

**THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS, Ms STELLA SIGCAU, MP, GIVES A KEYNOTE ADDRESS ON THE OCCASION OF THE HANDING OVER OF THE R 1.6 MILLION VUKUZAKHE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CENTRE**

**DATE:** SATURDAY 25 February 2006

**VENUE:** KWA MACHI, UMUZIWABANTU MUNICIPALITY, HARDING, EASTERN CAPE

- The Programme Director and the Chairperson of Committees in the Kwazulu-Natal Legislature, Dr Meshak Hadebe
- The MEC for Works in KwaZulu-Natal, Blessed Gwala
- The Mayor of Umziwabantu Local Municipality, Mr MP Mteshane
- The Mayor of Ugu District Municipality, Mr S B Cele
- Inkosi S S Machi and your council
- Councilors from our local government sphere
- Mrs. Ruth Bhengu and other women activists
- Distinguished Guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen:

In 1994 when we said we were going to create a better life for all, it was not only a promise. It was a vow born of the ANC's century of struggle for freedom, dignity and prosperity for our people. On the eve of the first decade of democracy we met here at KwaMachi on 22 February 2004 to lay a foundation stone for the development of the Vukuzakhe Community Resource Centre. At the time, you raised concerns among others about lack of water, electricity and better roads.

As your government we noted that and committed ourselves to work with you in delivering these services. I am encouraged to see that there is indeed progress on that score. Currently there are water projects taking place at Harding and the surrounding areas. This testifies to the effectiveness of government infrastructure programmes as led by the Municipal and Provincial Infrastructure Grants programmes.

The road between Deemont and Izingolweni is completely under tar, helping to facilitate commerce and speed up local economic development. The electricity grid which in 2004 seemed to be by-passing this area, is beginning to branch out to reach the communities in need. Even the project we are opening today has electricity connected. This all forms the building blocks for the Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (ASGISA) as espoused by government and led by the Deputy President, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka. The vision of ASGISA is to mobilize all resources to foster economic growth that will be shared by all. Following the announcement of ASGISA, the Minister of Finance presented a peoples budget that confirmed indeed that what the country is

producing, the government is prepared to share with all the people, particularly those vulnerable and less fortunate because of the legacy of apartheid.

Minister Trevor Manuel said:  
***“The budget tabled...gives practical effect to our programme of social cohesion, and in particular to prioritizing the needs of the poor.”***

Looking back at our history of continuous achievements, the Minister reminds us that:

- Today government spends seventy billion rand (R70 billion) on social grants that benefit more than ten (10) million people
- Since 1994, more than one thousand three hundred (1300) clinics have been built or upgraded
- HIV treatment programmes are in place in 192 health facilities
- About sixty four thousand classrooms have been built since 1996 and today only 17 schools in the whole country still have children learning under the trees and this will be totally eliminated by end of March this year
- Three and half million (3,5 million) homes have been connected to electricity and water supply infrastructure reaches ninety percent (90%) of the population
- Almost four million (3.9 million) and three million (2.9 million) poor households are provided with free basic water and electricity, respectively
- About three hundred and fifty thousand (350 000) new job opportunities are created every year

Remember this is just the past. These are the real achievements stemming from our commitment in 1994 to ***“create a better life for all”*** and ***“push back the frontiers of poverty”***

Let me give you the glimpse of the future because as your government we are thinking ahead:

- In the next two to three years, forty six (46) hospitals will undergo physical rehabilitation
- School fees will be phased out in low-income communities this year
- Government will spend twenty three billion rand (R23 billion) in the next three years to subsidise five hundred thousand housing units
- Government will also spend five billion rand towards improving infrastructure in time to host a successful World Cup Soccer 2010
- Beginning this year, any body earning less than forty thousand rand (R40 000) a year will NOT pay tax. Remember government has steadily been reducing tax on low income earners to put more money in their pockets and reduce poverty
- From 01 April, old age, disability and care dependency grants will increase to R820 a month and the child support grant to R190 a month

Today we are handing over a completed one point six million rand (R1, 6 million) structure which is going to increase the asset value of local community. The project is part of a cluster of special projects that the Department of Public Works financed to the amount in excess of R3 million in 2004 under its rural infrastructure programme called Community Based Public Works Programme (CBPWP). Although discontinued in April 2004, the CBPWP had managed to change the landscape of rural South Africa between 1994 and 2004. During that time, the programme traversed the width and breadth of South African rural hinterland investing more than two point five billion rand (R2.5 billion) in seven of the nine provinces including KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape. More than four thousand infrastructure projects were built and in excess of one hundred and sixty three thousand (163 000) job opportunities created as part of poverty alleviation.

The Vukuzakhe Community Resource Centre stands as a beacon of successful cooperation between government, amakhosi and the communities. The major stakeholders who were originally actively involved in the identification process include Inkosi Machi, Ms Bhengu, Ms Tshalata, Mr T Chala and the members of the project steering committee. The project was identified, planned and implemented with the local people. It is believed that the Local Municipality will provide necessary support in the provision of basic services and in creating further linkages to enhance the project.

The total value of the project is R1 630 487.50, which included a budget for the physical structure, professional fees and training. The Centre comprises of the following:

- Community hall
- Youth Centre
- HIV/Aids Centre
- Administrative offices (For hire to the Government Departments and Municipality)
- Crèche
- Skills Development Centre
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The main contractor of the project was a local based company called NuEra Construction, managed by Mr J Mbuthuma, who has worked beyond his scope of work to ensure that the project becomes a success.

Every effort was made to ensure that local unemployed people are utilized during the construction phase in order to provide job opportunities. There were 198 jobs that were created and both skilled and unskilled labourers were involved. Fifty one percent (51%) were mainly women, 23% youth and 1% disabled.

The project engaged the services of the local SMME's for building material, construction of the building, electrification and social development training. It is

believed that this has contributed in addressing the development of the SMME', which is a priority area for the Government.

The Committee is currently involved in attracting investors to create sustainable jobs by utilizing the Vukuzakhe CRC. It is also the wish of the management committee to create a small local economic hub for KwaMachi around the Resource Centre. The Centre will be used as a learning facility, resource facility, service centre and other important activities for the welfare of the people. The community would like to see the Municipality supporting this project as one of the Local economic Development Projects in this area.

As the country prepares to hold its third local government elections on 01 March 2006, I urge all of you to stand up and participate in the process. It is both your human and constitutional rights to do so. Without your vote this government will not be able to exceed your expectations. Remember apathy does not deliver services nor does it alleviate poverty.

I THANK YOU