

**Minister of Public Works
Ms Stella Sigcau
26 September 2000**

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Sod Turning at a CBPWP in Hlabisa

Master of Ceremonies - Mr W B Nxumalo
Premier Lionel Mtshali
Deputy Minister of Public Works - Mrs Buyi Nzimande
MEC of Public Works in KwaZulu-Natal - Rev Celani Mtetwa
Inkosi M Hlabisa
All other amakhosi present
His Worship Mayor Mdaka
All councillors present
Members of the media
Ladies and gentlemen
Learners of Mbopha, Hlabisa and Isiziba schools

Nginyanibengelela nonke ngothi lwenu. Iningi lenu lizibuza ukuthi ngabe ngiphetheni kule sikhwama sethu namhlanje? Ngaphambi kokuthi ngisivule, mangiqale ngikhulume ngengicabanga ukuthi kuyisendlalelo sohambo lwami lapha eHlabisa

Today, I would like to focus on three key important aspects that have an impact on our lives. They are education, poverty and the pandemic of HIV/Aids. The latter two are our country's biggest enemies requiring a concerted effort from all of us in fighting them.

I will not bore you about the history of education that we come from and the immense damage it has caused to our people. That is part of our history and is well documented and to some extent we still experience its effects.

With the democratic government that was ushered in 1994, you gave us a mandate to correct the legacy of the past. As a government that is committed to improving the lives of our people, we have planned a new syllabus - called outcome based. This is an initiative that seeks to address the state of education that was imposed on us by successive decades of inferior Bantu Education.

The success of this syllabus must be understood within a context, that proper learning should take place in an acceptable environment. This syllabus also requires dedicated teachers, whose interest is the welfare of not only learners but also their communities and the whole nation.

While I was Minister of Public Enterprises, I visited this area. During that visit I met with members of the governing body, teachers, learners and the community. I was informed and shown the needs with regard to Mbopha High School, one of the oldest schools within Uthungulu Regional Council area, which was and still is in a state of dilapidation. I must confess, I was appalled and deeply touched by what I saw.

Later it emerged that the Hlabisa Lower Primary School was in the worst state. I was informed that inspectors from the Department of Health had declared it a health hazard.

As a parent, a former teacher and now a public servant my conscience dictated that I should play my part and contribute towards a conducive environment in which learners could mould their future. Finally, I am able today to respond to that need from the community of Hlabisa.

As part of my department's key functions, we have a programme called the Community Based Public Works Programme (CBPWP), which is aimed at alleviating poverty, particularly in the rural areas. From the budget that was allocated for this programme, we created a special fund to give assistance to communities where there was a real need, based on our discretion.

This fund is servicing all the Special Projects that have been identified by communities as a need. Manje sesifikile lesosikhathi sokuthi ngivule isikhwama sami. I am happy to announce that Public Works would be contributing R2, 7 million towards the following:

- * Mbopha general renovation
- * Construction of two classrooms for Mbopha and a hall
- * Upgrading of Mbopha administration block
- * Upgrading of the library and laboratory

- * Mbopha High/Hlabisa LP Sports facility, with ablution and fencing (I must add Isiziba school will also use this facility)
- * Hlabisa LP renovations and the
- * Upgrading of Hlabisa LP administration block.

This is one of 18 projects including the Spatial Development Initiatives (SDI) roads, which are also allocated under the special projects in the 1999/00 financial year. The SDI roads got R103 million with other projects receiving R103 million and R130 million for the rest. For the 2000/1 budgets there is R18 million.

In KwaZulu-Natal we have Special Projects in the following areas: -Under the Ilembe Regional Council, at KwaMaphumulo, we have following Schools; Ukukhanyakwezwe, which is 85% complete and the Bonginkosi School, which is at roof level. Both these schools were allocated R1 million.

Under Ugu Regional Council, we have Hlokozi cluster, which is being implemented, and the KwaMadlala cluster, which is at the design stage. Both clusters were allocated R3 million.

Durban Metro was allocated R1 million for the KwaMashu Resource Centre and KwaMakhutha project, which are both at initial stages.

The other project is Egcekeni School, which was described by one of the daily newspapers as a pigsty. This project is complete and learners are already using it. This school was funded to the amount of R600 000.

This is the extent to which this government is committed to making the lives of the people better.

To you people of Hlabisa, particularly learners, teachers and parents, I am now posing a challenge. The challenge I am posing to you is for you to match the contribution that Public Works is making today, by ensuring that from next year, the end of the year results shall improve and that the following year they shall even be better. Schools in this area should be counted among the best not only in KwaZulu-Natal but the whole country.

The big challenge that you face is to strengthen the working relationship amongst yourselves. There is now more than ever a need for parents and teachers to forge a better relationship. Teachers should not feel threatened by the increasing involvement of parents in education. At the same time parents should stop dumping to the teachers the responsibility of moulding their children's characters.

Gone are the days when parents shifted their responsibility to teachers. The welfare of the children now belongs to both parents and teachers. I know some teachers dread teacher-parent meetings rather than see them as valuable source of understanding, support and help.

Parents on the other hand should not feel threatened by such meetings. They need to actively partake in the correction of their children's unacceptable behaviour within classrooms.

To you learners, education is your oyster; use this opportunity to your maximum benefit. The past is behind us; now let us look to the future. Remember you are now competing with everybody else equally.

Throughout my visit all over the country I always stress the need for all of us to accept that HIV/Aids exists. Let us not fool ourselves by saying that it will not happen to us. This is one disease, which knows no boundaries, race, gender or age. The sad thing is that the majority of those who are affected are the youth, particularly those who are economically active. Have you ever wondered what would happen to our economy in the next 20 years? The effect of this disease is immeasurable.

It is estimated that more than 4,2 million people in South Africa have HIV/Aids. Projections are that 6 million people will die from aids related complications by 2010. Do you want to be counted among those; I do not think so.

Studies predict the pandemic will reduce life expectancy dramatically. HIV/Aids is no more a health issue depending on your understanding of how it affects families and communities in general. It has become both an economic and developmental issue. Economic in the sense that the more people die the more our economy suffers because the skilled people will not be easily replaceable.

Your contribution to the alleviation of poverty in our communities will enable us to reduce conducive environments for the existence and proliferation of diseases including HIV/Aids.

During the recent Durban Aids Conference, President Thabo Mbeki said that there is an inter-relationship between Aids and poverty. To put it simply, where there is high level of poverty, there is likely to be high levels

of HIV/Aids. This is mainly because where hunger reigns, people cannot afford medical facilities, including HIV/Aids drugs.

This leads to the last aspect I want to talk about the scourge of poverty that plague our people, particularly here in the rural areas. Let me start by defining poverty and I fully agree with the following definition. The United Nations defines poverty as:

"The denial of opportunities and choices most basic to human development to lead a long, healthy, creative life and to enjoy a decent standard of living, freedom, dignity, self-esteem and respect from others".

The future is in our hands and it is up to us to ensure that we make the best of it whilst alive.

In 1996, government started a programme known as the Community Based Public Works Programme (CBPWP), to reduce level of unemployment and alleviate poverty among our rural people.

The objectives of the Community Based Public Works Programme are to:

- * Create job opportunities
- * Build community assets that will change the quality of our lives
- * Help train and empower local people to build, operate, manage and maintain these assets
- * Empower communities and encourage them to work together in identifying projects necessary the development of their areas.

The CBPWP is a direct response to the problem of poverty particularly in rural areas. Poverty among other things is borne by lack of income, a lack of access to institutions that offer social and economic services.

In South Africa, poverty has been one of the direct results of the botched attempts at social engineering, where social experiments were forced on people and communities, often without resistance. Today the country is reaping the bitter and unpalatable fruits of human error and vicious ideologies.

Since 1996, we have invested more than R1; 1 billion in community based projects. More than 2000-community infrastructure has been delivered and 45 000-job opportunities created due to the labour intensive methods encouraged by CBPWP.

As the slogan of the community based Public Works Programme says, "TOGETHER FIGHTING POVERTY" I urge you to be counted among those who would be making a difference in making your lives better, by joining government in the fight against one of our main enemies 'POVERTY'

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