

The Weekly

Premier invests in youth enterprises



Pioneering youth development ... A social entrepreneurs with MEC for Social Development, Sisi Ntombela, Premier Ace Magashule and COGTA MEC Olly Mlamleli

The premier of the Free State, Ace Magashule , has announced that his office has set aside R2-million to support social enterprise businesses created by the social development department in partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and other government departments.

Magashule made this disclosure in Bloemfontein this week at the occasion to present 71 young people from Mangaung and Matjhabeng Local Municipalities with certificates for their participation in social enterprise business plan competition.

“Our hope is in our young people, but they must have the required tools. We must ensure that our young people become job creators not job seekers. We are therefore happy with this social enterprise programme.”

“They will bring change in their society; the Free State and in Mangaung. It will bring good and sound business to the province. Already I am committing R2-million, we are going to make sure they succeed. The future, hope, prosperity and better life are in reach,” said Magashule.

Magashule added that young people should strive to be self-reliant because education without hard work is useless. He described himself as a community activist who believes in empowering people through community or social projects.

“If you are lazy you cannot grow the economy. I do not know what to do to make South Africa a working nation. Now is the time to reconstruct South Africa. We cannot just sit and not see what we can do for South Africa. The economy will only be changed by your generation,” said Magashule.

The youth programme dates back to 2010 where the call to train 500 young people through the National Youth Service (NYS) in the province was made. The Free State departments of social development and health committed themselves to train 250 young people. However, some fell off and only 237 remained.

The ILO was involved in the social enterprises pilot programme from the start. It focused in Thaba Nchu, Botshabelo and Odendaalsrus. In the beginning 120 young people participated but 71 of them remain. They received accredited training that took eight months. They were trained on youth and child care as well as social enterprise development.

They were trained to be able to identify social ideas which included people’s needs in their communities. They were also required to critically examine their communities’ needs and challenges.

“This is a three year programme to support Free State small medium macro enterprise (SMME’s). This also contributes to creation of jobs for young people in the province. The reality is there are limited formal employment opportunities, with the youth being the most affected.

“This programme will better prepare young people to become entrepreneurs and eradicate the dependency on government to provide jobs,” explained ILO social enterprise project director, Jens Dyring Christensen. ILO provides assistance in different sectors of the economy. These include agri-business which is adding value to agricultural products, construction, tourism and waste management.

Other stakeholders that will be assisting these social entrepreneurs are Sports for All Foundation and National Empowerment Fund (NEF).

“I believe we all have mandates given to us by God, how we implement these mandates is up to us. But I believe you all have a wonderful opportunity to turn your life around,” said the MEC for social development Sisi Ntombela.

One of the beneficiaries of the project, Kenneth Busakwe from Kutlwanong Rehabilitation Ex-offenders group (K.R.E.O) shared his excitement about participating in the project.

“Many people never believed in us. Thank you for giving us a second chance. All stakeholders involved in helping us have showed us that there is still a hope for us,” said Busakwe.