



Member of the Executive Council  
for Social Development  
FREE STATE PROVINCE

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY MEC: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, MRS. OUMA TSOPO ON THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY HELD AT THE MARQUARD TOWN, 17 OCTOBER 2008**

Programme Director,  
Honourable Mayors and Councillors present,  
Heads of Departments & Members of Senior Management Service,  
Respectable Municipal Managers and Municipal Officials,  
Members of the Religious Fraternity, NGOS and CBOs,  
Distinguished Members of the Private Sector,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

**“BUSINESS UNUSUAL: ALL HANDS ON DECK TO SPEED UP ACCESS TO SOCIAL SERVICES AND WAGE A WAR AGAINST POVERTY”**

Programme Director,

On this occasion of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, we are truly showing in action the commitment and the execution of the obligations our country carries towards global peace and stability. Global peace and stability have been under threat for years, however, this threat which led to the establishment of the United Nations Organisations and its peace keeping missions has been largely about state power, especially the threat of unilateral action by strong states intending to oppress and loot the resources of the weaker states. It has been a threat characterized by the arms race, with global powers contesting the creation of spheres of influence and domination over weaker states and its people's. These have led to disastrous outcomes in the outbreaks of wars – the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Wars. With Nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction being used in these wars, their collective damage and collateral has accounted for mere meager millions of precious lives. Sad as this is, we must note that the most dangerous threats to global peace and stability have been over human suffering through poverty, malnutrition, hiv & aids, malaria, diabetes and many

other communicable diseases which are a result of poverty and hunger. These have accounted for far too many billions of people in all parts of the world, rich or poor, strong or weak. No state in the world can claim that it has not suffered from any of these diseases with valuable lives and dignity of people being lost in the process. The worst of all is that the larger part of casualties are experienced in Africa – and we see similarities with these in our own backyards of the Free State Province.

Commenting on the eve of a similar occasion, the former Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Koffi Annan 2006 once remarked that “...the campaign to make poverty history – a central moral challenge of our age cannot remain a task for the few, it must become a calling for the many. On this International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, I urge everyone to join the struggle. Together, we can make real and sufficient progress towards the end of poverty...”. The challenge that Koffi Annan threw to the world still remains as there are still fewer and fewer activists against hunger, yet there are growing numbers of affluence and wastage of this much needed life sustenance in the urban and rural squalors. As you may have observed in the video footage – the number of activists is still smaller, however, growing into a remarkable force against this human tragedy - poverty. The declaration of War Against Poverty is thus no accident but a historical moment that marks the return of the values of humanity among our fellow humans.

In recognition of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the theme for this year's observance of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty is **"Human Rights and Dignity of People Living in Poverty"**.

The struggle against poverty has evolved more and more visibly into an overarching development goal of the international community. Poverty eradication, however, is not only a development goal; it is also a central challenge for ensuring world-wide recognition of human rights. The international community has acknowledged that poverty is a violation of human rights and that promoting human rights can reduce poverty.

The world-wide persistence of poverty can be attributed in part to the violations of human rights. In fact, human rights violations can be both a cause and a consequence of

poverty. People living in poverty are excluded from society, and their ability to secure their own rights is particularly limited by their predicament.

Poverty can be seen as a human condition of deprivation of resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights.

Under the core human rights instruments, human beings are guaranteed among others, the rights to life, liberty and security of person, the right to the highest attainable standard of health, the right to just and favourable working conditions, the right to adequate food, housing and social security, the right to education and participation in the democratic process. Securing those rights for all would bring us closer to poverty eradication.

Human rights based approaches to fighting poverty links poverty reduction to the question of obligation, rather than charity. It compels us as policymakers to implement strategies helping the most vulnerable individuals and groups escape poverty and destitution. This is hence our determination to use every policy instrument at our disposal to ensure that poverty does not result from state bureaucracy but the mechanisms for eradicating it are privileged. As the Free State Provincial Government we have already set the track in motion through our active participation in the establishment of a policy environment that would enable every willing human to take part in the fight against poverty. We have launched the War Rooms Against Poverty as a result of the Jacobsdal initiative which was launched by the former Deputy President on the 14 August 2008. Simultaneously, we had been hard at work to ensure that our Province becomes the first amongst the many to adopt a Poverty Alleviation Strategy with a Provincial Poverty Alleviation Forum constituted by all organs of state and driven from the Highest Office in the Province – the Office of the Premier and that of the Director-General.

It is cardinal to note that the War Room on Poverty is a culmination of the multiple integrated efforts at waging war on poverty. As a prelude to the national campaign against poverty, we had already started with an initiative of the Food Banks piloting it alongside the Social Relief of Distress through the Integrated Community Outreach Programmes. The provincial campaigns which have been running since May 2008 were

launched on the 12 June 2008 (ICROP) in Kroonstad and the launch of the food banks which has been running side by side with ICROP was launched on the 21 July 2008 in Bultfontein and has touched the lives of the poor in all the 11 poverty nodes of the province as per the Free State Growth and Development Strategy Review of 2006.

## **THE STATUS OF POVERTY ALLEVIATION THROUGH SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES**

The strategy of the Department is that we will not do payments to organisations directly, instead we ask them to do their own needs analysis and then get them to submit these for us to procure the necessary equipment on their behalf. This is in order to ensure that money and all resources are spent on appropriate items, as our experience tells us that many projects that collapsed are those that went to procure fancy items such as 4x4 vehicles and many other unnecessary items which did not match the size and volume of work that is required by the project.

Our Sustainable Livelihoods is Budgeted for a total of **R5 400 000**.

Our proposed allocations according to the five districts, however, still under discussions are as follows:

- Thabo Mofutsanyana – R1 600 000
- Lejweleputswa – R1 300 000
- Fezile Dabi – R1 000 000
- Motheo – R 850 000
- Xhariep – R 650 000

Our Youth Development on the other side is Budgeted for a total of **R 2 000 000**.

**The proposed allocations for the five districts are as follows:**

- Thabo Mofutsanyane – R 600 000
- Lejweleputswa – R500 000
- Fezile Dabi – R 400 000
- Motheo – R300 000
- Xhariep – R200 000

The Sustainable Livelihoods Projects are aimed at creating self employment opportunities for women, creating income generating projects for poverty stricken communities, creating safety net for vulnerable groups, promoting food security for the poor and vulnerable households, promoting innovation and skills development and ultimately to ensure that the ideal of eradication of poverty is attained.

The Sustainable Livelihoods Projects are the mainstay of our fight Against poverty, this is so because they are participatory and democratic. They are founded on the basis of strengthening community power, expanding people's choices to determine their own future and they leverage the resources and assets for building of sustainable communities.

They are complemented by additional resources that government has already made available to our people. Thus, the disbursement of Social relief of distress which is a temporary provision of assistance intended for persons in such a dire material need that they are unable to meet their families' most basic needs, is not a permanent measure. It is temporary, but has proven to be in high demand as a result of the depth of the pockets of poverty in our province.

Programme Director,

The War Against Poverty is fought from all fronts, I must just briefly sketch some of the interventions that we have made policy pronouncements on which are already being implemented. Our Budget Speech, emanating from the Apex of Priorities is focused on mechanisms that tackle poverty from all its sources and manifestations. We identified the following areas, in addition to our normal service delivery obligations:

- **War on Poverty** – through Poverty Alleviation mechanisms such as the food banks, the clothing banks, the social relief of distress
- **Tackling Child Poverty** – through the increased registration campaigns for Early Childhood Development, the funding and formalization of these Centres, the increased registration drives for Child Support Grants and its extension to benefit children of up to 15 years, the accelerated reduction of Foster Care Grants backlogs, increased registration for Foster Care, Care Dependency

Grants for Children with Disabilities including the increases in the unit costs for their day care services.

- **Tackling Adults and Older Persons Poverty** – The Social Security Assistance system has afforded us an opportunity to impact positively on the lives of adults and older person's living in poverty. The equalization of the old age grant has started with the uptake of males who are 63 and 64 years old and this is intended for men to receive their old age pension at 60 years by 2010.

It is estimated that a significant 5 000 men in the Free State will benefit from this pronouncement.

- **Changes To Means Test To Allow More People To Apply For Social Grants** – the new Regulations that are paving way for over a million people who were excluded before to now apply for a social grant were passed by Parliament. The means tests or income thresholds have been raised very significantly to allow people with higher wages to apply for the different social grants. In this regard, Dr Skweyiya announced that the means test applicable to the child support grant is changed from R800 in urban areas and R1, 100 in rural areas to R2, 100 per month everywhere. The distinction between urban and rural areas is now removed. The care dependency grant (for children with disabilities) income threshold is more than doubled from R4, 000 to R9, 400 per month. For the old age and disability grants, the income threshold is increased from R1, 900 to R2, 200 per month.

These are significant steps taken as an indication of our relentless efforts in the War Against Poverty. These are significant improvements in the food safety nets of the people of our country and our province. Because of the deeply embedded nature of the scourge of poverty, we have continued to forge ahead with many other interventions that would result in the increased access to the food basket of the province.

## TARGET OF THE FOOD BANK

The food bank is a project which broadly targets the poorest communities in the Free State. The main target within the Free State is the local municipalities and the towns within these municipalities. The following municipalities have been identified for the launch that took place and the sustainability of the project with a conscious focus on orphaned and vulnerable children, women, people with disabilities and older persons.

Municipality	People living in poverty 2004	
	Number	Rate
TSWELOPELE	45 762	79.6
TOKOLOGO	23 095	79.6
PHUMELELA	47 563	78.2
MAFUBE	46 101	77.0
SETSOTO	83 366	75.2
NALA	63 307	74.9
NALEDI	18 308	74.8
NKETOANA	60 454	74.0
MANTSOPA	44 382	73.8
MASILONYANA	46 401	68.6
MOHOKARE	30 795	67.9

Source: FSGDS Review (Global Insight, 2006)

The major challenge that is facing us is the expansion of the project, to make it bigger and stronger with more and more people participating in it by way of contributions, but most importantly the innovations for exit strategies, so as not to entrench the culture of dependency on our people. It must be viewed as an emergency intervention whilst long term income generating opportunities are being created and taken advantage of by our people.

### **Food Banks Ware Houses**

We have established Warehouses in these municipalities and initiatives are ongoing to lure the support of local business people to sustain the food and clothing banks in order to ensure that poverty is being ridden off our communities and that the dignity of these communities is restored.

- Thabo Mofutsanyane – QwaQwa Youth Centre
- Fezile Dabi – Frankfort, Kroonstad and Tweeling
- Motheo – Thaba Nchu (Botshelo Centre and Boiketlong)
- Lejweleputswa & Xhariep are in an advanced stage of establishing these warehouses

### **The Masupatsela Youth Pioneering Programme**

We have also identified young people that have passed Matric in these poor households that are recipients of the food banks and have enrolled these into the Masupatsela Youth Pioneering Programme. This is a skills development programme that will see these young pioneers being trained over a period of twelve months into various scarce skills areas such as Auxilliary Social Work, Community Development as well as Economic and Social Entrepreneurship. A total number of 346 is being recruited for this year, another 346 for 2009 and 344 for 2010. This is done in collaboration with Cuba – as they have a system of youth pioneers that moulds young people into responsible patriotic citizens. As it is, we are in the process of orienting these young people into this programme and shall be launching it provincially on the 30 October 2008.

### **ADVANCES IN THE FOOD BANK AND CLOTHING BANK INITIATIVE**

As earlier mentioned, we have established a Provincial Fundraising Committee, comprised of an inclusive personnel in the District and Provincial Office. Their relentless efforts have resulted in significant contributions to the food and clothing banks. In this short space of time, they have received food and clothing and further commitments have been pledged in this regard.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 2003 as we were launching the Social Development Month, our Department signed a Cooperation Agreement with EDCON. This valuable partnership with EDCON began on the Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> June 2008 wherein we received blankets worth about R500 000.00 as a donation from EDCON. The blankets were distributed to



the Older Persons of 95 – 100 years of age and Child Headed Households in the Province as identified by Social Workers. This partnership has served as the basis of our interaction with the various Corporate Social Investment programmes with other partners in the private sector. It is my hope and trust that others learn from the generosity of your willingness to partner with government in ensuring that the pride and dignity of our citizens is restored.

This partnership has identified the following areas as the most immediate and feasible areas of cooperation, namely:

**Clothing Donations:** Edcon will donate returned store merchandise to communities in the province, subject to availability;

**Literacy:** Edcon will supply material to equip school or community libraries in the province;

**Breast Cancer Awareness:** Edcon will be involved in a project to promote breast cancer awareness.

EDCON has committed to deliver clothing items by the 29 October 2008 of which a ceremony to hand over these will be arranged.

On the other hand, SABC has been urging communities to donate food and clothing items to the needy. They have assured us that they will be partnering with us as well as pledged media support as we distribute these to the needy communities.

I must thank the sponsors that have sustained the food banks.

- |    |                     |   |                         |
|----|---------------------|---|-------------------------|
| 1. | EDCON               |   |                         |
| 2. | Papa                | - | 400 bags of mielie meal |
| 3. | Nashua              | - | R15 000                 |
| 4. | Trade Centre        | - | 200 blankets            |
| 5. | NDA                 | - | R1m                     |
| 6. | Tau Naming          | - | 10 bags of mielie meal  |
| 7. | Bibo Cash and Carry | - | 50 food parcels         |

- |     |                                    |   |   |
|-----|------------------------------------|---|---|
| 8.  | Maluti maize meal                  | - | 20 X 50kg mielie meal   |
| 9.  | Polokwe Development Project        | - | R2000   |
| 10. | Dries Motors                       | - |   |
| 11. | Mr Moloji                          | - |   |
| 12. | Mr Blakkie Seoe                    | - | 20 Cattle   |
| 13. | Mr Dasheka                         | - | 2 cows and 10 sheep   |
| 14. | United Christian Church Thaba Nchu |   | R2 000  |
| 15. | KFC Thaba Nchu                     | - | R1 500  |
| 16. | Botshabelo Butchery                | - | R 200   |
| 17. | District Manager                   | - | R 200   |
| 18. | Boiketlong Officials Groceries     | - | R 780   |
| 19. | SANTAGO                            |   |   |
| 20. | Mangaung Business Solutions        |   |   |
| 21. | Mr. Mark du Plessis of Potato SA   | - | R 5 000 and has pledged future Support in many other areas such as mentorship programmes in agricultural production |

Indeed, the generous support of these fellow Free Staters and South Africans has led to others expressing their interest in contributing towards the sustainability of the food and clothing banks.

Mother's Union of Anglican Church in the Free State through Mrs. Tshetlo contributed + 500 children's vests –

FNB will be partnering with us – through its own branches – details of their involvement will soon be available.

Public Servants of the Department of Social Development donated and accumulated clothing from members of the public. In addition to this good gesture of good will the Thabo Mofutsanyane District has ignited the spirit of giving which is to be emulated by other Districts by launching last week on the 10 October 2008 a campaign for the collection of food and clothing from other fellow employees. This will see a minimum of R20 being contributed on a monthly basis to contribute towards the food banks. May God of mercy be upon all of you that are doing everything from the bottom of your hearts to contribute towards a hunger free and a decently clothed Free Stater.

These efforts may look small but they contribute towards the activism that Koffi Annan spoke of when he said that this is not a struggle for the few but indeed your local action is global in character.

The Deck has been defined – it is a war against poverty!

I thank you.