



## GETTING TO KNOW THE MEC

**Tackling poverty in our province head-on, Sisi Ntombela is changing lives one step at a time. Get It's Lindsay Batteson caught up with this delightful lady to find out how things are developing on the social front.**

### **FAST FACTS:**

**My favourite dishes to cook are...**pap, traditional Marogo and a variety of meat dishes.

**In my spare time,** I...enjoy writing motivational short stories geared towards helping the youth and women of our community.

**My favourites song is...**R Kelly's I believe I can fly.

**I love wearing...**any accessories from Ninewest and traditional wear made by our talented local designers.

Her passion is evident. It seems to radiate from this motherly figure sitting across the way, with her soft smile, sympathetic eyes and warm voice that has an immediately calming effect on the listener. If first impressions are anything to go by, you realise that this woman has definitely found her calling in life.

Sefora Hixsonia Sisi Ntombela is our new MEC for Social Development in the Free State, a province she feels quite at home in. "I was born in Tweeling, Frankfort in the Eastern Free State...so, I'm a Free State girl, born and bred" she adds with an effervescent laugh that bubbles up from somewhere deep inside.

Sisi Ntombela's political career began in the 1980's. Her father, a teacher in Bethlehem, had a profound effect on her life. When he passed away in 1972, she realised that she too had to join the struggle to help alleviate the suffering of the people around her. Since then, she has made it her life's mission. And where does her deep well of seemingly unending passion come from? "The children," she replies. With eyes that begin to glisten in the corners and her voice becoming a tad hoarse, she adds that the orphaned children of our region, being forced to live in abject poverty, are the motivating factor behind the work she does on a daily basis.

However, when unexpectedly being announced as the MEC, this kind soul had doubts as to whether her passion would be enough. "I never thought that I would become the MEC for Social Development – it was such a shock in the beginning! But then, almost immediately, I felt strangely nervous...I realised the enormity of the job." she confesses, looking thoughtful. But despite her misgivings, with a strong work ethic and an unending dedication to the cause, Sisi Ntombela is seen to be making a serious dent in the social development scene.

She is also instilling in people the idea that fighting poverty is not a oneman... or, to be politically correct, onewoman job. In a recent address, she stated "Government, civil society and businesses must put all hands on deck to eliminate poverty. It is not the responsibility of government only" adding that the war against poverty can only be won through partnerships formed with various stakeholders.



To this end, she created the Friends of the Poor project – a programme where the disabled, elderly and the young will benefit. Taking into consideration her love of children, she also recently launched the Child Protection Awareness Campaign.

A lesser known fact about Sisi Ntombela is that she loves being in the company of other women, feeling that we should draw strength from one another. As a wife, mother and grandmother, she is also very much a family person. When talking to those close to her, they'll tell you that she is an excellent communicator with a big heart, who is sometimes a little too sympathetic, finding it hard to say no to those in need.

In short, Sisi Ntombela is the definition of kindness, a thoroughly compassionate and thoughtful soul that cannot help but care for her community...custom-made to fit her portfolio.