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KWAZULU-NATAL

Angels expand their aid to food parcels

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FORTY child-headed households are to receive food parcels for the next three months, and plans are in place to expand this programme of aiding the most vulnerable in rural Zululand communities.

The programme, run by the Mpilonhle Mobile Health and Computer Unit based in Mtubatuba, received initial funding from Oprah's Angel Network and was launched at Madwaleni High School in the Mkhwanazi Traditional Authority area in the uMkhanyakude District.

Dr Michael Bennish of Mpilonhle said the orphans most in need had been identified through consultation with the non-profit organisation's social welfare staff, principals of four schools and the Department of Social Welfare.

The four schools, from which 10 pupils of each were identified for the food parcels, receive support from Mpilonhle's Mobile Health and Computer Units funded and initiated by the Charlize Theron Africa Outreach Project in conjunction with Oprah's Angel Network.

The chairman of the Mpilonhle board, uMkhanyakude mayor Lawrence Mthombeni, said at the launch that while children's health and education needs were taken care of, they were to no avail as long as there was no food in their homes.



THE Umkhanyakude mayor and chairman of the Mpilonhle board hands over the first of 40 food parcels to Thulisile Simelane, a pupil at Madwaleni High School. With them at the launch of the project are Dr Michael Bennish, Hlabisa Municipality councillor Mandla Gumede and Mpilonhle social worker Delli Mashele



PUPILS from one of the four schools attend a health education session in the makeshift classroom between two of Mpilonhle's four mobile units

"We have sufficient funds to supply food parcels for three months, but we need more funding to sustain this project. Anyone can help by making a donation," said Mthombeni.

The families receiving support were headed by orphans who were still at school but were just older than 18, the age below which the family would have been eligible for government grants to orphans.

Bennish said that through the mobile units, 3 500 children had been tested for HIV/Aids and TB and had received health education and counselling, basic health

care and computer training.

"The food parcel project is just one aspect of our overall programme. We would like to expand and extend what we do in providing the essentials of life that so many of us take for granted."

Funding for an additional two mobile units was being awarded by the US President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief.

"These additional units would help us in expanding the integrated HIV prevention, health and computer education services to other schools and communities in the area," said Bennish.