

**Minister of Public Works
Ms S Sigcau
14 October 2002**

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Official opening of the Kimberly Regional Office

Master of Ceremonies
Acting Premier of Northern Cape, Mr Goolam H Akharwaray
MEC for Safety and Security, Connie Seoposengwe
Other MECs and Dignitaries
Distinguished guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a proud day for Public Works to reopen this magnificent Old Magistrate Court Building in service of our people.

You are aware of the involvement of Public Works with this building since it was erected in 1881 - then the steel works, bricks and wooden furniture were manufactured by the Public Works' workshop. Prison inmates provided the unskilled labour to build the buildings as well as most of the skilled labour, supervised by the Public Works Department at the time.

After more than one hundred years' occupation by different departments, the building more recently stood in a state of disrepair for nearly 10 years before the Department of Public Works invested R8,3 million in the rejuvenation of this important National Heritage Site. The renovations started in July 2000 and were completed in June 2002. It is appropriate that Public Works should now be the occupants of the "Old Lady"

In the spirit of opening up our economy to all citizens of South Africa, making sure that the previously disadvantaged people get a chance to participate in our development, the renovations were done by a Joint Venture contracting firm consisting of three Previously Disadvantaged firms. All labour employed was from the local labour force and all sub-contracting was carried out by Previously Disadvantaged firms.

In the process, 150 local people were employed and received some training. These included 60 unschooled and unskilled men and women - indeed a message of hope if jobs and training were provided to people desperate for employment, also better equipping these people for future employment.

All bricks required for the replacement of deteriorated bricks as well as for the additions of toilets and conference rooms, were specially made to fit in with the bricks used in the original construction of the building. Special moulds had to be constructed for the manufacture of the four different types of special bricks used in the original construction. Old bricks that were removed were not discarded, but were reused in areas where it was possible.

Several more challenges arose during the renovation, including that of getting the new plaster to bond with old surfaces, where innovative work methods were required to solve the problem. The main courtroom was subdivided into a double level area to provide sufficient office space. This made provision for the accommodation of middle management on the top level, with the bottom level being occupied by Client Services, Registry and IT.

Of historical importance was the discovery that within the main courtrooms, the ceilings displayed were of acoustic panels and on removal the larger section of the courtrooms were found to have the original ceilings intact. These ceilings were in general in a satisfactory condition. These ceilings were repaired and repainted as per the original status. Care was also taken to ensure that we could have an acceptable and productive workspace without losing the impact of the original design.

As we observe the 8th year of our freedom, the building we are opening represents another milestone towards a better life for all. The beneficiaries of this project are representative of the community in Kimberley. The project has empowered the local community, local businesses and public servants. In our cities there is a tendency to move away from the Central Business Districts (CBDs). This reconstruction is a clear message from Government of the need to let the CBD remain the hub of economic activity.

We are opening this regional office a day after the Imbizo Focus Week. A week that is very important in the Government calendar, a week that pays attention to the child, a week that is focusing on public service during

what is known as the National Productivity Week.

In particular during this current Imbizo Focus Week, government at all levels is again interacting with communities around projects, as we are doing here, to discuss activities and suggestions to improve implementation and delivery.

As South Africans, we are fighting the scourge of poverty on a daily basis. As a young democracy, there are many frontiers that we have to deal with as a country in order for us to ensure future socio-economic growth and expedient development of our human resources.

The October 2002 Social Development campaign also involves thousands of volunteers from youth and women's organisations and public servants who are putting in extra time and effort to register children who qualify for grants. This campaign is part of Social Development Month held under the theme "Lend a Hand to Protect Children's Rights".

I fully support Minister Zola Skweyiya who has indicated that we are on course with more than two million children registered to receive their grants. We must keep up the momentum so that every child who is entitled to it, does indeed get his/her grant. This is a constitutional imperative and is a very critical part of our poverty alleviation programme.

The Department of Social Development has established a system of home and community based care centres operating in all nine provinces while community caregivers are being trained continuously.

Between 2001 and 2004, an allocation of R25 million from the HIV/Aids budget has been allocated to establish 100 community-based support structures. In addition, a three-year budget of R60 million for 144 rural food production clusters was made available. Some poverty pockets have however still to be attended to, as management structures at community level need to be developed and more coordination between partners is essential.

The latest statistics showed that there were 660 000 orphaned children under the age of 15 in South Africa. These figures make one understand the concern about and focus on the plight of children.

Currently the overall budget for all the monthly grants is R24 billion. An addition R100 million has been set aside for poverty alleviation this year and R46 million has been reserved for HIV/Aids projects.

Some 2,3 million children had been registered for grants by August 31. As government we have set the target of registering 3 million more children for grants by the year 2005 and at least one million more by the end of March 2003.

To ensure an appropriate response to the President's directive, Social Development Minister, Zola Skweyiya, and other government officials, kick-started a national home visit campaign to register eligible children, as part of the Social Development Month.

The children who will be registered are children with disabilities who qualify for the Care Dependency Grant, children who are orphans and qualify for the foster Care Grant as well as those under seven who qualify for the Child Support Grant.

Allow me to share with you a brief requirement for these grants:

- To qualify for a care dependency grant you must be a South African citizen, except for foster parents; must reside in South African; the age of the child must range from one to 18 years; a medical or assessment report confirming disability is needed; and the care dependant child or children must not be permanently cared for in a state institution.
- For a foster child grant you need a court order indicating foster care status; an identity document or birth certificate bearing the 13 digit numbers in respect of each child; and provide requirements in respect of the child's income.
- To qualify for a child support grant you must be a South African citizen and reside in South Africa; must be the primary caregiver of the child or children concerned; the child or children must be under the age of seven; must meet the requirements of the means test; must provide a 13-digit bar-coded identity document of the caregiver; and a 13-digit birth certificate of each child.

Let us acknowledge what each party does in the process of growth and development, let us share the credit for our joint success as South Africans. We all have a part to play in making our country an even better place, with more opportunities for all.

The society in which we live is dynamic, but all of us need to catch up with the times. We need to address various challenges in our society in a manner that brings life and hope to our people. A challenge which says we must all lend a hand in making sure that our country becomes the type of place wherein people feel safe, cared for, wanted; and that each and everyone of us has a role to play in making sure that as we move from generation to generation, we shall be builders of the future of our country giving full meaning to the phrase : Proudly South African.

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