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Media Release

Youth agriculture Project brings hope for Manyeledi rural community

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Manyeledi - The Bokamoso Agricultural Innovation hub has turned the tide against unemployment for the young people of Kagisano Molopo Local Municipality. The Manyeledi village based foundation having realised poverty within the village has launched an agricultural innovation hub employing at least six full time employees. The enterprise incubated and motivated community members for four months proving basic course in agriculture that starts with seedlings, advances to planting and ends with harvest. The Deputy Minister General Bheki Cele and MEC Manketsi Tlhape visited the hub yesterday to conduct community engagements and unpack opportunities presented by the sector specifically to women.

The Bokamoso Agri Innovation Lab, been only two years since its of operation is a social enterprise which aims to connect rural communities to opportunities through empowerment by using diverse entrepreneurial platforms and encouraging increased participation of women in the economic stream as female entrepreneurs.

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Lesego Serolong, the project leader said she had chosen the area as she believed that many rural communities do not get opportunities that are received by other urban ones. She said she believed in the potential of any young South African and the young people in the Kagisano Molopo possess equal capability like any other young people. "The most important thing that we need to do as a civil society facing the triple challenges of poverty, employment and inequality is to ask ourselves of what then do we do. We need to find solutions to our problems," she emphasised. Serolong who holds a Bachelor degree from the London School of Economics said she wants to see more partners on the project and would like to see it connecting the invisible rural population to opportunities through empowerment using a diversified entrepreneurial platform.

Speaking to about 200 women during the engagement, MEC Manketsi Tlhape said the gathering was important as it happened during women's month and after the departmental Female Entrepreneurship Awards. Tlhape said the 5th administration was prioritising women empowerment and the Bokamoso Agri Innovation Hub showed that women can go to greater heights. MEC further added that she believed the Project leader Serolong had passion more than any other thing on the work she does. She said it was imperative for young people to grab opportunities as they are brought forward by government. MEC added that the project embraced key government concretes which include VTSD and Saamtrek Saamwerk. She urged young people to come closer to Serolong so she can impart her knowledge and skills.

General Bheki Cele lauded the project and said it was unbelievable that such type of was can be called non-arable land can grow such green and fresh vegetables. He further said the youth project has defied a myth about young people having no interest in Agriculture. General Cele called on all partners to have a further discussion and model how the project can be grown further including assisting on water challenges they raised."The meeting should take place very soon because we want to see the project sustainable and young people getting involved," he concluded.

The Bokamoso project also runs an afterschool program with the library for the local community with an aim of exposing young children to farming at an early age. Their vegetable produce market includes local public schools and local shops.

Photos:

11065 – Deputy Minister, General Bheki Cele and MEC Manketsi Tlhape flanked by management members of Bokamoso Agricultural Innovation Hub

084134 - Bokamoso Agricultural Innovation Hub garden with fresh vegetables

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