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MEDIA STATEMENT

Zikalala announces the construction of over 100 Welisizwe bridges in SA

The sight of school children crossing swelling and dangerous rivers because of lack of bridges Infrastructure in the country's rural areas will soon be a thing of the past. This comes after Public Works and Infrastructure Minister Sihle Zikalala announced a R3.3b rand budget to construct 134 Welisizwe bridges in six provinces in the next three years.

The Minister made the announcement during the launch of the massive Welisizwe Bridges construction project held in two Welisizwe bridges construction sites in Port St Johns in the Eastern Cape. Accompanied by the Eastern Cape Transport MEC Xolile Nqatha and Port St Johns local Municipality Mayor Nomvuzo Mlombile-Cingo, the Minister visited the Sunrise and Ntlenga bridges sites, which are 50% complete, giving relief to the affected communities for safer rainy seasons.

Minister Zikalala said R1.1b per year will be spent in the Eastern Cape, which was the pilot for Welisizwe bridges programme, KwaZulu-Natal, Free State, Mpumalanga, Limpopo and North West.

Addressing the media, Minister Zikalala said the Welisizwe bridges programme is targeting rural provinces where there is a backlog in the construction of bridges and a threat of life during rainy seasons.

Welisizwe bridges is a government initiative aimed at addressing the backlog of Bridges infrastructure in rural and disadvantaged communities. The construction of Welisizwe Bridges allows for access to health facilities, schools and economic amenities.

The Welisizwe Bridges project is government project involving the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, The South African National Defence Force and the Provincial Departments of Transport.

Welisizwe Bridges not only makes access possible to many communities, but also is labour intensive, creating a number of working opportunities through the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP). A number of skills like welding, ground work and soil retention are transferred to the workers. Each bridge site has 7 SANDF members who oversee all the projects, 5 artisans and 40 EPWP workers.

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