

A DRIVE TO REVIVE SA'S SMALL HARBOURS

By Hope Motitimi

The Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) has embarked on refurbishments of South African harbours in hopes to improve the country's oceans economy. The refurbishments are done through the departments Economic Reconstruction and Recovery programme that seeks to repair and refurbish the country's harbours to increase their operating efficiency.

On Thursday, 4 May 2023, Minister Sihle Zikalala, conducted a site visit at the Saldanha Bay Harbour in the Western Cape, to assess the progress made thus far in reviving the harbour. The Saldanha Bay harbour is one of the twelve proclaimed fishing harbours in South Africa and is home to one of the largest exporting ports of iron ore on the African continent and is the largest natural port in Africa. The Saldanha Bay Municipality relies heavily on its thriving commercial fishing industry, which involves the fishing of oysters, mussels, fish, crayfish and more.

DPWI has invested R501 million for the refurbishment of 13 small harbours across the country to unleash the oceans economy, help uplift communities who rely on fishing for their livelihoods and create a conducive environment, that will enable residents around the harbour benefit from job creation, cleaner oceans etc.

Speaking at the Saldanha Bay Harbour, Minister Zikalala said that he would like to see community members benefitting from the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery programme, and he wants to ensure that it is well implemented in coastline provinces such as the Eastern Cape, Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, and Northern Cape. He was pleased to see the private companies on the harbour working together with community members in order to lessen the unemployment levels in the Saldanha Municipality.

"The local people have an infrastructure now whereby they can register, lease and operate their small businesses. We are working to ensure that the rates for the leases are not so high, in order for us to accommodate small businesses too. This also means that

big companies need to allow opportunities for small businesses to join the value chain and that's why we will continue to develop small harbours, to assist local communities” said Minister Zikalala.