

The Weekly

NTOMBELA INTERVENES TO AID IMPOVERISHED COMMUNITY

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Happy to help ... The community of Hoopstad gathered to listen to the programmes planned by the department of social development for the area

The Tswelopele Local Municipality is best known as the cleanest municipality in the Free State, but its small town of Hoopstad is plagued by unemployment and teenage pregnancies.

These afflictions emerged on Wednesday last week when the town hosted discussions on the social development department's budget allocation for the 2013/2014 financial year.

"This town of Hoopstad, which means Hometown in English, is the most impoverished area where almost the entire community depends on social grants. This town has a population of 9 000 including 436 orphans and 36 disabled people," said the MEC for social development, Sisi Ntombela.

Ntombela promised that her department would help this community to set up vegetable gardens. ABSA bank will provide young people involved in this project with seeds and training for six months. In addition, the department will finance a R3-million poultry project in partnership with the agriculture department.

Frans Mmutlanyane (32) cannot wait to see this project get off the ground. He finished school in 2000 and went on to work at a local mortuary for five years. He has been unemployed since 2005. Mmutlanyane is a father with three mouths to feed. He has no income but is hopeful that things will change.

"There are no factories in our area and this means we depend on government projects for work. Though most of us are not employed, the crime rate in our area is low because we are a close community and we know one another very well. We can identify a thief easily because of this. The only thing that we need is jobs," said Mmutlanyane.

Simon Moshodi (34) is adamant that if young people get employment, this will keep them away from vices like alcohol abuse and unwanted pregnancies. "We have this beautiful stadium but young people do not utilise it to the fullest. They need motivation and guidance to be able to participate in sport. There are football teams here, but they are not actively involved in encouraging other young people to take part".

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“Public works programmes come and go. These are the only good things happening here. We need help. Only the well-connected members of our community get employed on those projects.”

Mamiki Ntomane (32) approached The Weekly and shared her experience while carrying her baby on her back and holding her seven-year-old son.

“I need an RDP house for my family. My parents passed away and I was left alone on the family land. I have applied and I am still waiting. I have two children who depend on child grants. This is the only income I have since I do not have a job. I pray for my situation to change as I am now desperate,” said Ntomane.

Emily Boniswa (24) is an orphan with a seven-year-old child. She is unemployed and her son only received his child grant on his sixth birthday.

The other achievement the department prides itself on is helping 128 street kids two years ago. From this number, 124 were from torn families.

The department reunited these children with their families, and helped them to get identity documents. They were also trained and placed in jobs.

“We also helped 98 sex workers last year. These young girls went back to school and some are now working,” disclosed Ntombela.

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