

Traditional Leader, Chief: Nkosi Biyela

Government officials from various departments and spheres of government

Community members

Members of the media

Good morning, Sanibonani, molweni

1. It is my great pleasure to be here today in KwaZulu again to hand over yet another bridge to a community in need. This is one of three recently completed bridges here in KwaZulu Natal.
2. I am also delighted to be joined by my colleague, the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Thandi Modise as her department is a key stakeholder in this project and ensuring that these bridges are installed quickly.
3. As I always say, infrastructure is not just about cold, cement buildings, it is about life-saving measures such as these bridges which will provide decent and safe access to this community who for many years risked their lives to cross the river to get to schools, clinics and places of work.
4. Today we are pleased to come to this community to hand over your bridge and I know that the community has waited long and you have been very patient.
5. Thank you for being patient because I will be the first to say that you have waited too long for this basic infrastructure to ensure that you have safe access.
6. We always see the horror stories of how our community members and children have to cross river streams to get to school and work and many times, people and children have lost their lives drowning due to lack of infrastructure.
7. This is something we are working hard to stop through this intervention, the Welisizwe Rural Bridges Programme which has been successfully implemented in the Eastern Cape and here in KwaZulu Natal.
8. Since last April, all partners have worked together to ensure that we complete the 14 bridges planned for various communities in KZN.

9. In November 2021 we handed over the 11th bridge to the community in Ndwedwe and today we are pleased that we can finally hand over the Nsimbakazi Bridge in the Mthonjaneni Local Municipality.
10. Two more bridges have been completed and these will be handed over to the communities by the provincial government. These are the Nyalazi bridge in Mtubatuba Local Municipality and the Okhombe bridge in the Okhahlamba municipality.
11. These bridges for our communities is made possible by a partnership between different government departments and spheres of government.
12. The Department of Public Works & Infrastructure (DPWI), the Department of Defence & Military Veterans (DOD) and the Department of Transport – KZN entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) on the implementation of Welisizwe Programme within the province.
13. The programme is aimed at providing urgent safe access to social amenities and further respond to potential disaster areas and emergency disaster situations. The intervention is done through the construction of Modular Steel Bridges.
14. DPWI and SANDF undertook technical assessments in the identified potential disaster sites in KwaZulu Natal and KwaZulu Natal Department of Transport (KZN DOT) committed funds for the installation of the fourteen (14) bridges in the province.
15. The KZN Department of Transport allocated around R110.4million for the construction of 14 bridges including contingencies and R103million was spent on the installation of the 14 bridges.
16. The initiative forms part of government's response to challenges of access to social facilities and forms part of the SONA commitments as announced by the President earlier this year.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT, JOB CREATION AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

17. The programme contributed towards skills development as 23 graduates were appointed as the bridge assessment, project management team and maintenance team. These positions included junior and assistant engineers as well as candidate construction project managers.
18. The project also provided EPWP opportunities to residents from surrounding communities. In total 420 EPWP opportunities were provided during the construction of the 14 bridges in KwaZulu Natal.
19. Of the 420 EPWP opportunities, 60 of those work opportunities were provided for this bridge to residents from surrounding communities.
20. This project has also brought a significant amount of economic empowerment to local contractors in various communities with the installation of the 14 bridges.
21. More than 30 local companies have benefited from these projects as they supplied various goods and services during the installation of the bridges over the past year.

OTHER INTERVENTIONS BY DPWI FOLLOWING FLOODING IN KWAZULU NATAL

22. Apart from the 14 bridges that have been completed since May 2021, we are now working to upscale this project and bring more bridges to communities in need in KwaZulu Natal especially in light of the recent, devastating floods across the province.
23. The DPWI and DoD are working with the provincial government to respond to the need for more bridges to be installed in various communities.
24. 18 bridge sites were identified and assessed for the 2022/23 financial year and following the floods, the total number of sites where bridges need to be installed across KZN now stands at 52 bridge sites which have been identified.
25. These 52 bridge sites are across the province in various municipalities including; Mkhambathini, ILembe, Mvoti, UMsunduzi and in eThekweni.

26. The process of adding more technical capacity has started and technical assessments for the first 18 bridges have already been completed.
27. The technical assessments for the remainder of the 52 bridge sites is expected to be completed in the coming days.
28. Apart from the intervention of more bridges in KZN following the recent flooding, I can also report the following assistance and intervention by DPWI since the flooding.
29. On 19 April, the deputy Minister and I were joined by MEC Sibiya to visit various sites affected by the flooding.
30. We have brought together a multi-disciplinary team of built environment professionals from organisations such as the Council for the Built Environment (CBE) and Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) which will be allocated to various teams to assess, scope, cost, design and implement critical reconstruction and building work associated with bridges, roads, storm water and other critical infrastructure and for use by other sphere of government.
31. The team of built environment officials includes architects, quantity surveyors, civil and electrical engineers, structural engineers and project managers.
32. Internal departmental resources will focus on the 49 government owned buildings that have been damaged in order for them to be made fit for purpose and usable by client departments in the shortest possible time.
33. One of the sites we are working at currently is the Airforce base in Durban.
34. Severe damage was caused to the water and electricity system and the kitchen and hanger was flooded. There was also damage to the walls, floors, roofs, gutters, downpipes and cladding.
35. Following an assessment by the teams, a generator was provided to the military base and water tanks were also delivered.

36. High level scoring and quantification of costs was conducted for all assets reported by client departments and service providers have been appointed to conduct repairs at 33 various state-owned buildings. The department is finalizing detailed assessment using internal professionals.
37. DPWI has also identified land parcels which could possibly be used for the resettlement of households that have been left homeless in light of the flooding.
38. The verification process by the Housing Development Agency is ongoing to confirm which land parcels are suitable for release for resettlements of displaced communities.
39. Ladies and gentlemen, as I always say, the patience of our people is running out and the President has asked us to “Khawuleza”. So we must move and work with urgency.
40. All of us in government from national to provincial and local level, must work closer together and we must work harder to work with urgency and bring our communities the infrastructure they deserve.
41. To the community, again I want to thank you for your patience. You finally have your bridge and we hope that it makes life better for you.
42. To all our partners in DoD, the provincial government, local municipalities, thank you for your support and partnership on this important programme.
43. We look forward to cementing our relationships even further and working harder and faster to bring more bridges to communities in need.

ENDS

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