

**Minister of Public Works
Ms Stella Sigcau
18 September 1999**

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Address at the KwaMashu Community Resource Centre

Master of Ceremonies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for the kind words of introduction and welcome extended to me.

It is indeed an honour to address you on your third Annual General Meeting, more specifically so when considering the achievement and growth you have realised in the valuable contribution to address direct socio-economic needs and objectives of the people around you.

Listening to all your accomplishments presented here today, I sincerely wish to congratulate you, and encourage you to continue searching for avenues of relief to social plights, operating as inclusive as you have up to now. A lot of your success, I am sure, is due to the networking approach you have followed in consulting and working together with other institutions, and not trying to do everything in isolation.

Within the broader scope of seeking a competitive, fast-growing economy which creates sufficient jobs for all work seekers; redistribution of income and opportunities in favour of the poor; the availability of sound health, infrastructure and other services to all and a secure and productive living environment, Government is implementing innovative measures to generate higher levels of growth and much higher levels of employment and equity.

Having emerged from one of the world's most brutal and unjust economic and political systems, South Africa's democratic Government has committed itself to overcoming poverty and improving the quality of life of the majority through a sustainable, co-ordinated and integrated development programme.

Please allow me to discuss with you, in broad terms, some of the programmes and projects in which the Ministry and Department of Public Works are engaged to ensure that previously marginalised and current emerging contractors are integrated into accelerated development and delivery initiatives, working from the construction and property industries.

The Department of Public Works is committed to developing the emerging contractors, including women and the youth, in the South African construction industry. A broad departmental programme entitled "Creating an enabling environment in the reconstruction, growth and development of the construction industry" was articulated recently in the Department's published White Paper for the construction industry. The Emerging Contractor Development Programme (ECDP), as an integral part of the overall Construction Industry Development Programme (CIDP), was developed to build capacity of the emerging contractors and to enhance their capabilities.

The CIDP aims to bring synergy among key role players in the construction industry. These include the Department of Public Works, technically competent emerging contractors, relevant industry associations, training providers and other organisations such as yourselves, who are committed to the achievement of ECDP objectives.

The Emerging Contractor Development Programme has 1200 contractors registered on the database, of which only 7% are women. And most of these women are involved in the lesser support side of the industry by providing cleaning, horticulture and catering services. Less than ten women groups are actively engaged in construction work.

A major stumbling block seems to be the preparation of quotations by women contractors. While affecting all emerging contractors, our helpdesks have found that the problem is more pronounced among women contractors.

The Department of Public Works has set up helpdesks in our Regional Offices in Bloemfontein, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Kimberley, Johannesburg and Durban. These helpdesks are there to assist you - to explain processes, clear bottlenecks and to cut down on unnecessary red tape.

I believe from the Durban Helpdesk that some bottlenecks are experienced when youth who have just

qualified, say as electricians, but who have not yet registered with the Electrical Board, enlist. Their non-registration then prohibits them from carrying out electrical work, but what is it that prevents them from registering? This is the issue to address.

We have found that \pm 30% of emerging contractors listed on the database is capable of doing work that is not very marketable. Should you however have emerging contractors who can handle work in the following areas, they should contact Ms Ntshadi Olowolagba at our regional Office in Durban. The areas in which we have work available include air-conditioning, generating sets, incinerators, boiler pumps, X-ray machines, cranes, transformers, sewer plant services, fire equipment and pest control, for example. This gives you an indication that also training in these areas should be considered a priority.

Ms Ntshadi Olowolagba can be contacted at tel: 031-332 1211 or fax: 031-332 5485.

The Emerging Contractor Development Programme provides access to training for emerging contractors. The training modules have been developed in conjunction with the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

The ECDP also identifies and negotiates better deals with potential money lenders to enable ease of access to finance by the emerging contractors.

The ECDP complements the Department of Public Works' Affirmative Procurement Programme (APP) and empowers the emerging contractors to take advantage of the APP. The APP was developed to facilitate wider access to government contracts. It targets the previously disadvantaged individuals and some weight is given to women candidates.

The Department has also engaged in an intensified targeting programme to develop black contractors at prime contractor level through the Strategic Projects Initiative (SPI) programme. The SPI demands a higher level of expertise and capacity to develop and operate as prime contractor. The Kokstad Prison is one of the Department of Public Works Strategic Project Initiatives.

Another programme that could be a very useful entry into construction, in particular in rural areas, is the **Community Based Public Works Programme**.

The Community Based Public Works Programme (CBPWP) is a government initiative driven by the national Department of Public Works. The CBPWP is based on the principles of job creation, poverty alleviation and the creation of productive and sustainable community assets. The programme relies strongly on inter-governmental alliances as well as partnerships with local authorities, line departments, non-governmental organisations and the private sector. The programme focuses on development clusters in rural areas.

The CBPWP involves a lot of construction related work.

Since its inception in 1994 the programme has been constantly refined to achieve maximum local and regional impact. It has implemented more than 1600 projects in all nine provinces, concentrating on KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape and Northern Province; created over 240 000 jobs of various duration for women, youth and men and has achieved an estimated indirect benefit to some five million people in rural areas.

The CBPWP targets poverty pockets with an emphasis on youth, the disabled and women as specific target groups.

Local communities are continuously involved in the construction of clustered productive assets, apart from also building capacity in the planning and steering of the projects, as well as the operation and management of the completed infrastructure.

Training on the Ownership, Operation, Management and Maintenance of community assets will be provided to enable communities, especially women, to sustain their operations.

To everybody interested in the built environment, the challenge remains to keep abreast of new developments, to obtain sufficient information, to become technologically literate and to continue, forming linkages and networking with those people who will prove to be a resource to enhance your participation.

In order to succeed, we should recognise the success and achievement of others and simply use them as role models.

I believe that the opportunities we offer are well worth investigating, and I would urge you to follow up and extend the contact with the Durban Regional Office of Public Works. They will gladly be an access point for future relations, and can also inform you from the Helpdesk on possible work scheduled.

Another person who could be helpful to you, is German Mphahlele, from the national Department of Public Works in Pretoria, who is responsible for the Emerging Contractor Development Programme. German - please stand up?

I wish to conclude by expressing my appreciation for your endeavours - may you also become a role model for other organisations to learn from.

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