

The Weekly

DLAMINI, NTOMBELA OPEN R1-MILLION ECD CENTRE IN QWAQWA

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Caring for children ... Social development minister, Bathabile Dlamini, officially opened the Lethabong Early Childhood Development (ECD) centre in QwaQwa

The million rand state of the art centre will provide refuge for poor and vulnerable children in the area.

The minister of social development, Bathabile Dlamini, accompanied by Free State social development MEC, Sisi Ntombela, opened the R1-million Lethabong Early Childhood Development (ECD) centre in QwaQwa on Wednesday.

This came after the 2012 Social Development Month was launched in the Free State. The month has been designated as a period to interact and reach out to meet citizens, while assessing government's contribution to the improvement of the lives of South Africans.

Dlamini also paid tribute to Clara Mokoena, a grandmother hailing from Qwaqwa who uses her own house to accommodate and take care of children. Mokoena's generosity allows young parents, who live her with their children, to continue with their studies.

According to Dlamini, Mokoena's efforts are an investment in the future of children and their parents as well as the broader community.

"I want to express my sincere and heartfelt "thank you" to her as well as all the other grandparents and community members who are doing similar work."

She said more than R1-million was spent on construction of the facility, with an additional R190 000 donated by the Free State department of social development for the paving, fencing, lawns and equipment.

The department of correctional services volunteered to assist with the building of the centre. The facility has created employment for a single manager; four ECD practitioners and cooking and cleaning staff.

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Dlamini said the provincial department in partnership with the National Development Agency (NDA) allocated R7.5-million for the reconstruction of seven facilities and the renovation of four others. “We are proud to announce that nine of these facilities were completed. The second facility that is still under construction is being erected here in QwaQwa in collaboration with the NDA. It is a drop-in centre, which will cater for children in need of care and protection in Slovo Park.”

The provincial department of social development has allocated R1.9-million towards the building of the drop-in centre expected to be completed in the next four weeks. The centre will be named after Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, to honour and applaud her following her new appointment as chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC).

According to Dlamini, this was one to honour the contribution Dlamini-Zuma in the fight against apartheid and the revival of Africa.

The minister said government was committed reducing high levels of poverty, inequality and unemployment. “An important component of that strategy is to improve household food security so that all South Africans have access to nutritious food. Our strategy is integrated in that it seeks to support families and help small farmers improve their capacity to produce food to feed the nation,” she said.

Dlamini said the strategy included efforts to lower the prices of essential foods and improving access to social assistance measures, such as grants and food distribution programmes. “To reduce poverty and associated challenges, the department of social development works with its provincial counterparts, agencies as well as with non-governmental organisation (NGOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs).”

“It is only through structured and committed partnerships that we can successfully implement our mandate which is to improve the lives of all South Africans,” she said.

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