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MEC donates school uniforms to the needy

Christmas arrived in June already for over a thousand learners when the Mpumalanga ANC chairperson and current MEC for public works, roads and transport, Mandla Ndlovu, donated school uniforms last Monday.

Ndlovu, accompanied by the Mpumalanga health MEC, Sasekani Manzini, and the popular *Skeem Saam* actor, Thabang Mathebula, assembled 1 060 learners from disadvantaged families who did not have school uniforms.

Ndlovu said what had prompted him was the knowledge that most families, especially in Bushbuckridge, are living below the poverty line and therefore the ability to provide full school uniforms and food at home is already an impossible mission to accomplish.

"You will understand that Bushbuckridge is a rural municipality. Most parents live below the poverty line. I saw it fit to come here with the little I have, also with the help from some friends and comrades. We know we have not touched everyone due to limited resources, but believe me, if we could, we would have covered each and every learner in this municipality. We asked the 17 schools to identify those learners who were in dire need of the uniforms, and we prioritised them," said Ndlovu.

He was touched by the sheer number of learners in need of support, and decided to take this drive provincially to benefit as many learners as they could. "We understand that these are future leaders, and we want them to grow up knowing that their family background should not be a reason to quit school, because education is the only weapon they will use to escape poverty," he said.

Mathebula, who is also from



MECs Mandla Ndlovu and Sasekani Manzini during the donation ceremony.

Bushbuckridge, encouraged the learners to work hard in order for them to improve their families' well-being and make good of their lives. "I am a product of these schools. In 2010, I was doing my Grade 12 just here, so don't think I don't know the situation. What you need to do is choose your education before anything else, and don't worry about your family background. It is you who are going to make your families proud one day, but

it starts here by attending school and working extra hard to achieve great results."

One of the children who benefited from the gifts, which included a school bag, a jersey, shoes, shirts and pants or skirts, told Mpumalanga News she lives with her older sister who is unemployed, and her younger siblings. This donation will lessen the burden on her family having had to worry about

uniforms, she said. "I'm thankful to MEC Ndlovu. Our situation at home doesn't make it possible for us to have everything. It's either my sister buys us uniforms, or food. Obviously, we can't live without food, and these old uniforms were donated to me by my neighbour who studied at the same school I'm attending. I want to say: let other people emulate MEC Ndlovu's deeds, because this may seem small, but it is huge to us," said the Grade 12 learner.

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