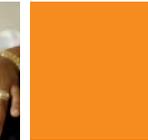




MY DISTRICT TODAY



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Minister Nkwinti visits agricultural projects in the Joe Gqabi District Municipality

By: Lorna Bodlani

In February this year, the President announced in his State of the Nation Address that one of the biggest success stories has been the revitalisation of farms. To date, 769 farms have been recapitalised and provided with agricultural infrastructure. Some 234 farmers are receiving mentorship and training. Minister Gugile Nkwinti visited the Joe Gqabi District Municipality and handed over the farms on 20 April 2012 to beneficiaries in the small town of Lady Grey in the Eastern Cape.

The Department of Rural Development and Land Reform has invested about R30 million on emerging farming communities in the last 10 years in the Joe Gqabi District Municipality. The Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme has funded these projects and some of them have been in business since 2002. Seven farms have been bought for cooperatives and former farm workers to produce maize, wool and livestock. Some of these former farm workers have been working as farm labourers for more than 20 years.

One of the farms will be used as a training centre for breeding cattle and sheep.

The Imbumba cooperative has 18 members including nine youths. The farms vary between 369 hectares to 1 222 hectares, with a carrying capacity of over 200 cattle and 600 flocks of sheep.



The Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform, Mr G Nkwinti, with the Mayor of Senqu Local Municipality, Ms N Mtyali in front of the infrastructure that the Minister handed over.

Experienced farmer, Mr Johan Potgieter, will mentor former farm workers for three years.

Mr Potgieter believes that in the first year, the former farm workers will be able to sell their first lambs and calves. He projected that by the end of the third year they will have about a R1 million bank balance and they will be fully-fledged commercial farmers.

The Malibuye Project has two permanent workers with five hectares maize under production and 11 hectares under lucerne. During the season, approximately 44 casual workers are employed.

Rural Development and land reform is one of the five priority areas of government.



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Government empowers youth through arts and culture

Kemantha Govender

A government programme that is aimed at discouraging anti-social behaviour among young people, using different forms of art, has changed five young lives forever.

Towards the end of March the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Arts and Culture took five young people to Reunion in the Indian Ocean for seven days as a reward for being finalists in the My School Cultural Adventure Programme.

The programme gives learners an outlet to express their talent and potential and channel their creativity towards constructive and productive social activities.

The department uses this programme to address issues of social cohesion and nation building among the youth and creating a skills base by partnering learners with developed arts and culture practitioners in various activities. In the longer run, it is hoped that economic opportunities can be enhanced through arts and culture.

Thandeka Mncube completed Grade 12 in 2011 at Muzokhanyayo Secondary School and was one of five youths in the province to win the coveted prize.

Thandeka told BuaNews that the trip changed her life because, apart from all that she has learnt, she was able to travel outside South Africa, something she believed her circumstances would not otherwise allow.

“It was difficult for people from Reunion to speak English, but they made an effort. We wore clothes and jewellery that showed that we were from South Africa and they were very interested in finding out about that,” she said.

Thandeka says she did not even know Reunion existed but did her research before she left.

“This programme by government must not be stopped because it motivates us, creates understanding and we learn. We forget that we come from a poor background and this gives us hope,” said Thandeka.

The head of the delegation, Mbuso Kunene, said that the programme is a direct response to KwaZulu-Natal Premier Zweli Mkhize’s call to create a platform for young people to access creative alternatives for quality and meaningful after-school opportunities.

“The programme does not interfere with school hours. It takes place after school, which is the time when many

young people are vulnerable to negative lifestyles, influences and behaviour.

“It is a behavioural-change programme to those who participate and to those who form part of the audiences. Art is used to communicate messages of good behaviour and educate people on social ills.

“The trip was a lifetime experience for the youth and other members of the delegation. There was a packed week-long programme for 12 hours a day. They were so willing to learn and share with the Reunion people, especially the Reunion young people,” said Mr Kunene.

The young people visited two secondary schools and observed classes. They participated in a number of discussions and shared ideas regarding culture, education and social issues, especially those affecting the youth.

They also went to a technical industrial school that prepares young people for jobs.

Mr Kunene said the youth represented the South African people with pride and honour and they returned determined to be ambassadors of good behaviour.

Bongeka Zuma has already started to feel like an ambassador not just of good behaviour but also for the country.

This Grade 10 learner from the KwaMncane High School is passionate about using poetry as a tool for social change. “But learning about our own province and the way our government works was also very helpful. This programme showed me that government wants to see us improve our behaviour and help us,” she explained.

During the competition, the programme required the learners to write essays and use poetry, music and other creative forms of expression to address social issues.

“I write about HIV and AIDS, its dangers and how we, as the youth, must take better decisions. The message is simple, we don’t have to risk our lives,” said Bongeka.

She and her fellow winners met with government representatives of Reunion when they visited the local parliament where the South African flag flew alongside the French flag.

They enjoyed the South American, Kreol (local), Mauritian, Italian, French and other cuisine as part of the Cultural Exchange Programme.

The group also learnt the significance of respecting other people’s cultures and behaviour including their food even if they did not like it.

“We would have never been given this opportunity had it not been for this programme. Experiencing other cultures was amazing,” Bongeka said.

She said that KwaZulu-Natal has a Memorandum of Understanding with Reunion.

“The Reunion Government representatives said they were happy that the bilateral agreement signed in 2003 was beginning to take shape. In 2003/4, there was a big exhibition in Reunion called *Terre Zulu*. The Indian Ocean island is truly multicultural and the learners were given an opportunity to experience cultural pluralism and diversity,” she said.

During the earlier stages of the programme, the learners were very excited about it, explained Bongeka.

“The Department of Arts and Culture has the means to develop tools that would encourage change in negative social behaviour and to enhance positive behaviour. A number of messages came through during the competition in local, district and provincial levels.”

The art products, reflected on issues relating to families, communities and the society. Some products and productions focussed on teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, road accidents and gender-based violence.

“Behavioural change is not an instant thing but a process. One example of the message was the beautification of public space in uMzimkhulu where a painting along the road reflected road accidents and a sign reading *Don’t drink and drive*.

“The feedback is that the sign has appealed to the learners and communities around the area and people are talking about its impact on accidents on our roads,” said Bongeka.

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