**MEC LEADS A SPIRITED CHARGE TO FIGHT SUFFERING**

In a true indomitable spirit of a woman, MEC Limakatso Mahasa literally defied her doctor's orders and abandoned her sick bed to personally lead the charge to solve service delivery challenges in Metsimaholo.  MEC Mahasa responsible for Economic Development, Small Business, Tourism and Environmental Affairs in the Free State lead a team of senior economists, trade experts, tourism practitioners, environmentalists, conservationists and managers from state owned entities accountable to the department, the Free State Development Cooperation (FDC) and Free State Gambling, Liquor and Tourism Authority (FSGLTA) to engage with Metsimaholo Local Municipality Councilors and officials.

The Metsimaholo Local Municipality was led by the Acting Mayor, Cllr Mosioa Poho and MMC for Local Economic Development Cllr Lucas Fisher.

Despite being the country's Petro Chemical heartland, Metsimaholo continues to experience capital outflow to Gauteng leaving huge disparity and inequalities in the Municipality controlling Sasolburg, Danesyvile and Oranjeville.

Unemployment, lack of modern commercial shopping facilities, full landfill sites, inadequate conferencing, banqueting, accommodation facilities and land were just few of the challenges the Municipality is grappling with. This highly industrialized area providing job opportunities, uncharacteristically still faces challenges of less developed areas with visible inequalities and misery for the people.

"We may not be able to reach everybody, due to budget constraints, but there is no reason why in a small way we can't make a difference in this area. If we change one life at a time, we will be making a difference in this stubborn poverty challenge" committed MEC Mahasa.

Each official, had to make a commitment on how they will make a contribution within the shortest possible time to address some of these challenges. Waste pickers, car wash, spazashop and chisanyama owners could be some of the business owners who will benefit from what could be the most impactful township revitalization initiative in Refengkgotso.

Capacity building and skills transfer will happen in a very big way in order to ensure that municipal officials are equipped to turn the situation around at the shortest possible time. Speeding up of approval of environmental impact assessments will also receive added attention in the department as a catalyst towards development in the area.

Management and marketing of tourist attractions in the area were also under spotlight. Metsimaholo is on the doorstep of Gauteng and on the shores of the Vaal River. This Municipality could leverage the mobile community of Gauteng for weekend getaways as well as the nearby Vredefort Dome World Heritage Site.

MEC further instructed that all available information on once popular Jim Fouche' resort be searched and proposals of refurbishment be dusted and all legal ramifications be addressed in an effort to resuscitate this hospitality facility that could unlock job creation and other economic activities in the area.

Strict timelines for visible and tangible signs of improvements were set. Indeed MEC Mahasa is taking no prisoners on her strong desire to see change in the lives of the people of Metsimaholo.

She challenged the Municipality, business community and other sectors to work together with the Department to unlock potential of this area which is part of the Free State Tourism Lions Route. The business community should be alive to downstream opportunities presented by the Petro Chemical industry and its proximity to Gauteng, the industrial hub of South Africa.

**End**

**Issued by Department of Economic, Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs**

**For more information please contact Festy Mfazwe or Buko Gcolotela on 051 4009548/4725 or email:** **nyamatef@destea.gov.za** **or** **gcolotela@destea.gov.za**