

**Minister of Public Works  
Ms S Sigcau  
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**Moletij Imbizo**

In this country we had a long and intense struggle for democracy. For nearly fifty years many needs of people were neglected, and especially so in the rural areas of South Africa.

Since 1994 we have been working on the principles of the Reconstruction and Development Programme. Government has gone to great lengths to ensure that in the spirit of true democracy, people actually become involved in planning and mapping out their own destiny by means of development in their respective areas.

Specifically in terms of rural development, government has devised the Integrated and Sustainable Rural Development Strategy (ISRDS). This strategy allows for national departments, together with provincial and local governments and the private sector, to pool their competencies and resources in addressing needs at community level.

A further intensification of democracy is brought about by what we are doing in this current Imbizo Focus Week. Many Cabinet Ministers, Premiers, MECs, Mayors and other public leaders are interacting with communities on the ground. We are discussing delivery at local level with you, the communities. And we are listening to you - we hear your unique problems and constraints and we listen to the suggestions and solutions you are bringing forward. It is because government appreciates that you are the people who know best how to deal with your particular circumstances, and that you are the people who should identify the assistance needed from government.

The Department of Public Works has been running the Community Based Public Works Programme (Ilima/Letsema) in rural areas as a poverty alleviation programme since 1995. It focuses on job creation, training and the creation of much-needed local infrastructure and assets to revive economic activity from within rural communities. In addition it has as an objective to support local service delivery and administrative institutions. Sustainability of these projects within the CBPWP is enhanced by ensuring that utilisation, management, further development and growth are supported by sister national government departments. Provincial departments are involved in service delivery and coordination and the private sector is encouraged to further build on potential by investment. Also municipalities and local leaders are involved on all projects.

Assessed by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE) as the best programme of its kind in 30 developing countries in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, we nevertheless brought refinement and extension to the CBPWP. Building on the clustered approach of providing development infrastructure and community assets in a "local activity hub," we have successfully incorporated the Multi-Purpose Community Centres as one stop access facilities to social services and Community Production Centres as concentrated development points, rehabilitating mostly existing agricultural infrastructure for increased suitable produce on a larger scale, with value adding taking place at the point of production before the produce is marketed.

As a programme that starts its implementation, right from the needs assessment and project proposal phase, in working with the community, the CBPWP is ideally suited to Imbizo. During its implementation, national, provincial and local government are working together on various aspects and phases. This ensures that Integrated Development Plans as well as other priorities and linkages are accounted for in the delivery of development infrastructure at a local level in true intergovernmental cooperation.

The projects we visited today were built through the Community Based Public Works Programme. It was an expressed need in this area to provide facilities where people dealing with disabilities could have the opportunity to fend for themselves and actually make a contribution to the local economic activity.

Already during the construction phase of the poultry units, the irrigation project and the access road, more than R1,35 million was earned by local community members who participated. This is money brought into local households and money which they in turn spend, mostly in the same area, that stimulates the local economy.

It has been calculated that the poultry farming alone could earn the community around R552 000 per year in income, which can be more if deliveries become possible through the acquisition of a cool truck as well as through direct sales of live and slaughtered poultry, feet and livers to individuals. This makes the project a

viable one to be self-sustained and even extended according to local market needs.

The irrigation food-lot also provides sustainable jobs to participants as well as nutritious fresh vegetables to the community.

The necessity of the access road is obvious, as are the imparted skills during the construction thereof in order to maintain it in good order for access and trade purposes.

Overall in this area, including the three projects I mentioned, Public Works has spent R4,6 million in the provision of rural infrastructure to support economic development and social coherence. You are aware of the other facilities created such as .....

You are also aware that various other departments, NGOs and even private companies have donated and invested money in relation to further development that is associated with these projects. This is the tangible proof of government working in a cooperative fashion to bring growth and opportunities to you. Even though we cannot assist everybody at the same time, you should also encourage other communities and be an example to them, of a nation working together, united in action for change.

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