

**Minister of Public Works
Ms S Sigcau
21 September 2003**

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Handover of projects to Botlokwa community

Master of ceremonies
MEC for Public Works, Mr Collins Chabane
MEC for Transport, Mr Dean Farisni
Kgosi Machaka
The Mayor of Capricorn Municipality Mr Monakedi
The Mayor of Molemole Municipality Ms Mothudi
Distinguished guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

Thobelang

Introduction

Since 1994, the Department of Public Works has prioritised poor rural areas for infrastructure development. With the cooperation of provincial and local government, we go into rural communities, identify basic but essential infrastructure needs and build that infrastructure. As we do, we create jobs, develop skills of people and create facilities where none existed before.

Investment through rural development

The province of Limpopo like KwaZulu - Natal and Eastern Cape, has a high proportion of poor rural areas. In consideration, my department has invested R1,4 billion since 1998 to build more than 3000 projects in the country. About 150 000 job opportunities were created, targeting women-headed households, youth and people with disability.

Today we are officially handing-over projects worth R6,9 million to the community of Botlokwa. These projects were built in the 2002/03 and consist of:

- Nthabiseng Crèche
- Springs Crèche
- Ramokgopa SMME
- Irrigation Scheme
- Poultry
- Community Centre
- Clinic
- Botlokea learning centre

During their construction, 449 job opportunities were created, of which 218 were women and 112 went to youth and 11 were disabled. About 168 people received training on technical skills while 8 were trained on business management. Ultimately 45 sustainable jobs were created.

This form of targeting is important to government and has been consistently applied, where applicable, through-out the roll-out of rural infrastructure projects. The quality of our freedom will be judged by the extent to which women and youth are able to participate in the economy.

In the last year alone a total of 638 community projects were constructed countrywide, yielding 20 539 employment opportunities. Women received 10 537 jobs whereas 9 614 went to youth. My department invested more than R250 million.

Limpopo Province received R62,1 million of the above amount for their infrastructure development. This investment yielded 153 community-based and community-owned projects and created about 1451 job opportunities, of which 756 were women and 681 were young people.

A year before that, i.e. in 2001/2002, my department had already started with the construction of the R1,6 million Taxi Rank at Botlokwa. This project comprised 8 platform shelters, 3 toilets, borehole, paving and sewerage. Construction started in February 2002 and was completed in May of the same year. A total of 96 people were employed and 12 were given training in Operation, Management and Maintenance while others received training on plumbing and electrical assistance courses.

The construction of this facility creates a comfortable and conducive environment for the smooth and humane operation by the 220 registered Taxi owners who use this facility which was just a barren piece of land without any form of infrastructure.

The reason for quoting these figures is to indicate to you the seriousness with which government cares about development and well being. This government has declared war on poverty and the following are some of the measures we have initiated to eradicate poverty, we have:

- Steadily increased the quantity and size of the social grants including disability grants
- Registered over 3 million children and made available their grants
- Distributed free food parcels to the communities in dire need
- Built and distributed free houses and facilitated access to free basic services including water and electricity
- Passed successive tax breaks for working people in the last four years, putting more money in their pockets

Expanded Public Works Programme

Although we are proud of our poverty relief successes, it is not the intention of government to perpetuate poverty by encouraging people to be dependent on welfare. Instead our aim is to create an environment where the unemployed will be brought on to the mainstream of economic activity as producers of goods and services.

Notwithstanding government successes in turning around the economy for the better, unemployment remains a key challenge afflicting our country, hence the announcement by President Thabo Mbeki to launch Expanded Public Works Programme as one of many initiatives by government to reduce levels of poverty.

The objectives of the EPWP are:

- i. To address investment in social and economic infrastructure
- ii. To create large-scale job opportunities
- iii. To develop human resources through skilling and training

As the Ministry responsible for the coordination of EPWP across government clusters, we are targeting the creation of over 1 million jobs in the next five years, mainly from infrastructure - related projects & programmes.

This will range across capital projects, maintenance, ports and rail infrastructure, electrification, provincial and municipal infrastructure including a total of 37416 kilometres of provincial and municipal roads.

We are encouraged by successful provincial programmes including Gundo Lashu in Limpopo, Zivuseni in Gauteng, Zibambele in KwaZulu Natal and other labour-intensive initiatives in the Western Cape and these examples will be emulated when we rollout the programme at the national scale.

At a national level, the Department of Public Works has been successful in creating sustainable special projects with potential to create jobs and stimulate local economic development. Community Production Centres are a point in case. These community-owned commercial enterprises, mostly agricultural in orientation, could even produce for the export markets. Working in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, to date 14 centres, at varying stages of finalization, have been brought on stream through an investment of R50 million. This include the CPC which we launched at Elandsdraal in Limpopo on 23 May 2002

Some of the following milestones attained on our road to successful implementation of the EPWP include the:

- Commitment from the Department of Labour to provide skills development

- Funding of 500 learner ships by (CETA) over the next five years for emerging contractors to learn labour-intensive construction methods in a programme similar to Sakhasonke, which was recently launched in Limpopo.
- Completion of a monitoring and evaluation system for EPWP by the Human Science Research Council

In conclusion, we congratulate the people of Botlokwa for these beautiful and useful projects. We hope you will assist government and keep these projects in a mint, working conditions for generations to come.

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