Speaking during the handover, the Deputy Minister said many

The policy of the PHP enables/encourages communities to actively contribute and participate in the housing development process so that communities take ownership of the process and not just act as passive recipients of housing. This was a policy review where a deliberate shift towards an inclusive participation by the community and community based organisations in building the Enhanced People's Housing Process (EPHP). This policy is the result of lengthy negotiations with the National Department of Housing (NDoH) on the part of a handful of NGOs, dating back to 2004. The new policy adopts a broader definition of PHP, allowing for greater flexibility and choice while maintaining the central principles of people-centred development. Therefore, the Enhanced People's Housing Process makes the community aware of their housing rights, local economic development, stable communities and that housing is an asset far beyond the monetary value.

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THE FIVE GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES DURING THE PERIOD 2009 - 2014

- Develop and implement a comprehensive rural development strategy linked to rural and agrarian reform and food security.
- Create decent work and sustainable livelihoods
- Strengthen the skills and human resource base (Education)
- Improve the health profile of all people in the province
- Intensify the fight against crime and corruption

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