

Minister of Public Works
Mr J Radebe
21 November 1998

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Re-Instatement of the Themba lethu Children's Home

Honourable Chairperson
His Excellency the Ambassador of Norway, Mr Per Grimstad
Respected Amakhosi

It is a great honour and privilege for me to be with you today. Last month I was in the Izingolweni Area with President Mandela to launch the Rural Anti-Poverty Programme as part of the Masakhane Focus Week. Today I return here to witness the re-instatement of the Themba lethu Children's Home. This home is a reminder that there is no limit to what we can achieve, if we can dream, build and work together. Allow me therefore to express my appreciation to all who have worked hard to make this dream a reality. Your actions bear testimony to the fact that ordinary South African women and men all over our country are building and shaping the destiny of our nation.

I believe that institutions such as Themba lethu have a very strategic role to play in bringing about healing and reconciliation amongst our communities. The peace initiatives that are now taking deep root in this beautiful province of Kwazulu Natal is a reflection of our renewed hope. It gives us confidence that the future of our children will be safe and secure. It sends out a powerful message to the thousands of children who were traumatised, maimed or orphaned that they can look to forward to a brighter future.

Our ANC-IFP government is committed to entrenching the hard-earned fruits of democracy that we reaped in 1994. We realise that poverty is deeply rooted in this province and that years of violence and social discord has wreaked havoc with our social life. To uproot these evils requires determination and a tremendous sacrifice. I am however deeply moved by what I witness wherever I go in this province, particularly in areas previously ravaged by political violence and social mayhem. Ordinary women and men, are drawing together their courage and meagre resources to rebuild their lives, to rekindle a sense of community. It is this spirit which underlies the great achievements which you have reached in this project. I must commend the manner in which the various local role-players have come together to develop a meaningful partnership. This partnership has succeeded in transcending the narrow confines of race, religious denomination and petty-party political allegiances. I have no doubt whatsoever that the successes that you have achieved thus far is largely due to this winning partnership and ability to work together for the common good.

It is also quite apparent here this afternoon that this project enjoys the support of local communities, business, traditional leaders and local government structures as well as provincial and national government. This bodes well for building a strong spirit of co-operative governance and restoring the confidence of communities.

On behalf of the Mandela Government allow me also to re-iterate our sincerest appreciation for the funding received from Norway. The generosity of Norwegian Church Representatives is characteristic of the support which South Africa has enjoyed from our many loyal friends abroad. We want to assure you and all your fellow Norwegians who have contributed to this project, that your kind gesture has made a real difference in the life of the Themba lethu Children's Home. We trust that we can continue to rely on your support here and many other places in our country that face similar social calamities.

I also want to commend the management and staff who on a day-to-day basis provide love, care and protection to these children. Your task is not an easy one. We know of the many traumas which young people of this province have been exposed to. Despite that you are applying yourselves to your task in a most admirable manner. The responsibility of being care-givers is an enormous one as these young people will emulate you. It is therefore important that sound values be transmitted to them and that they see in you a exemplary standard of conduct so that they may grow to be respectable citizens .

Over the past four years our ANC-IFP Government has channeled numerous resources into projects and programmes which can effectively uproot poverty and address the ill effects of skewed apartheid planning. We realise that only through a sustained and integrated effort will we be able to make a meaningful impact.

Our efforts have therefore included projects covering a vast range of social delivery services. It includes short term food security and nutrition programmes as well as longer term programmes to create employment through land reform and job creation.

My Department of Public Works through its Community Based Public Works Programme(CBPWP) and Rural Anti-Poverty Programme(RAPP) has made considerable progress in improving the quality of life of targeted communities. Since its inception in 1995-1996 it created a total of 1,118 projects throughout South Africa, generating more than 148,000 jobs and creating productive assets which contribute to the long-term recovery of the local economy. The lessons learnt from this initial experience showed that improved targeting would drastically enhance the impact that our poverty alleviation initiatives could make.

As a result we targeted the three provinces that collectively comprise 60% of the country's rural poor. The R85 million allocated to Public Works from the poverty alleviation funds in November 1997 was thus directed at the Eastern Cape, Northern Province and Kwazulu Natal. To date this has created 13,000 jobs of which 3,000 is sustainable and has created clusters of productive community assets which will provide a great boost to local economic development .

These clusters of projects focus on enhancing social cohesion through including projects such as multi-purpose community centres that can serve as a nerve centre and cultural focus for communities; sports and recreation facilities provide a healthy outlet for the pent-up energy of young people and develop team spirit and a sense of responsibility; training workshops provide skills and build confidence, self-reliance and entrepreneurship. It also enhances peoples ability to shape their own future.

Project clusters such as taxi ranks. Market stalls and access roads enhance the access to economic opportunity for communities that have historically been cut off from the mainstream of our economy. It allows them to transport agriculture stock to areas that we previously inaccessible.

In the near future I will be announcing details of our latest allocation of R174 million poverty alleviation projects. You can be assured however that we will further improve our investment in the people and prosperity of Kwa Zulu Natal. Perhaps, however, as a recent evaluation of the Community Based Public Works Programme notes, "the best aspects of the CBPWP is that it makes communities feel more needed and responsible for their own destiny. They can do things for themselves, rather than waiting for others to do it for them."

As a home for handicapped, orphaned and children in need of care, Thembaletu is undoubtedly aware of the new child and youth care system that has been designed by the Inter-Ministerial Committee on young people at risk. The gravity of the problems encountered by our young people make it imperative that we transform the child and youth care systems, develop minimum standards and establish models for replication throughout the country. We have already made considerable progress in this regard.

The children of Thembaletu Home must be afforded the opportunity to develop to their full potential so that they may be empowered to pursue careers of their choice and ability and take charge of their own destinies. In turn they will make a contribution to the upliftment of their communities and the country as a whole. This I believe ties in well with the home's objective of developing the children's skills and knowledge to enable them to enter society as useful and responsible citizens.

Finally, as we move towards voter registration next week I would like to urge each and every eligible voter to go and register and contribute to building a vibrant and healthy participatory democratic culture.

In every facet of life in South Africa there still remain enormous challenges ahead of us. In the words of President Mandela in his address to Parliament earlier this year he said: ' We are at the beginning of an arduous and protracted struggle for a better quality of life. In the course of this struggle, we shall have immediate successes, we shall have setbacks,, but we shall certainly progress, inch by inch towards our goal.

What is certain is that never again must we allow this beautiful province of ours to slip back into the morass of political violence and chaos. Kwazulu Natal has come a long way, let us consolidate our gains, cement our ANC-IFP strategic alliance in government and build a prosperous future for our children.

May Thembaletu Children's Home continue to serve as a beacon of hope in this area. To the management, staff and children I wish to express my best wishes for a prosperous future. May your home grow from strength to strength and may many leaders and visionaries emerge from your corridors.

I THANK YOU!

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