

**FREE STATE TERTIARY STUDENTS FROM DISADVANTAGED
BACKGROUNDS RECEIVE FOOD DONATIONS FROM MEC FOR SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT: Me SISI NTOMBELA**

In many South African universities, tuition fees are high and continue to skyrocket on a yearly basis. Many students are forced to give up their dreams of enrolling at a tertiary institution because they do not have the necessary funding to further their studies. The Free State provincial government has embarked on a mission to assist such students. 58 tertiary education students received a surprise visit from the MEC for Social Development Me Sisi Ntombela and her officials.

The office of the Premier provided these learners with accommodation and registration fees but they are not receiving any financial aid at the moment, some of their applications for bursaries and loans have not been approved by bursary schemes and some are still waiting for a response from various bursary or student loan schemes.

The food parcels will be delivered to the students on a monthly basis for the entire duration of their studies or until they receive some sort of financial assistance. The food donations are received from various business people and women that the MEC has mobilized during her campaigns to donate non-perishable food stuffs towards this noble intervention.

Beatrice Makaota is a first year student studying education from the North West province. Beatrice is one of the students who benefitted from this initiative. She is coming from a disadvantaged background, with her family not being able to provide her with basic necessities such as food and accommodation. "These food parcels are really making a difference in our lives, we no longer go to bed on an empty stomach and this makes it easier for us to concentrate on our studies, as this means there is one less thing to worry about, we are really thankful to the Free State Provincial Government, they are really making a difference in our lives", said Makaota.

The MEC has encouraged these student to focus on their studies and not be lured into the world of prostitution and sugar daddies. "You are all from poor families, focus on what you came here for so that you can go back home and make your families proud", said Ntombela.

The MEC also warned the students about the dangers of being involved with sugar daddies commonly known as "blessers", alcohol and drug abuse especially in the areas where most these students reside. She asked them to support each other by reporting those that were unruly so that they can be dealt with accordingly. The students express their gratitude to the department and they committed themselves to studying hard and not giving in to temptations of the so called blessers that could destroy their lives.