

Minister of Public Works
Ms S Sigcau
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Launch and Harvest of Elandskraal Community Production Centre Limpopo Province

Premier of Limpopo, Adv. Ngoako Ramatlhodi
The MEC for Public Works, Mr Collins Chabane
Mayor for the Greater Marble Hall Municipality, Counsellor KM Tshehla
Executive Mayor of Sekhukhune, Counsellor ND Masemola
Speaker of Sekhukhune District Municipality, Counsellor R Matseke
Rev I Madisa
Distinguished guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

Today, a mere two days before Africa Day, we are celebrating the giant strides we have made since the 27 April 1994 democratic breakthrough. Addressing Parliament on 9 February 2002, President Mbeki noted: "What I know and can say without any equivocation is that during the past year, our country has, in real terms, and within its means, moved further towards a society free of poverty and underdevelopment".

It is a fitting tribute to the people of the North that we are launching this cluster project in the land of the great patriot and warrior King Sekhukhune.

This day also reminds us of another great patriot and freedom fighter, Flag Boshielo, after who the dam is named. He perished at the hands of apartheid death squads. These patriots epitomise the spirit of Vukuzenzele and volunteerism in the struggle for freedom. The recent sad event involving the dam named after Boshielo is also still fresh in our minds.

Indeed the levels of poverty and underdevelopment in the North attest to the devastation caused by centuries of colonialism and decades of apartheid rule.

Our democratic government is on course in its national crusade to bring about a better life for all. Reversing the consequences of the legacy of apartheid is the cornerstone of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). President Mbeki has chosen May as a month of Rural, Urban renewal and Community Development. The efforts of the nation are directed at lending a hand in pushing back the frontiers of poverty and underdevelopment.

Through the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme (ISRDP), government is delivering basic infrastructure to the rural poor. This mammoth task requires united action for change. The entire nation is challenged to emulate the spirit of freedom fighters, the spirit of Vukuzenzele in the reconstruction effort.

Government has identified nodal points as frontline trenches in the struggle against poverty and underdevelopment. The National Department of Public Works through its Letsema programme is operating at the nodal points. My Department, in the spirit of cooperative governance, is working with other departments, provincial public works, district councils, communities and traditional leaders. An integrated approach is the recipe of success in the struggle against poverty and underdevelopment. As the experience of Elandskraal informs us, the involvement of the private sector is essential.

The national Department of Public Works, in partnership with the provincial Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs identified the Elandskraal Community Production Centre (CPC) project as part of the rural development program for the Sekhukhune Nodal district.

The program began during November 2000.

The project entails the upgrading of irrigation infrastructure, the establishment of a Water Users Association, fencing, small, medium and micro enterprise (SMME) development, the management of start-up funding, skills training and farm management.

The agricultural rehabilitation of infrastructure was done on 197 ha that is currently being farmed by 97 emerging farmers. The management of the Elandskraal Irrigation Scheme is composed of representatives of

the emerging farmers, the local community and the local business centre under the Water Users Association. This has been one of the key result features of the programme.

The overall objectives of the Elandskraal CPC are:

1. To increase production by local farmers
2. To generate surplus markets
3. To improve income and security
4. To create employment
5. To ensure sustainability planning for the project.

In support of these objectives, the project focused mainly on the irrigation infrastructure rehabilitation that involved the:

- a. Installation of a new bulk reticulation system for pumping water from the river, and
- b. The repair and replacement of the existing infrastructure to the 197ha of farm land (infield irrigation system).

Road upgrading also had to be done, and \pm 4 km of gravel road was constructed within the project to provide for improved accessibility.

About 20 km of fencing was done around the perimeters, buildings and sheds were rehabilitated and the farmer training as well as that for the project steering completed.

As we are aware, this project also had its teething problems, but these have mostly been overcome. Start up funding of R400 000 has been provided to project beneficiaries.

In terms of sustainability, the Project has successfully created linkages with local commercial farmers from Marble Hall and various marketers who provide contracts for the marketing of the emerging farmers' produce and local farmer support services such as extension and seed. However, the project still faces challenges relating to the strengthening of the project management structure and overall longterm sustainability. Challenges relating to emerging farmers' access to credit continue to be a major constraint in engaging productive assets and activities as does the correct timing of credit supply by the Land Bank.

At the same time, the project provided an opportunity for two graduate trainees who have contributed both technical and social facilitation support to the project beneficiaries and Project Steering Committee.

Looking at the integrated development side, other projects associated with the Elandskraal CPC, include:

- A housing consolidation where 1400 houses were consolidated, even though there are still about 100 families living in shacks
- Street rehabilitation for which R850 000 was allocated for the 2000/2001 financial year and implementation was scheduled to start in March 2002
- The Department of Social Welfare funded 9 projects comprising carpentry, brick-making, sewing, bakery, pillow making, dairy, glass works as well as two projects for broiler and egg production.

The allocated budget to the Elandskraal project is R4 million and it has been fully expended.

Further finance is required for the development of SMME's around:

- A mill
- A silo
- A drier
- Implements (tractors etc.)
- Storm water control (conservation)
- Sustainability planning
- Training and

- The further rehabilitation of 220 ha of agricultural land.

Income generation is estimated at around R50 000 per 5 hectares per season.

As further spin-off we anticipate the generation of more jobs in the development of the SMME's as mentioned before. Also the community bakery will have cheap wheat meal (flour) from the mills and the local layers and broilers project (chicken project) will be supplied with feeds. The local animal farming community will be supplied with a maize stoker.

Currently there are 197 hectares under irrigation, with 97 fulltime emerging farmers and 394 laborers that will be employed on seasonal basis (2 laborers per hectare). Four security personnel will be employed on a permanent basis as will two permanent administration staff. The total number of jobs to be created seasonally as a result of this project will be at least 497.

Special Features worth mentioning on this project include that:

- It has a 100 % market security.
- It is said to be the most successful of its type and magnitude in the Limpopo Province.
- Elandskraal CPC has had the honour of being visited by President Thabo Mbeki on 26 April 2001.
- The leadership of Elandskraal CPC is a formidable team of visionaries (though they still need training in sustainability issues).
- A total of 131 people were trained during the project implementation.
- Agricultural awareness has been raised within the entire community.
- The project has served as an unifying factor (united against poverty)
- Youth participation in Agriculture has been enhanced.

This is a project that we can all be proud of, one with much potential still to escalate development, and to do so in a variety of ways by a variety of means. Most of all, at Elandskraal we have seen that the human potential, the guiding and driving force of development, is ready to tackle the future - please continue to design yourselves a destiny worthy of all your expectations!

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