

**Minister of Public Works
Ms Stella Sigcau
25 June 2000**

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**Official launch of Community Based Public Works Programme (CBPWP) projects
in Mpumalanga Province**

Master of Ceremonies - Councillor SV Khumalo
Deputy Minister of Public Works - Mrs B Nzimande
MEC for Public Works in Mpumalanga - Mr JS Mabona
Chief Executive Officer of Lowveld Escarpment District Council - Mrs Thoko Mashiane
The Chairperson of the council - Councillor LB Shongwe
All members of the council present today
Members of the media
Ladies and gentlemen

Today's event has double significance for the people of Mpumalanga. Firstly, since its inception, the National Community Based Public Works Programme (CBPWP) is making its maiden appearance in the province. Having been on a roadshow to KwaZulu Natal, Eastern Cape and Northern Province, continuously reaching out and positively touching hundreds of thousands in those regions, CBPWP is today making a debut in Mpumalanga. This is a historic moment.

Siyanihalalisela bantu base Mpumalanga

Sithi Nkomazi nanxa umncane kangaka

Namhlanje uzalelwa umntwana

Uphiwa umncedisi, igama lakhe ngu CBPWP

Secondly, our visit to Mpumalanga today comes barely four months after the devastation caused by the worst floods in the memorable history of our country. Our visit is a pilgrimage to pay homage to the indomitable spirit of the people. You did not allow the temporary intervention by forces of nature to permanently cripple your will to fight and live.

Nje ngembali enhle, InKomazi iyaqhakaza futhi

Nje ngelanga, InKomazi ilethela abantu base Mpumalanga ithemba, noxolo nempumelelo

Disasters and catastrophes are never spoken about in heroic terms, but the spirit of the people to survive the trying times makes history.

It was the same spirit of resistance and resilience that saw the people of South Africa rise up in 1994 and say: "we want to be authors of our own destiny". Overwhelmingly, the people voted in a new dispensation which immediately responded to their needs and introduced programmes to better their lives. Hence the birth of the CBPWP. Five years later in 1999, the people re-affirmed the mandate of the government and urged "we want delivery". And it is delivery we are bringing to you today.

CBPWP was conceived as a national response to the problem of poverty in South Africa. Apartheid had left behind a legacy whose effects were being unevenly felt by the people of South Africa. It is no exaggeration that black people, especially those in the rural areas experienced the acute pains of poverty as manifested by lack of physical infrastructure to take care of the basic needs. Shortage of employment opportunities coupled with little or no education and training inhibited the capacity of the communities to seek and find better ways to improve their conditions.

In the words of one black American philosopher, Booker T Washington, he said: YOU CAN NEVER KEEP A PERSON DOWN WITHOUT GOING DOWN WITH HIM.

If we were to save our new democracy and protect our developing economy, we had to confront the question of poverty head-on. From our research, it was established that the poorest of the poor were found mainly in areas outside of cities, our rural areas.

Owing to depression and helplessness, these areas had over the years experienced a continuous stream of energetic bright young men and women, as they flocked to the cities and further depleting the resource base of the rural areas.

The CBPWP is striving to put a stop to the social and economic conditions in our rural areas which encourage diaspora of human resources, leaving behind more often, the aged, women and children to fend for themselves. For decades women-headed households have become a feature in the rural areas, leaving them to their devices as they seek to eke out a living from the barren soil. Women who over the years have to eke out a living from the soil without any form of financial support which would help make their endeavours successful.

In consultation with the communities, CBPWP aims to eradicate poverty by eliminating conditions which breed poverty. The objectives of the CBPWP, in summary, are to:

- Build productive community assets which will begin almost immediately to impact positively on the quality of life.
- Create job opportunities and enable primarily women, youth and the disabled to become providers.
- Develop human resources through skilling and training and ensuring the sustainability of these projects

The first category of assets are those that the communities identify, select and build in cooperation with local, provincial and national government through programmes such as CBPWP. The second category are the Special Projects which are administered in conjunction with the Private Sector to promote Public Private Partnerships and improves the life of the communities. Big industries such as the sugar factories can play a leading role in working with the local government to promote community development.

Since 1994 CBPWP has invested R1.1 billion in the construction of over 2 819 projects and created 86 301 jobs. Today CBPWP plays a central part in the Integrated Rural Development Strategy as driven from the office of Deputy President, Mr Jacob Zuma. The Department of Public Works, through CBPWP, is beginning to integrate their resources to bring development with a maximum impact. The idea is to create developmental nodes, where government departments will conglomerate assets and service in unison, to compliment and support one another while increasing the asset base of the communities.

Ladies and gentlemen, join me in welcoming the Nkomazi East Cluster to the ever-growing CBPWP family of communities. Although CBPWP is coming here for the first time, my Department has extensive interests in the province. Let me mention to you without elaboration that we are involved in the upgrading of the Lebombo Border Post to de-bottleneck flow of commerce between South Africa and Maputo. This is part of the Maputo Development Corridor, a multi-billion rand Spatial Development Initiative whose success depends on contribution that will be made by the local economies. The four projects we are launching today have the potential to grow and benefit from the anticipated brisk trade that will be carried on the Maputo Corridor. The four projects have an estimated value of R2.2 million and comprise:

- Tonga A-B-C Community Garden
- Tonga Taxi Rank (upgrade)
- Market Stalls
- MultiPurpose Hall

Together with Nkomazi West, the East compliments the total number of projects found in the Lowveld Escarpment District Council. All in all R9.6 million has been invested in the Lowveld from a total provincial budget of R37.3 million allocated for the 1999 \ 2000.

I however, want to remind all the stakeholders that the millions we are talking about are earmarked to help and benefit the poor. Speedy delivery of projects will ensure that money is used up in the actual delivery of quality products instead of being nibbled at by escalation of costs. At the same time, any savings should be re-invested in the growth and expansion of these projects.

I was heartened by the story of implementers of CBPWP in the Eastern Cape who made a saving of R300 000 from one of the projects. The saving was firstly openly declared and secondly committed immediately to another project. I have never stopped to urge officials in my department that every cent of CBPWP should as

far as possible end up in a project.

Recent reports of unspent poverty relief funds are disconcerting, no matter how factually inaccurate many of them might be. My department has gone public to explain obstacles that might have been there before, stifling timeous expenditure of funds earmarked for poverty relief. The simple truth is that until very recent, funds were allocated to the department well into the financial year, leaving departments with limited time to commit, plan for and expend shrewdly millions of rands.

The problem was also compounded by the lengthy planning process, which preceded the actual expenditure. I am happy to report that the department has introduced measures to speed up the expenditure of poverty funds. Firstly the new arrangement means that funds will be allocated to the departments well in time, enabling them to plan ahead and plan in time. Secondly the planning process has been reduced to NO MORE than four months. These steps are beginning to bear fruits. In 1999 \ 2000, my department expended R420 million of the R651 million in one financial year. This is a radical departure to the average R90 million in the previous years. I am proud of the strides we have made, and we shall continue to do even better.

In conclusion, let me remind you that construction forms the cornerstone of CBPWP. Construction industry is however faced with great challenges of health and safety. The recent accident involving a collapsed bridge of Inyaka is a single reminder of the dangers that are lurking if safety standards and specification are continued to be ignored. However, the mobile nature of construction works means that workers are constantly removed from their homes and families and made vulnerable to social pressures. As we teach and train people in construction skills, we should not forget to raise awareness about health matters and threats posed by diseases such as, malaria, HIV and Aids. For us it is even more imperative because we encourage the employment of youth in our programmes. As the future leaders of the industry, the line effects of socially transmitted diseases such as HIV \ Aids should be emphasized. The negative economic, political and social impact of HIV \ Aids can never be over emphasized.

I wish your projects a speedy completion and hope to join you soon as we hand over the projects to their rightful owners.

I thank you.

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