



public works
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SPEECH BY MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE AT THE MONA RURAL BRIDGES HANDOVER IN NDEWDWE, KWAZULU NATAL

Bridges delivered to rural communities in KwaZulu Natal bring lifesaving infrastructure to communities who need it most

NOTE TO EDITORS: The following speech was delivered today, 29 November 2021 at the handover of a recently installed bridge in Mona in the Ndwedwe Municipality in KwaZulu Natal.

Good afternoon, sanibonani

It is my great privilege and honour to be here today at the launch of this very important infrastructure project for the Mona Community and surrounding communities.

I want to start by thanking MEC Nkonyeni and the KwaZulu Natal Department of Transport for recognising the need for this project and availing the necessary funding and for their commitment to investing in infrastructure.

This project is demonstrating how through the Infrastructure Investment Plan, all three spheres of government are working together to get the job done and provide the community with what they need and are entitled to.

I also want to thank you to the community for your patience.

My thanks also goes each and every person from all departments and the community who worked on this project and for completing it through the pandemic.

It is very exciting for us to be visiting the KwaZulu Natal Province again to handover more bridges after our visit and handover of other bridges in Ekhamanzi in March this year.

This is the beauty of this important project that these life-saving bridges can be installed in a matter of weeks or months and do not take years to install.

Even through these bridges do not take long to install, we know that the communities who need these bridges have waited years for this infrastructure so that you can get to work, school, clinics and other social amenities safely.

For many years, our children, mothers and fathers have had to cross dangerous river streams to access the basic and important social amenities such as schools, clinics, government offices and to get to work.

It has always been the most heart breaking thing to me when we hear on the news of young children especially who drown while crossing a river to get to school.

The excuse that there is no money must never be used again when it comes to an intervention that will not only make access to government services easier but will also give our children and people dignity and save lives.

I have always said that infrastructure is a basic need and a service which all our communities are entitled to.

Infrastructure is about giving people a better life and access to opportunities. We can see that as with the case of these bridges, infrastructure is about reversing the legacy of our apartheid pass by giving people access and dignity.

Infrastructure is about improving the socio-economic conditions in our communities and eliminating barriers for our people to get where they need to get safely so that they can succeed and make a meaningful contribution to our country.

The Infrastructure Investment Plan is about achieving spatial and economic justice by connecting our people, integrating our communities and bring people closer to work opportunities.

The Welisizwe Rural Bridges Programme is aimed at providing safe access to social amenities and further respond to potential disaster areas and emergency disaster situations.

It ensures that community members especially school children can have safe passage to amenities such as schools and clinics and prevents devastating drownings which often take place in rural areas without proper infrastructure.

The intervention is done through the construction of Modular Steel Bridges. The Department of Public Works & Infrastructure (DPWI) and Department of Defence & Military Veterans (DOD) entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) on the implementation of Welisizwe Programme.

Subsequently, the DPWI and the KZN Department of Transport entered into MOA on the implementation of Welisizwe Programme within KwaZulu Natal province.

The KwaZulu Natal province was identified as a key area for this intervention following inclement weather conditions caused by severe thunderstorm which resulted in adverse effects on both human life and property.

DPWI and SANDF undertook technical assessments in the identified potential disaster sites in KwaZulu Natal and the KwaZulu Natal Department of Transport committed funds for the installation of the fourteen (14) bridges in KZN province.

This project has progressed well in KwaZulu Natal since it started in April 2020.

Teams from SANDF were deployed in 2020 with DPWI assisting in a coordinating role to install the bridges in the province.

Since April 2020, 11 of the 14 bridges have been completed in the KwaZulu Natal Province at a cost of R103million. The Mona Bridge was installed at a cost of R8.5million.

The other bridges completed in KwaZulu Natal since April 2020 are: three bridges Ekhamanzi, one in Mthoqotho, one in Hoffenthal, four bridges in Mangwenya and one in Amanzimtoti.

The remaining three bridges to be completed are between 50% and 70% complete and I want to urge all stakeholders to resolve any issues so that we deliver these bridges to these communities in the next two months.

The project also forms part of government's Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP) to provide much needed financial relief and provide jobs and opportunities to community members and local companies.

To date the project has created 420 jobs in the various areas in KwaZulu Natal where the 11 bridges have been installed so far. For the Mona Bridge installation, 60 job opportunities were created for local community members.

A number of local companies have also benefitted from the project through sub-contracting of goods and services during the installation of the bridges.

The programme is also contributing towards the skills development initiative as 23 graduates were appointed as part of the bridge assessment, project management team and maintenance team. These positions included engineers and candidate construction project managers.

MEC Nkonyeni, I once again have to commend our teams from DPWI, the department of Defence and the teams from the provincial Transport Department for the level of urgency they have worked with.

I am so proud of the teams and this project and that is because it is one of the few and very impactful projects that can be delivered in matter of weeks.

To the community we want to say that it is not right that you have had to wait so many years for these bridges and we are happy that we can finally hand over three bridges to you today. These are your bridges, this is your infrastructure and what you have been crying out for years.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are here to serve our communities and the pride that we feel today must motivate us to delivery fast and deliver more. As the President said: "Khawuleza". We must hurry up, the patience of our people is running out.

Let us now move with haste to complete the remaining three bridges in the province to ensure that the remaining communities who need this lifesaving infrastructure get it.

Siyabonga and God Bless.

ENDS

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