



GAUTENG PROVINCE

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA STATEMENT

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DEPARTMENTS OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, AGRICULTURE & RURAL DEVELOPMENT TO WORK TOGETHER TO COMBAT POVERTY IN GAUTENG

Good afternoon to all media houses

Today we gather just 4 days after Premier Lesufi announced his cabinet and vision for the term. In his articulations he outlined the importance of this cabinet building on the successes from the tenure of Premier Makhura. And the importance of us focusing on the poor and working class who continue to be victims of poverty, underdevelopment and its associated ills.

As our democracy matures, we are learning more and more about the gravity of the many challenges that have been brewing for decades in our communities.

Whilst the democratic government, particularly in Gauteng, has achieved many strides in bringing a better life to the ever-growing population, there is still much more that needs to be done. The people of Gauteng, especially in our townships, informal settlements, and hostels continue to bear the largest brunt of poverty, inequality and unemployment. These challenges manifest in different ways, and amongst these key manifestations are food insecurity, hunger, homelessness, hopelessness, and the resultant substance abuse.

The two Departments of Social Department, Agriculture and Rural Department both have aggressive programmes in place to combat poverty through food relief, food growing and processing as a measure to move beneficiaries from dependency on the state to self-reliance.

This is done through cooperatives, training and skills development and capacity building. On the 16 and 18 October each of the Departments will host their World Food Day activities respectively. This is an important global

program which seeks to highlight the plight towards the eradication of hunger and food insecurity.

War On Poverty

Our work in combatting poverty is driven by the GCR Anti-Poverty Strategy. The aim of the strategy is to eliminate urban hunger and inequality. It also aims to ensure the social inclusion of the marginalized, connect the poor and vulnerable to economic opportunities, as well as to combat hunger and food insecurity.

The approach on agriculture and food security of the two Departments seek to use agriculture to improve capacity, empower the most vulnerable, and address food shortages. These initiatives aim to increase the agricultural skills of those who are extremely poor, primarily women and young people. Beneficiaries targeted are unemployed people who reside in peri-urban areas, in utter poverty, and who depend heavily on social assistance as a means of subsistence.

Building entrepreneurship amongst our participants, are the program's main objectives, as we seek to build a nation where everyone actively participates towards their, and our collective development.

Additionally, is to dispense agricultural business knowledge and enhancing the livelihood plans of the projects of the participants. This is accomplished by establishing cooperative structures and providing ongoing on-the-job training in crop production.

The project's goal is further to create primary and secondary co-operatives with financially sound members, who are no longer reliant on social support. The execution of this project contributes to South Africa's current anti-poverty strategy and emphasizes sustainable livelihoods.

As Premier Lesufi has indicated, we cannot adequately celebrate our democracy and freedom, if poverty and unemployment continue to plague our nation. Through the joint programs our two departments will embark on, we are certain we will move closer towards the eradication of hunger.

Responding to Homelessness in Gauteng

Yesterday on the 10th of October 2022 the world commemorated World Homeless Day, a day on which attention is drawn globally to the needs of people who experience homelessness.

According to the International World Homeless Day Organisation, the day calls on communities to make a difference and get all hands-on deck with small deeds to make a difference.

During the 2021/22 financial year, the Gauteng Department of Social Development allocated over R87 million rand to Municipalities to deal with homelessness in the province. It further transformed cargo containers into temporary structures and tents to accommodate the homeless. This was in a bid to restore hope and dignity for homeless people.

In these shelters, skills such as clothing and textile, carpentry, visual artistry, and various agricultural projects are provided to ensure that beneficiaries become self-reliant after exiting these shelters.

The Gauteng Department of Social Development is currently funding 26 homeless shelters in the province and has launched 4 park homes for the homeless across the province, accommodating around 3000 beneficiaries. The Department continues to link beneficiaries in these park homes with centres of excellence for skills development.

Since 2018, over 150 000 beneficiaries were reached through family preservation, and 11 000 through the family re-unification programme. These are programs geared at uniting the homeless with their families, as a means to restore our family units.

Even though much work is being done, homelessness cannot be eradicated completely, as individuals continue to enter the province with prospects for a better life and a means to be close to economic activity. Whilst awake to this reality, what remains critical is for the province to have a well-functioning integrated system that can respond at any given time, including family reunification.

The Gauteng Provincial Government has considered both the contributing factors and outcomes and therefore will be able to support the homeless not only by providing shelter but responding with a range of interventions that ensure beneficiaries are assisted to get off the streets permanently.

On Fighting Substance Abuse

On 7 October Premier Panyaza Lesufi spoke passionately about the painful impact of Nyaope on its users, families and on society as a whole.

The Department of Social Development is the lead agent in the administration of the; Prevention of and Treatment of Substance Abuse Act No 70 of 2008.

Part of the deliverables of the Act is to reduce the demand of drugs in communities, through our “Ke Moja substance abuse prevention programme”. A programme we seek to grow as a means to eradicate drug usage and intake within our communities, especially amongst youth.

During 2013, the Department of Social Development spearheaded the campaign to classify Nyaope as an illicit drug in terms of the Drug Trafficking Act 140 of 1992 as amended. The campaign ignited the debate around the classification of nyaope as a drug. This advocacy led to the Medicines Control Council prioritizing the classification of nyaope as an illicit drug in April 2014, to improve prosecution of those dealing and found in possession of nyaope.

Nyaope is a Novel Psychoactive Substance (NSP), and it is widely used among black people more especially the youth; within our various townships across the five regions of Gauteng.

Through the GCR anti substance strategy, the Department ran 2 TV seasons of the Kick It awareness campaign on SABC 1. This successful programme won SAFTA awards for Best Factual Educational Programme.

Whilst the Department funds NPO-led rehabilitation centres across Gauteng, the department runs its own rehabilitation centre, namely Dr F & F Ribeiro treatment centre, in Cullinan, Pretoria.

The Premier is currently leading a team that will ensure the implementation of the facility he pronounced on. These plans will be communicated by the Premier and our Department in due course.

In the interim, the Department will be maximizing admissions in all 1 400 plus treatment beds, intensifying aftercare including skills development, education, bursaries, and so on. As Gauteng government we will use all the resources we have using the full might of the state to turn the corner against Nyaope and related drugs.

Our strategy will work with young people to educate them about the harms of substance abuse and to convert them into ambassadors. At the end of the October, the Department of Social Development will host the “Ke Moja Awards” to honour those that work with Gauteng Provincial Government to fight the war on drugs.

The Gauteng provincial government remains committed to fighting poverty, homelessness and substance abuse. Our Premier was unambiguous in our commitment and plans, our media briefing is to brief the media and people of

South Africa on the work we are doing and give them assurance that our government remains people centred, and we remain committed to building a non-sexist, non-racial, democratic, and prosperous South Africa.

**Ms Mbali Hlophe,
Member of the Executive Council (MEC)
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Development**

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Issued by the Gauteng Provincial Government

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