

Speech by KZN Health MEC, Neliswa Nkonyeni on the occasion of the Gala Dinner for Co-operatives in Richards Bay

28 May 08

Programme Director, there could have been no better time to hold this CO-OPERATIVES INDABA than this era of food security crises that has prompted Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization, **Jacques Diouf**, to alarm the global citizens as he says:

'ONE is deeply concerned about the impact of rising food prices on the world's poor. Sharp increases in the price of wheat, rice and corn threaten to undermine recent gains in poverty reduction and frustrate already slow progress toward the Millennium Development Goals'.

Our very own province is not immune to this situation. I think it's a fact we must all acknowledge that poor can hardly survive this epoch of turbulent times faced by our economy as clearly demonstrated by the confluence of diseases compelling them to flock to health care institutions.

We applaud the Department of Agriculture for calling on the congregation of minds to find a way out for those ready and prepared to use their natural talents, skills and resilience to eke out a living for themselves and their brethren. We agree, the answer lies with the all embracing CO-OPERATIVES; KOPERASIE; AMADLANDAWONYE type of trading arrangement.

Programme Director, South Africa's black economic empowerment strategy document clearly states that *'No economy can grow by excluding any part of its people, and an economy that is not growing cannot integrate all of its citizens in a meaningful way'.*

It is precisely for that reason that the Dept of Health in KwaZulu Natal has established the TARGETED ENTERPRISES DEVELOPMENT UNIT.

This is the vehicle solely meant to accommodate the indigenous people calling on them to use their collective strength and wisdom to access ubutsebi churned through the department's acquisition needs. Its function and mandate include but not limited to the following;

- Marketing business opportunities available in the department
- Mobilizing targeted enterprises on upcoming bids in order to position themselves accordingly.
- Exploring business opportunities that can sustain emerging suppliers from the disadvantaged background.
- Facilitating convenient access of bid documents by emerging suppliers compliance to the departmental supply chain management procedures
- Providing post-award support to emerging suppliers that may experience problems after being awarded with departmental bids.
- Closely monitor the progress in respect of the awards made to the emerging suppliers through effective and efficient Monitoring and Evaluation mechanisms.
- Maintain statistics for the departmental awards made to the targeted enterprises.

Most of the issues tabulated clearly show that to be realized, they call for interdepartmental collaboration particularly with Finance and Economic

Development department and in our case, with the Agriculture and Environmental Affairs Department as well.

I am of the view that working together using our procurement muscles, the previously marginalized people mostly from rural communities, can be spared and rescued from the diseases that are caused by hunger, illiteracy and helplessness.

As various government departments, its given, we all have a responsibility to ensure that we:

- Expose rural communities to better business opportunities and provide them with training on the interpretation and completion of the bid documents;
 - See to it that there is a creation and implementation of a reliable accredited supplier database for all Departments to use; and
 - Assist in forging linkages between emerging suppliers, Financial institutions and relevant bodies where funding and registration aspects are involved;
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- , goods such as linen, disposable material e.g. diapers, toilet papers

and serviettes are earmarked for co-operatives. The example of services put aside for co-operatives include garden and grounds and cleaning of buildings and the award statistics to support this statement is provided for viewing

Industrial Catering: The department is currently engaged in a project where the targeted enterprises are to be recognized in the supply of farm produce to our institutions. TED unit is to facilitate this process in collaboration with the Department of Economic Development and Department of Agriculture. Once the project is up and running, TED will be responsible for the following;

- Monitoring and Evaluation of the project to ensure that good relations always exist between the hospitals and emerging caterers.
- To ensure that skills transfer takes place between the emerging and the established caterers with the former being the mentees and the latter being the mentors.
- To ensure that the supply of farm produce by the emerging farmers run smoothly and reporting any problems that may be encountered to the Department of Agriculture and /or Department of Economic Development.

Our icon and late President **Oliver Tambo** in 1991, told us that we need to believe in our cause, noting that, *‘Transformation requires a more dynamic discourse that insists on capacity and potential; on originality and on a creative existence that makes and remakes its own essence; that stimulates a will to overcome history, time and necessity, rather than encouraging submission.’*

Following that advice, tonight I can report that in the past financial year the Department of Health spent in total, an amount of **R135 million** awarding to the emerging suppliers for the following goods and services:

- * **R49 million** on Co-ops & SMMEs for the Cleaning of buildings on 2–3 years contracts
- * **R11 million** on Co-ops & SMMEs for the Disposable Material
- * **R10 million** on Co-ops for Sewing of Hospital Linen
- * **R8 million** on Co-ops for hospital and clinic Gardens and Grounds on 2–3 year Contract

In the execution of the above mentioned exercise we became our of challenges faced by the people we are assisting;

- Co-operatives awarded with the responsibility to supply us with linen e.g, pyjamas, bed sheets and gowns still struggle to get the material which then forces them to outsource the finished garments from the established companies thus leaving them with no profit at all. This calls for strong linkage with the Department of Agriculture as a custodian of those who plant cotton.
- Co-operatives who are also manufacturers awarded to supply disposable items such as toilet papers, diapers, linen savers, at times experience problems with their machines which then cuts them off from further bidding for these items. Problems of on going support are the main feature here.
- The financial support needed by the emerging enterprises after obtaining departmental bids is not always forthcoming which result in emerging enterprises not complying with their contractual obligations.

It is important to mention that the consequences of the above challenges result in some of the co-operatives not tendering with the department anymore. The much vaulted sustainability ethos is then lost forever and back to square A for those caught in poverty vicious circle.

Programme Director, I will loose all the blessing I have if I do not mention the plight of those rejected by the Medical Aid Insurance Industry, pitied and scorned by those manufacturing and supplying western medicine; I am talking about the Traditional Health Practitioners. Here again I applaud the Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs for giving recognition to these naturally bestowed healers and for its efforts to establish indigenous nurseries aimed at preserving medicinal plants. MEC Mthimkhulu, we will surely hold hands in this one and wisely give support

We have at the moment three indigenous nurseries which are owned by the community and they are at the communal lands outside our protected

areas. We have the nurseries located to each of our regions, namely; Ukhahlamba Region, Zululand Region and Coast Region.

The nursery that is at Ukhahlamba is situated at the area called Ntabamhlophe, hence it is called White Mountain Bambanani Nursery. The nursery that is in Zululand at Kwangwanase area, it lies between to popular indigenous forests Sileza and Manguzi forests and it is called Sileza–Manguzi indigenous nursery. The last one which is at the Coast region is called Zabalaza Indigenous nursery and is just outside the Kosi Bay Nature reserve in the far north of KZN. The size of these nurseries is 100X4 metres each nursery.

The rationale of establishing these nurseries is to assist the medicinal muthi users to propagate their own medicinal plants in their areas, thereby curbing the amounting pressure from the illegal harvesting at the wild and also inside the protected areas. We are also taking them for propagation courses at the accredited institutions. We would also like to see the communities benefiting financially from these projects for they would be able to sell to the other muthi uses and the public. These nurseries will also play a vital role in some research processes.

It is imperative to mention that EKZNW intends to develop this programme by ensuring that Traditional healers use these nurseries for economically empowering themselves and as sound bases for research and imparting knowledge to those who are practicing and those who anticipate to practice in the field in future. The economic side could be achieved through the processing of other important medicine for selling to other traditional healers.

There are numerous critical roles to be played by the Department of Health and the following forms part of them:

- ✓ Ensuring that the traditional medicine gets appropriate recognition through relevant legislation;

- ✓ Institutionalisation of Traditional medicine practice within the department;
- ✓ Commissioning appropriate research on traditional medicine
- ✓ Supporting the future sustainability of indigenous nurseries, as a depot for traditional medicine; etc

We have no choice but to continue working towards an ideal propagated by **Inkosi Albert Luthuli** 42 years when he said; *our goal is a united Africa in which the standards of life and liberty are constantly expanding; in which the ancient legacy of illiteracy and disease is swept aside, in which the dignity of man is rescued from beneath the heels of colonialism which have trampled it.'*

I thank you.

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