

**TO: ALL MEDIA**

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EMBARGO: NONE

## **Media statement : MEC Dhlomo hands over motor-driven wheelchairs in Utrecht**

Today, the MEC for Health Dr. Sibongiseni Dhlomo together with Khethekile Mining are visiting the small rural town of Utrecht, now known as eMadlangeni Municipality, to hand-over six wheelchairs to disabled community members to improve quality of life, ensure social inclusion and full participation.

“We need to equalize opportunities for persons with disabilities,” said MEC Dhlomo speaking about the importance of giving assistive devices to people with disabilities. “We also need to assist in enhancing the quality of life and their families, meet basic needs and thus ensuring inclusion and full participation in social life.”

The MEC called on local business people, Khethekile Mining from Utrecht, to procure six motor-driven wheelchairs at the total cost of R20 000. The recipients were selected from a number of disabled people on the basis of their greatest need. Mr. Bongani Khumalo of Khethekile Mining said: “Having been born in the area, we witnessed the difficulties these people go through especially those who are breadwinners. One of the recipients is a recent widow who has to look after very young children as well as herself.”

MEC Dhlomo said: “We need to inculcate the spirit of the National Health Insurance however we can, and begin to plant the seeds of and understanding for the importance of universal access. We are grateful to the contribution made by Khethekile Mining in changing the lives of these people. Now they can move about with minimal assistance, if any.”

Emadlangeni Local Municipality is located near Newcastle and Vryheid, consisting of a vast rural area with a low percentage of economic activity. The total population, according to Stats SA (2007), is 23 263; 76, 8% of which is below the age of 40 years. 13.6% of the adult population has no education and only 1.7% of the population older than 20 years of age with a higher education qualification. This hampers the municipality’s potential for growth.

The MEC is in the area as part of government deployment to the District Municipality as a champion.  
ENDS

**ISSUED BY:**

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH: KWAZULU-NATAL  
CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS**