

## **RESEARCH INDICATE THAT “TAKING LEGISLATURE TO THE PEOPLE PROGRAMME IS A WINNER**

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A scientific research has shown that, contrary to observations by some political players in the province, the KwaZulu-Natal Legislature's outreach programme of "Taking the Legislature to the People" brought tangible benefits to the poorest of the poor in the province.

Addressing a media luncheon after the Official Opening of the 2008/2009 Legislature, Speaker Willies Mchunu, described this parliamentary outreach programme as a "winner" with R2.3 billion having been spent by the national government on the pressing needs of the people in the province.

This was, said Mchunu, thanks to the pressing needs of the people, such as the inability of the people in the far-flung areas of the province to access clean water and electricity, having been brought to the attention of the authorities through this innovative outreach programme.

Sharing, for the first time with media, the findings of the research conducted by the legislature on the impact and benefit of "Taking the Legislature to the People", Mchunu said since the launch of this outreach programme, people of KwaZulu-Natal have benefited handsomely.

Mchunu said so far this programme had been taken to districts of uMkhanyakude, Ugu, uMzinyathi and Zululand, reaching well over 140 000 people.

However, he said because of time and huge attendances, not all people were able to voice their concerns, prompting the Legislature's Research Unit to glean more information from people through the use of questionnaires.

"These questionnaires were intended to elicit not only demographic data, but also concerns and opinions of the people. The response of the people was overwhelmingly enthusiastic and provided the legislature with 11 500 completed questionnaires which gave both quantitative as well as qualitative analyses.

"This was done in-order to fulfill the Legislature's desire to address the issues of those on the ground who have not yet achieved optimal service delivery levels.

"Exactly 8 563 of these questionnaires from the districts of uThukela, uMkhanyakude and uMzinyathi were analysed with particular emphasis on the provision of water and electricity in these areas," said Mchunu.

He said once the analyses of the three districts were interpreted and written up as reports, the legislature was given a clear guidance as to the needs of poorest of the poor.

"After these reports were completed and submitted to the Speaker and office-bearers of the Legislature, it was resolved to submit the reports to the relevant National Ministers in-order to draw attention to dire circumstances in which many of our people in these three districts live," said Mchunu.

As a result of these reports, Buyelwa Sonjica, Minister of Minerals and Energy and Lindiwe Hendricks, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, visited KwaZulu-Natal legislature to outline plans to deal with problems raised in the reports compiled during this outreach programme.

This was yet another first for the KwaZulu-Natal Legislature in its bid to fulfill its constitutional obligation of being a voice for the voiceless and the poorest of the poor.

"I am pleased to share with you that the net gains of our interaction with the ordinary people has resulted in the national government making available an additional R2.3 billion over and above the allocated provincial budget for the financial year 2007/8," said Mchunu. .

Mchunu said the benefit of the legislature's intervention was that Sonjica committed herself to a 50-50 co-funding of electricity projects with Premier S'bu Ndebele in affected districts. Hendricks committed R80 million towards water projects in the province.

There were other commitments made with regards to improving the access of the people to clean water and electricity in the province running to millions of rands. "With all this information and extra resources for the people of KZN, we are convinced that the 'Taking the legislature to the People' programme is not only deepening democracy but it's also bearing real fruit for our people," he said.