

More bridges needed following the recent floods

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In light of the recent severe floods in KwaZulu-Natal, the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) and the Department of Defence and Military Veterans (DoD) are working with the KZN provincial government to respond to the need for more bridges to be installed in various communities.

DPWI Minister Patricia de Lille revealed that apart from the 14 bridges that have been completed in KZN since May 2021, 18 bridge sites were identified and assessed for the 2022/23 financial year. She added that however, following the floods, the total number of sites where bridges need to be installed across KZN stood at 52 bridge sites. She was speaking during the handing over of the Nsimbakazi bridge to community members within the Mthonjaneni Local Municipality in Empangeni, in the northeastern part of KZN earlier in May 2022.

The Nsimbakazi bridge is one of the 14 bridges that have been completed in KZN under the *Welisizwe* Programme. It was built by the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) which is accountable to the Department of Defence, with the funding provided by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport. The Department of Public Works and Infrastructure provided expert coordination between these government institutions. Around R103 million was spent on the installation of the 14 bridges.

The programme to install the 14 bridges provided 420 job opportunities to residents from various KZN communities. Of the 420 Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) opportunities created, 60 were provided for the Nsimbakazi Bridge. “The programme also contributed towards skills development as 23 graduates were appointed as the bridge assessment team, project management team and maintenance team. These positions included junior and assistant engineers as well as candidate construction project managers,” said Minister de Lille.