



KwaZulu-Natal Premier Senzo Mchunu has heaped praises on the trustees of the Sugar industry Trust Fund for Education. This after the fund awarded bursaries to needy students, especially those whose parents are farm dwellers. The fund has invested more than R50 million towards the education of disadvantaged children since its inception.

“It is quite encouraging that over the past 50 years the Fund has assisted thousands of disadvantaged students. Some of the students have gone on to become respected intellectuals, leaders of society and academics in different fields. These include Judge President of the Western Cape Judge John Hlophe whose mother was a farm worker and Dr May Mashego-Mkhize, her husband Dr Zweli Mkhize, the former KZN Premier and current ANC Treasurer- General of the ANC and current minister of higher education Dr Blade Nzimande.”

“The contribution of the Trust towards the provision of quality education is immeasurable. The celebration of the 50 years of the Trust is a clear indication that for all these years the stakeholders in the sugar industry have been aware that the levels of poverty mean that many youth with potential to develop would hampered by the inability of parents to fund their educational advancement.

“As government we have long stated that the ability to compete in the global front is dependent on training and mentoring. Unfortunately the reality in our country and KZN in particular is that the wealth of the child's family is very likely to determine that child's access to a decent education.”

“We are mindful of the fact that economic growth comes from talent and knowledge. As economies become ever more sophisticated and ever more integrated, we will compete for skilled and talented people against countries all over the world. Therefore, we need ensure continuous production of a skills population capable of driving socio-economic development.”

“Critically, as government we want to work with stakeholders in the sugarcane industry in order to sustain this sector. I have been informed that direct employment within the sugar industry is approximately 79 000 jobs, which represents a significant percentage of the total agricultural workforce in South Africa. Indirect employment is estimated at 350 000. In addition there are approximately 29 130 registered cane growers. Approximately one million people, more than 2% of South Africa's population, depend on the sugar industry for a living.”

“The long term goal is for the agricultural sector to be strengthened to create jobs and maximize export potential. Government has committed itself to intensifying the rehabilitation of emerging farmers who acquired land from land reform processes and to providing mentorship and capacity building.

“We took a decision as government to revive sugar cane industry. We also want to generate interests beyond sugarcane into the possibilities of getting many of our people to be involved in the production of bio-diesel through the conversion of sugarcane to a form of energy source and converting a sugar mills into a bio-refineries.

We have committed ourselves unlock the potential of agriculture and sugarcane in particular through Operation Phakisa. The focus is on the improvement of productivity and quality of products produced by our farmers.”

**Photos 1 attached:** Chairman of the Sugar-Industry Trust Fund for Education Tim Murray, Premier Senzo Mchunu and one of the recipients of the bursary.



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**Photo 2 attached:** Dr Sbongiseni Dhlomo, KZN Health MEC, Judge President of the Western Cape John Hlophe, Dr May Mashego-Mkhize former KZN First Lady, Ms Stella Mthembu and KZN Premier Senzo Mchunu.

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