

SHOE FACTORY FOR FREE STATE

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THABA PHATSWA – A shoe factory worth R1 500 000, spearheaded by the Department of Social Development through cooperatives is expected to open in Qwa Qwa and will produce mainly school shoes which will be distributed through the department's outreach projects.

The MEC for Social Development Sisi Ntombela said that the factory would also have a textile wing for the manufacturing of school uniforms. Women and unemployed graduates are targeted for employment, Ntombela said.

With a budget totaling R822 787 000, the department of Social Development will seek to focus on social welfare programmes, which have been allocated R554 049 000 for the 2012/13 financial year.

Under this programme, Early Childhood Development (ECD) initiatives will be spearheaded by the department at a cost of R176 million. This allocation would seek to support 922 ECDs, which will benefit 46 000 children, increasing from the 43 000 children who benefitted in 2011/12. In order to make this goal within reach, 450 practitioners would have to be trained on pre-grade R curriculum for the financial year starting on April 1.

Furthermore, R11 million will be poured into building eight new ECDs in the five districts of the province whilst also re-furbishing seven structures from the 2011/12 financial year, Ntombela said.

However laudable are the efforts of the department to universalize pre-grade R schooling as envisaged by the department of education, there were still members of the public who were not entirely satisfied because they felt left out in the cold by the MEC.s

Mamodise Kola is one of the people who made her way to Thaba Phatswa in anticipation of what the MEC held for community volunteers like herself.

Kola works as a Community Development Practitioner (CDP) in Tweespruit, where she facilitates after-care and playgroup programs for primary school children. The mandate of CDPs across the province also involves sessions with the elderly in homes.

She is one of the volunteers who are undergoing training with Lesedi Educare Association, an entity which specialises with mobile toy libraries and providing pre-school schooling in underprivileged areas across the province. Her concern was that the department has not made an allocation for the volunteers to be employed in the department.

"My concern is why the MEC has not made provision for CDPs, especially because we will be qualified in September. It seems like because our programme is not directly with the department but with Lesedi, we are being ignored," the mother of four said.

Vathile said that although they do not mind the work they do because it has significance in their respective communities, they do, however, need a stipend to survive and go on with their daily functions.

“Currently, I’m the only one working around Tweespruit. There were two of us before, but because there is no income, the other lady dropped out of the programme,” she continued.

This was after the MEC announced that through learnerships aimed at internal employees and youth with grade, employment opportunities would be created with the help of the both the public and private sectors.

A further initiative which was applauded was the recommitment to implement the child protection register.

“The register will have names of all those who are entrusted with care and protection of children yet have committed gross violations against children,” Ntombela said.

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