

**Deputy Minister of Public Works**  
**Rev KM Zondi**  
**20 September 2001**

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## **Opening of the Wellington Multi-purpose Centre**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Department of Public works manages a poverty alleviation programme known as ILIMA/LETSIMA – a community based public works programme – as part of its core functions.

ILIMA is an African concept denoting a spirit of working together for effective results. This is in line with our slogan "Together fighting poverty". As a Department, we appreciate the initiative of your organization and the communities it represents to come forward with a collective proposal as a solution to the problem of inaccessible and often not-so-affordable services.

Central to the programme of ILIMA is a desire to employ labour intensive construction methods in the delivery of community projects. These projects are normally physical assets aimed at improving the quality of life particularly in the communities previously overlooked by skewed apartheid social planning policies.

Job creation, infrastructure development, human resources development, community participation and empowerment and socially functional communities – are the direct positive spin-offs of ILIMA.

This is important to understand because poverty manifests itself in many ways, one of, which is a lack of basic infrastructure as is the case in most rural areas and other poor communities around the country

Since 1994, the programme has created in excess of 2500 community projects with an estimated investment of more than R1, 5 billion.

Given different functions that they serve, these projects are grouped in to the following categories:

- Improved access to trade – e.g. rural access roads
- Directly productive – i.e. projects which provide ongoing sustainable employment such as agricultural foods, small scale irrigation, recycling etc
- Labour Saving – projects which results in reduced labour usage such that saved labour can be used for more productive activities
- Environmental protection – e.g. erosion control, donga rehabilitation, revegetation etc
- Social cohesion – i.e. projects that create social cohesion within disadvantaged communities such as multi-purpose centres, sports facilities etc.

### **MULTI-PURPOSE COMMUNITY CENTRES**

Multi-Purpose Community Centres are one-stop-centres where local, provincial and national governments, as well as other service providers, bring their services in a co-ordinated way closer to the communities, as dictated by the needs of the communities.

Conceptually the idea of the MPCC's involves a consolidation of government services in a way that sets up one-stop-shop centres for poor communities to access services

Government plans to build about 60 such centres by March 2003. Ideally every District Council should have at least one such facility.

As a Department, Public Works uses its core competency as infrastructure developers and construction project managers to build the MPCC's on behalf of other stakeholders and/or service providers.

This core competency cuts across the three key functions of the National Department of Public Works, namely provision of infrastructure requirements including functional (e.g. prisons, police stations, courts etc) and office accommodation for other government departments.

The Department also engages the construction industry in policy formulation and other business development efforts to grow, and transform the construction industry in South Africa.

Management of poverty alleviation programme under ILIMA is the third function and entails infrastructure development including MPPC's as a way to improve the quality of life in our communities.

In 2000/2001 the Department of Public Works spent R22, 4 million developing, upgrading and building in total 23 MPCC's in KwaZulu Natal, Northern Province, Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga , Northern Cape and Western Cape provinces.

In the next financial year (2002/2003), about R10, 4 million has been proposed for the construction and development of 16 MPCC's in KwaZulu Natal, Northern Province and Eastern Cape due to the high rural and poverty levels in these areas.

Of the 23 MPPC's developed in 2000/2001, about 14 involved the development of new structures, whereas 2 and 7 were extensions and renovations to the existing structures, respectively.

Development options are a key consideration given the limitations of our budgets. There are a number of options for developing MPCC's subject to the available existing infrastructure. These include:

- Upgrade and optimize existing functional buildings and infrastructure
- Refurbish non-functional buildings
- Build new facilities

Obviously there will be combinations of these options as well.

In many areas, there are existing administrative centres and buildings, which are used by the key service providers to interface with the communities. An essential element of the policy should be to optimize the use of existing infrastructure and only create new infrastructure where there is no appropriate existing infrastructure or where the existing infrastructure is poorly located in relation to the communities served.

This implies that wherever possible existing appropriate infrastructure should form the core for the MPCC and be upgraded instead of constructing totally new buildings.

For example, in an area there may be a very well located and successful clinic, which is used by the community. It makes sense to create an MPCC around the clinic. The clinic would thus become the "anchor" tenant for the MPCC.

### **SERVICES AVAILABLE AT MPPC's**

Multi Purpose Community Centres are community-based projects conceptualized, driven, owned and operated by the communities ideally through their democratically elected local government.

Communities from around the centre and the surrounding areas are the ones who identify and request the services. These services include but are not limited to, pension and social grants, child and family welfare, elderly and disabled care, social development, women empowerment and youth development, skills training, job creation programmes, labour and other advice centres, health education, safety and security, library, passport/identity and birth documents, government information and many more.

Services that were inaccessible to the communities in the past such as two-way communications between government and the people will now become available. This is laudable because it strengthens the concept of democracy and call on government on one hand to be more transparent and accountable.

On the other hand, informed populace means active participation in the processes of governance by the electorate – persuading government to be more responsive and attentive.

Reading through the business plan of the proposed MPCC for the community of Wellington, it became immediately apparent that the points raised above are by no means lost to the people of this area.

As government, we commend the initiative taken by the local government of Wellington in ceding land to the

people of the area at their request, to build/establish a MPPC.

We further applaud all other efforts undertaken by you in ensuring that this valuable piece of land shall be well invested and utilized for the social development of more than 30 000 people of Hillcrest, Weltevrede, Van Wyksvlei, Newtown, Carterville and Egoli

Partnership with local businesses is important for economic development and social cohesion; it is therefore inspiring to see the support that the business is prepared to lend in this venture.

### **CRITERIA FOR MPCC's**

The core focus for the MPCC should be customer service and meeting the needs of the community served. In instances where basic infrastructure lacks, MPCC's should be located in the midst of the community, bringing people closer to government services meanwhile saving them travelling time and money.

This spirit was well captured in a sentiment expressed by an old woman during the opening of the first MPCC at Tombo in the Eastern Cape in 1999.

According to her, acquiring either a birth certificate or an identity document used to take an overnight journey often travelling on foot to Umtata (nearest city) making them vulnerable to social dangers and exposing them to natural elements.

This concern and many others akin to it have led government to come up with the following essential elements as a basis for the criteria to develop a MPCC:

- it should be well located in relation to the communities it serves
- it should provide appropriate facilities to the service providers using it
- all key service providers should be accommodated within the MPCC
- it should be cost effective to construct, which implies maximizing the use of existing infrastructure as far as possible
- it should be cost effective to maintain, and
- it should be sustainable in the long term i.e. well maintained, which implies cost recovery or revenue generation is essential in order to provide for maintenance and ongoing operation

It is considered most appropriate for the local government to take the lead in the co-ordination and development of the MPCC as they are responsible for integrated planning within their areas of jurisdiction as well as provision of municipal services.

### **ROLL OUT PLAN**

As mentioned above, government intends rolling out 60 MPCC's by March 2003. In the Western Cape, the Unobuntu MPCC was established as a pilot project at Worcester in the District Council of Boland in 1998.

Similar facilities will be established in the Western Cape as part of phase three of government roll out plan, that is, between April 2001 and March 2002.

The following District Councils in the Western Cape will be positively affected by the roll out plan – Klein Karoo, Central Karoo, West Coast, Overberg, and City of Cape Town Metro.

### **CONCLUSION**

Access to information and other services of government are a hallmark of a democratic society.

Government has identified MPCC's as a vehicle to facilitate that access and empower the communities.

The Department, using its core competencies and within the limits of its budgeted resources, will continue to render services to other stakeholders in an effort to realize objectives of government, including development communication.

I thank the communities of Wellington for the opportunity accorded to share our challenges as placed on us by the public mandate and the constitution.

Thank you.

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