

**Deputy Minister of Public Works
Ms BM Nzimande
18 May 2000**

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Presentation to NCOP Disaster Management Conference

We all know that the floods were devastating and disastrous.

As a response, Cabinet took a decision to establish an Emergency Reconstruction Committee, headed by the Minister of Public Works, Ms Stella Sigcau, comprising a number of Ministers.

The responsibility of this Committee is to facilitate an appropriate response to the needs of our country with regards to reconstruction work following the devastating floods.

In addition to the Committee, an implementation structure, the Command Centre has been set up, located at the Department of Provincial and Local Government under the leadership of Deputy Minister Lindiwe Sisulu.

The preliminary work of the Command Centre was to collate all emergency and immediate disaster damage for assessment and reaction. The first response was to attend to areas of emergency proportions, in terms of accessibility, where all links to resources, social services and even shelter was destroyed.

The Command Centre set out to categorise needs in terms of emergency interventions.

An institutional framework has been established at the Command Centre with a technical team to drive emergency critical short term reconstruction work. The initial work of the technical team was to collect information from the provinces and government departments on reconstruction work to be done. Teams of experts were sent to the provinces to work with the provincial disaster management structures to verify the damage reports.

Field assessments of roads and bridges have been completed.

Various Government Departments have specific responsibilities for which they have an obligation as well as capacity to discharge. For example the national Department of Agriculture is best placed to respond to the needs related to agricultural related damage such as soils reclamation, cropping, etc. Similarly, the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry is best placed to respond to damages related to water supply, pipe lines and water purification works, etc. Most departments have started reconstruction work in their respective functional areas.

For example the South African National Roads Agency Ltd. (SANRAL) has already done a lot of work with regard to roads reconstruction under their jurisdiction. On their own budget, they have effected critical repairs to the N1 between Matoks, Louis Trichardt and Messina.

SANRAL was asked to verify the claims sent in by the respective Provinces regarding damage after the floods. One of the main problems in assessing the damage claims, were that the initial reports were lacking information in respect of the actual damage to roads and bridges. Details were scant and limited information was received from the Transitional Local Councils.

SANRAL has completed most of the time consuming work and are in the process of finalising:

The reports to include all the assessments, quantification of costs and prioritisation for repairs

Proposals on effective repair handling

A summary report on costs, priorities and other inputs.

Although all the work has not been completed, a number of roads and bridges have been prioritised for repairs, which should be actioned next week as finance is now available. The identified projects termed "immediate" include the restoration of links to schools, clinics and places of work.

The same is true of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, who immediately started working on some

of the repairs and water purification.

The Department of Agriculture has also moved quickly. Apart from the National Agriculture Flood Task Force, who did assessment of the flood damages to the agricultural sector in all the affected provinces and drew a recovery plan for rehabilitating the damaged on-farm infrastructure and soil in the affected provinces, the National Department of Agriculture (NDA) also established the Flood Management Centre that is expected to operate for six months (April to September 2000), dealing with the flood assessment and recovery program. This management team comprises Inter-Branch Officers including Economists, Engineers, Statisticians, Veterinary Scientists, Communication staff and an Administrative Officer. They are supposed to interact with the DDG on a daily basis and with the Director-General together with the Central Command Centre on a weekly basis.

On assessment, provinces have been requested by the Flood Management Centre to submit the assessment on soil damage and unpack infrastructure into canals, dams, weirs, fences etc. Therefore new reports are being submitted to the centre regularly. On recovery, the national Department of Agriculture has commissioned the Land Bank as an agent to administer the recovery strategy of rehabilitating the soil damage.

The Department of Agriculture is continuing with representation at the Command Center.

The national Department of Public Works is responding to the flood damage through its National Public Works Programme.

Floods in the Northern Province, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal affected a number of Community Based Public Works Programme (CBPWP) projects that were being implemented at the time. In response, the Department identified the affected projects and the following allocations were made on our own budget in order to save these projects.

In Mpumalanga R2,5 m was allocated to the Nsikazi Cluster for the Gutshwa Bridge Project.

This bridge has been completely swept away and the linked villages cut off. A new bridge is to be constructed. The work consists of grading and possible re-alignment of the approaching road, demolition of the existing structure and construction of a reinforced structure with proper erosion prevention.

In the Northern Province, R2 019 700 was allocated to repair existing roads at Tshipise/Nzelele, Dilokong, Eastern Tubatse and Bushbuckridge Clusters. This amount also covers an erosion project at Dilokon, market stalls at Bushbuckridg, a school road and sports facility at Letsiele Cluster and retrieving and drainage projects Eastern Tubatse.

KwaZulu Natal was allocated R1,5m for road repairs at Mbazwana and Kwa Ngwanase Clusters.

It must be noted that the above allocations specifically relate to CBPWP projects that were already under implementation and the figures must be read in separation from the Department's process to allocate for 2000/2001.

LAND REHABILITATION PROGRAMME

The intense storm damage has resulted in the many rural communities now having no food for winter as a result of their crops being washed away and that lands being damaged by erosion and wash-aways. In response, the Department of Public Works (DPW) through the Community Based Public Works Programme (CBPWP), has developed an emergency relief programme for "Work for Food" in order for devastated communities to earn sufficient funds to buy food and at least survive the year 2000 winter.

As opposed to merely handing out food, the programme gives the devastated communities the opportunity to work on restoring and rehabilitating the damaged lands and thereby have the dignity of working and earning enough to buy the food needed for the winter until the next planting. This will provide temporary jobs for the affected communities.

YEAR 2000/2001 FAST TRACK PROGRAMME

The Minister approved an internal document called "Strategy for Allocation of Funds and Acceleration of

Expenditure" which proposed an allocation of R156m from the 2000/2001 year budget to fast track projects in the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and the Northern Province. The projects identified for this programme were those which could be implemented rapidly. In response to an invitation to submit such projects, the district and regional councils submitted a number of projects that had been hit by floods and tornadoes, particularly rural access roads and schools.

Work is already on-going.

Reconstruction of bridges in the Northern Province has already started, for example where the first medium girder bridge was opened to traffic on 8 May 2000 at Georges Valley in the Northern Province. In addition four other pedestrian bridges were constructed at Tsabalala, Dupeni, Mashamba and Rabadi. The SANDF is currently maintaining all these bridges.

In the Eastern Cape the construction of a bridge at Cofimvaba is under consideration, although preliminary preparations are done in anticipation.

The Provincial Government of the Northern Province has erected a number of temporary river crossings where bridges had been swept away.

The other emergency relief being addressed by the Command Centre is the provision of tents for displaced families. Already in the Northern Province, tents have been provided. In Tohoando assistance is being given to deploy 50 large tents (able to house five average families) and 30 smaller tents Each able to house one average family). These were donated by the United States.

In the Eastern Cape the SANDF has provided items consisting mainly of clothing and the government of the Eastern Cape distributed the items as it deemed fit. Similar donations are being arranged in other areas.

Following the announcement by Minister Trevor Manuel that R300 million is to be made available, the work scheduled can now be further addressed in a properly coordinated manner.

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