

MEDIA STATEMENT

DATE: 18 APRIL 2015

TO: ALL MEDIA

EMBARGO: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WINDS OF CHANGE TO TACKLE POVERTY HEAD ON

The KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Finance, Ms Belinda Scott has re-configured the Department's Outreach Campaigns which used to be in a form of gatherings in community halls, with catering for the masses, transport, toilets, music system, among others, which usually result in a huge expenditure that is attached to this nature of the outreach.

"I feel quite strongly about using a lot of money on tents, venues, and buses, because I feel like all I do is go out there and speak for half-an-hour then people have food parcel and go home. When that food parcel is finished that was my contribution over. I want to change that approach in my department. I want us to go to the people and leave something behind that the community can benefit from" said MEC Scott.

The new approach, according to the MEC, entails reaching out to NGOs and NPOs or some legitimate (registered with the provincial Department of Social Development) social formations, for example, that serve poor or challenged communities. In the list of needs, (since some of these Institutions are not funded) one or two is /are identified and attended to by the Department or a sponsor is sought to address that particular need.

MEC Scott is now in the process of piloting this new approach as she and a team of senior Department officials from different Business Units visited specific areas in Mtubatuba on Friday to, among other things, hand over uniforms to the identified needy children as well as undertake a house-to-house visit with budget literature in a bid to engage people at a grass root level on money matters.

The NPO called Sukumani in ward 17 at Mtubatuba, in UMkhanyakude District was the first one to benefit from this new approach. This NPO cares for 70 HIV-positive and orphaned children from birth right until they can stand on their own. These children go to crèches and schools in the area. The department decided to give 30 uniforms to those children that have been identified as extremely needy and poor in this NPO. It was heartening to see some children in tears of joy, saying that they will be wearing uniforms for the first time which will give them a sense of belonging as they always felt like outsiders at their schools without uniform.

The second project that benefited from this initiative was Isilungiso Agricultural Cooperative. The department solicited sponsorship from ABSA bank on behalf of this cooperative, to donate three Jojo tanks to store water pumped from the river.

Isilungiso Co-operative is made up of a local group male and female members who are all HIV-positive and are on ARVs. Instead of crying over unemployment which is rife in the area, they sought to start their own garden/s (3.5 hectares of land) where they plant a variety of vegetables to eat, sell to locals and even distribute to a local supermarket. This, however, has not been plain sailing as they encounter a number of challenges, among which are lack of a generator to pump water from the river for their plants, containers to store pumped water and a park home for use by members to ensure security for their plants due to theft.

The KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Treasury has undertaken to provide tangible support, with financial resources allowing, to certain legitimate community-based organisations in the form of NGOs, NPOs or Cooperatives that contribute in poverty eradication in various ways in communities. Over-and-above visiting and supporting the above projects, the Provincial Treasury staff mostly comprises of financial experts and economist, took to the streets of Mtubatuba, going door to door, talking money matters with the people on the ground.

The community engagements through house visits were more constructive, as communities especially youth, were vigorous and among other things complained about job opportunities, sports facilities, water and electricity problems, non-service delivery from the dissolved council. The financial experts from treasury had a lot to come back with for digestion and consideration when deciding on the provincial budget.

Issued by the office of the MEC for Finance in KwaZulu-Natal. For more information, contact Musa Cebisa, on [071 687 8777](tel:0716878777).