

**Minister of Public Works
Ms S Sigcau
12 August 2002**

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Launch of the Department of Public Works book

Deputy Minister of Public Works, Rev Musa Zondi
Executive Mayor of Durban Metropolitan, Councillor Obed Mlaba
Mayor of Umgungundlovu District Municipality, Councillor Sithole-Mlaba
Mr Omar Badsha
Senior Officials
Distinguished guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

Today we are launching a book of images. What has been artistically captured in this book reflects quite a broad spectrum of emotions, of situations and circumstances that continually change - but is portrayed here as a lasting moment.

We can never allow poverty to become a lasting moment in our lives or in the lives of the poorest of the poor. Human kind needs to aspire to growth, needs to be nurtured in the process and taught how to access the means to break out of the death-spiral of prolonged deprivation.

As it is indicated in "With our own hands" (p7), edited by Omar Badsha:

"Poverty is increasingly being understood as a fluid process rather than a static condition: people can move in, and out, of poverty. The concept of vulnerability is used to understand these processes of change. The poor not only suffer from an absolute lack of key assets such as land, education, skills and health but also face limited choices with respect to livelihood strategies. This affects their ability to withstand or counter the impact of negative processes of change. Strengthening and supporting the assets of the poor, whether these are human, physical or social assets, help to counter the vulnerability to poverty."

That is why the Community Based Public Works Programme has won so much acclaim, from the direct beneficiaries right through to international evaluators who described this programme as the best of its kind in more than 30 developing countries in Asia, the Pacific and Africa.

By way of an example of the impact of the programme, the Department of Public Works has over the last six financial years, spent more than R460 million (Since 1998: R260 450 026) in KwaZulu-Natal to strengthen the infrastructure basis in rural areas. The 929 projects delivered during this period spanned:

- Access roads
- Agricultural sheds
- Agricultural support
- Arts and crafts workshops
- Bakeries
- Low level and masonry bridges
- Bulk water supply
- Business training centres
- Cattle dips
- Cold rooms
- Community ablutions
- Community market gardens and stalls
- Creches
- Day care centres
- Disabled facilities
- Earth dam repairs
- Electricity supply
- Erosion protection measures
- Fencing
- Fresh produce processing facilities and markets
- Food processing facilities

Irrigation schemes
Light industrial workshops
Multi-functional centres
Parking facilities
Piggeries
Poultry units
River crossings
Sanitation
Schools - primary, secondary and technical
Skills training centres for construction
Solid waste removal
Sports fields and spectator stands
Stormwater drains
Stream crossings
Storage facilities
Taxi ranks
Toilets and ablution blocks
Traditional craft industry facilities
Waste collection
Water projects
Water supplies
Women development projects
Workshops.

The pictorial account of poverty alleviation in this book shows a nation at work united by a common resolve to push back the frontiers of poverty. With our own hands, put to the plough, we can all make a considerable contribution in fighting the battles against poverty. Today's launch vindicates President Mbeki's promise that "... together with you, we shall ensure that the journey to a better South Africa is carried out with speed".

Investments of almost R2 billion have extended the frontiers of freedom to the hinterland of our country. Rural areas, hitherto enclaves of poverty and human degradation, are poised to become oases of development.

Admittedly the success story narrated in this book does not change the fact that we are nowhere near liberating the overwhelming majority of our people from the intolerable burden of poverty and underdevelopment. It is indisputable, as President Mbeki states, that "We are progressing towards the achievement of the historic goal of the eradication of a centuries-old legacy of colonialism, racism and apartheid".

As Department of Public Works, we have built a special working relationship with the provincial governments and in particular the response and dynamics with which the municipalities in the provinces have thrown in their weight and taken on the required responsibilities, have contributed greatly to the success of the Community Based Public Works Programme. We have however, seen it fit to launch this book from this province, also acknowledging their cooperation in the Programme.

Through the Community Based Public Works Programme, jobs have been created, skills transferred and livelihoods positively affected for rural citizens of our country. In most cases the assets created in communities are of such a nature that sustainable economic activity, and thus continued growth opportunities, ought to stem from it.

The crux lies in the management of these assets.

Too often our country is caught in the snares of disreputable activities, hampered by inefficiencies and criminal conduct. It dampens the enthusiasm for investment and development, it undermines the trust in corporate governance and it disillusiones Mr and Mrs Citizen of South Africa.

Instead, Mr and Mrs Citizen of South Africa should join the government in the drive of moral regeneration and assist in identifying and pursuing perpetrators of immoral behaviour towards babies, children, women, the disabled and the elderly.

We really need to take the drive in respect of moral regeneration very seriously.

To regain our moral ground lost in many decades of suppression, we have to develop a conscience. That cannot be done by government alone, for just as you cannot legislate a conscience or a morality, everybody

needs to contribute in the spirit of revival. I, for one, acknowledge the role that art and craft, sport, religion and many other collective activities can play and I hope that we will continually encourage our youth, women and the disabled to participate in these opportunities of social networking.

As part of our commitment to moral regeneration, our commitment to development and growth, let us in our homes give our children a sound beginning, and teach them the enduring values of honesty, hard work, discipline, respect for self and others, responsibility, obligations and of doing unto others as they would have done unto themselves.

It is in our own hands that we are holding the future - how we are dealing with it and how we are working with it will determine the success of our efforts.

Viva South Africa!

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