

Minister of Public Works
Ms S Sigcau
24 February 2002

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Launch of the Nongoma Cluster

The year 2002 marks the 8th year in our journey towards a better life for all. The struggle against apartheid was waged to defend life and build a united, democratic, nonracial and non-sexist society.

The struggle against apartheid colonialism enlisted millions of volunteers in South Africa and abroad. Unity in action for change was the guarantor of victory.

The process of Reconstruction and Development is the fundamental ingredient in nation building. Of critical importance in our advance, is the overcoming of the legacy of poverty and underdevelopment. The challenges we are confronting as a nation are aggravated by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The scourge of HIV/AIDS poses mortal danger to the gains of our freedom. Evidently, success demands of us, to gather the same resilience, unity, volunteerism and discipline we forged against apartheid.

Government has deployed a comprehensive strategy to defeat the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The core pillars of the strategy are the following:

- Educating the community about HIV/AIDS (Abstain, Be faithful, Condomise)
- Research on HIV/AIDS vaccine
- Research on anti-retroviral drugs including nevirapine
- Evaluation and monitoring of pilot sites on the use of nevirapine by pregnant women, to prevent the mother-to-child transmission of HIV
- Treatment of opportunistic diseases
- Eradication of poverty

Addressing the nation on February 8th, 2002 President Mbeki states, "Government, working in partnership with all sectors, particularly the SA National AIDS Council (SANAC), will intensify its comprehensive programme against AIDS, sexually-transmitted diseases, tuberculosis and other communicable diseases."

The Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme has extended the frontiers of development to the hinterland of our country. Today's sod turning ceremony at Kwanongoma affirms government's commitment to the upliftment of the poor. The Nongoma HIV/AIDS drop-in-centre represents another milestone in the struggle against poverty and HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The HIV/AIDS Infrastructure Programme is creating infrastructure development, which will be beneficial to rural communities to offset the devastation caused by HIV/AIDS. The Department of Public Works is co-operating with the Department of Health and the Department of Social Development as well as District Municipalities. Projects to the total tune of R10 million are being implemented in four provinces, namely:

- Free State
- Kwazulu-Natal
- Mpumalanga
- Northern Province.

In terms of the fiscal year 2000-2001, R2.5 million is programmed for spending by end of March 2002.

The site is at the central point of two communities, the Ezincingweni and the Ophalule communities, which are suffering immensely from the scourge of HIV/AIDS. Both communities are the beneficiaries of the project.

The Nongoma HIV/AIDS drop-in-centre is one of six drop-in-centres that will be built in Kwazulu-Natal as part of an integrated HIV/AIDS programme. The projects were identified through prioritization of areas where there is a high rate of HIV/AIDS. Other centers will be built at Ubombo, Hlabisa, Msinga, Nquthu and Mandeni.

The specific objectives of the drop-in-centres are, namely, to provide infrastructure and HIV/AIDS awareness training, counseling, voluntary HIV/AIDS testing and community/home care.

The overall objective of the HIV/AIDS programme is to promote sustainable social development strategies that focus on building institutional capacity to address structural conditions associated with poverty, namely: high levels of unemployment, lack of resources, inadequate services, inability to afford services, HIV/AIDS and social pathologies related to the disease, education related problems, health and environmental problems.

The Nongoma HIV/AIDS Drop-in Centre will consist of two administration offices, two consulting rooms, a storeroom, two dormitories, a kitchen and toilet facilities. The approximate extent of the centre is 175 sq m. Each dormitory will accommodate 5 people (10 people per centre), while the consulting staff will be four people.

It is projected that approximately 60 people will be employed during construction of the Nongoma drop-in-centre. All the labourers will be from the local community. Skilled/semi-skilled local labourers will be 10%, disabled local labour will be 10%, local youth will be 20% and local women will be 50%.

The total project allocation for the centre is R477 540.41.. Construction of the project will begin tomorrow, on 25 February 2002 and it will be finalised on April 30, 2002.

In conclusion, I appeal to all stakeholders, in the spirit of Ilima, to work together for the success of the project.

Let us indeed engage in the collective fight against this threat. Let us address collectively as government and people, as parents and adults, as children, women, wives, teachers, care givers and concerned citizens, HIV/AIDS. This is a pandemic that at times seems far removed from ourselves, yet we are part and parcel of its common target. We need to care and offer what support we can to the victims. We all need to take up the campaign of enlightening those who still believe that there is no such threat, for apart from the suffering it causes, it also becomes a disease that destroys our financial and economic growth.

It is therefore essential that all places of work, in all industries, should join hands with government in the campaign to improve awareness and prevention of the further spreading of this pandemic.

May this small contribution be making a difference - you, the community here, can indeed ensure that it does.

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