

**Minister of Public Works  
Ms Stella Sigcau  
12 December 1999**

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### **Address at Tshipise-Nzhelele Cluster Northern Province**

Master of ceremonies, Deputy President, Members of the Executive Committee, leaders, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, .....

It is indeed an honour to have Deputy President Jacob Zuma with us today. Allow me to thank him for the time he has made available to the Community Based Public Works Programme, for coming here, for sharing with this community the pride in achievement, the sense of industriously working towards a desired future and a genuine effort to be a nation at work.

We know, Deputy President, that rural development is a subject close to your heart and the Department of Public Works, together with all its partners in delivery (these are the provincial governments, regional and local authorities, community structures and non-governmental organisations as well as the established private sector partners) are again assuring you of our commitment to accelerated, integrated rural development, striving to improve the livelihood of previously marginalised households.

We all realise that the infrastructure created through the Community Based Public Works Programme provides but a drop in the ocean of need. It is through the sustained operation and further spin-offs in utilisation of the facilities created that the real empowerment and economic participation will have a maximum impact on addressing poverty.

Please allow me, Mr Zuma, at this point to refer to you our future strategy on the Community Based Public Works Programme. We have projects lined up for implementation which are following the normal cluster approach as you know it and as you have witnessed today. These will continue, and we will consolidate the targeted three provinces' delivery as planned. As a refinement, and we believe intrinsic element of poverty alleviation, we have identified projects of a somewhat larger scale, with a strong agricultural bias, in these three provinces. What we are now integrating is not only greater cooperation with our sister departments in community development, but also a revitalisation of existing, *albeit* neglected or abandoned infrastructure. We want to ensure maximum utilisation of what is already there and build onto that.

These projects will illustrate coordinated development, operationalisation and management by various levels of government in fields such as Agriculture, Water Affairs, Communication, Health, Welfare and others, embarking on community public private partnerships. Right from the outset, we are looking forward to working very closely with the Ministries of Agriculture, Water Affairs and Forestry, Welfare and Health as a beginning. Other departments will be involved down the line. We see our role as Public Works to work with the communities in creating the infrastructure – from there onwards these other departments should advise, guide and support the communities in the utilisation and optimal management of the assets created.

I am referring to what we want to call Community Production Centres. This will entail crop and food production (serving 56 000 and 200 000 people respectively in Lambasi in the Eastern Cape and on the Makhatini Flats in KwaZulu-Natal), workshops, public service and training facilities as well as market outlets. We want to have these larger projects started in time for planting crops.

The concept is further linked to Multi-Purpose Community Centres – a one-stop service and activity centre with multi-purpose facilities. For example, the idea is that apart from social cohesion facilities, specific service rendering facilities such as a post office, pension pay point, a creche, library and clinic will be included.

Here in the Northern District Council area, we have not finally decided on the location of the envisaged Community Production Centre, but we are considering Veeplaas, because of its ideal location transport wise, and the many opportunities and benefits it poses. Situated on the Oliphants River, the existing Veeplaas Centre is on tarred roads and has a landing strip nearby. This is of importance when consideration is given to the Centre's future development and distribution opportunities. The existing buildings can be utilised and renovated.

The land at Veeplaas is suitable for the growing of maize, wheat, beans, cotton and ground nuts as well as a variety of other garden crops such as potatoes, cabbage, carrots, onions and peas. The soil and climate will further allow the growing of citrus fruits such as grapefruit, lime and tangerine. This allows for direct

employment, contributing to nutrition for the local communities as well as commercial and international marketing.

Further to integrated rural development, this Department is ideally positioned to impact on a broad spectrum of infrastructural and capacity building needs of local communities because our products span a wide range of sectors, which then creates the opportunity for our sister departments, the provincial and local governments, to

continue with feasible and sustainable sector specific development and operation.

In conclusion, I trust that the projects we visited today will continue to reap the intended benefits to the local economies and communities. We really are honoured, Mr Zuma, that you have visited these projects and interacted with the communities. We look forward to listening to you.

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