

**Minister of Public Works
Ms S Sigcau
31 October 2003**

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**Official launch of the Xolilizwe Royal Chambers
Nqadu (Eastern Cape)**

The President of South Africa, Mr Thabo Mbeki
His Majesty, King Xolilizwe Sigcawu
All the King's and Chiefs present today
The Premier of Eastern Cape, Reverend Makhenkesi Stofile
The Deputy Minister of Public Works, Reverend Musa Zondi
All the Members of Executive Council present today
The Executive Mayor of Amatole District Municipality, Councillor Somyo
The Mayor of Mbashe Municipality, Councillor Dantyi
Other dignitaries
Ladies and Gentlemen

Recently we returned from our visit to the various communities under the government national imbizo focus week. We were heartened by the openness, frankness and honesty that our people displayed in the constructive engagements we had with them. The underlying sentiment that prevailed was the realization that ten years into democracy, the tide is turning for the best. The government has cemented a social contract with the civil society to build a prosperous nation and a bright future for all. Indeed the work has begun.

On 17 October 2003, South Africa joined the rest of the world in commemorating the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty as declared by the United Nations in 1983. Poverty manifests itself in many ways. Significantly poverty is characterized by:

- Lack of choices
- Lack of access to essential services
- Lack of infrastructure
- Lack of resources including skills

When the ANC government took over in 1994, poverty was the major challenge confronting us. But because we had both the will power and the business plan to govern, today we are turning the tide against poverty and pushing back frontiers of poverty that seemed to captivate our people in perpetual bondage.

Rural poverty is more apparent because of many decades of colonial and apartheid neglect. Our response was to launch the Integrated and Sustainable Rural Development Programme (ISRDP) as a concerted attack on rural poverty. Within the ISRDP, the Community Based Public Works Programme its a cornerstone of rural infrastructure development. The Community Based Public Works Programme (CBPWP) was established as part of rural development strategy with a bias towards infrastructure creation. The programme i.e. (CBPWP) goes into the heartland of South African most impoverished rural areas to build basic but essential infrastructure, create much needed jobs meanwhile dispensing critical skills for people development.

Since 1999, the Department of Public Works through CBPWP has invested more than R1, 5 billion nationally and constructed nearly 3000 (i.e. 2825) infrastructure projects. The implication of this in terms of poverty alleviation is that infrastructure was built where none existed since time immemorial. In the process, about 117 553 jobs were created of which 46,1% (54 250) and 44,4% (52163) went to women and youth, respectively. About 2,2% (2550) of these jobs were carried out by people with disability. It is important to emphasize these numbers because we want to reflect the magnimity of a task at hand, but also to demonstrate progress because we are an able, willing and winning government.

In the same period (since 1999), the Eastern Cape Province benefited substantially from our investment and other efforts. In total, R446, 5 million was allocated to the province for the creation of 892 physical projects (infrastructure). This managed to open up job opportunities for 49 758 people including 23118 women (46,5%), 23028 youth (46,3%) and 1039 disabled people (2%).

It was at Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape, (on 17 March 2001) where my Department launched the R50 million Youth for Environment Programme which was a partnership between the National Department of Public Works, National Youth Commission and the office of the Status of Disabled in the President's Office.

More than 400 unemployed youth from all over the country were enlisted, trained and given an opportunity to convert 267 public buildings and make them accessible to people with disability. As a result 3 schools, a hospital, Social Development Offices and a Magistrate Offices were physically modified in Grahamstown alone.

In promoting access to government services as part of poverty alleviation, the Department of Public Works has been instrumental in the delivery of 15 Multi-Purpose Community Centres within the government-wide campaign to establish 61 such centres by 2005. To date 43 centres have been built and are operational in South Africa. The Eastern Cape has six (6) such centres at Tombo, Sterkspruit, Cofimvaba, Zalu Hill, Centane and Sandrift in the Tsitsikama Region. A variety of government services such as home affairs, social development, health, agriculture and land affairs, municipal services, telecentres and postal services are now within easy reach of many poor communities, saving them time, money and labour.

On 25 November 2000, the President, Mr Thabo Mbeki piloted a concept of Community Production Centres when he officially opened the Centre at Lambasi near Lusikisiki under the Community Based Public Works Programme. The Centres are mainly: agricultural in orientation and involve communal ownership and commercial activities. Following an investment of R50 million, 14 of these have been opened in the country of which four are in the Eastern Cape. Through these, once-poor rural communities are now trading their way to commercial success, including international marketing and exports. Profits are reinvested in the business ventures for further growth and community development.

In recognition of the role of linkosi and other traditional institutions of leadership, the Department of Public Works in 1999/2000 targeted Great Royal Places of South Africa, on needs-basis, for revamping, as part of rural infrastructure development and economic growth, meanwhile enabling Kings to administer their traditional affairs effectively and efficiently.

Today's occasion represents another milestone in our accelerated advance towards a better life for all. The institution of traditional leaders is an integral part of our constitutional democracy. The best traditions bequeathed by our forebears inform our present and future advance.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is an honour to me, and I hope to all of you, to present the President of South Africa, Mr Thabo Mbeki, to address you on this occasion.

Thank You.

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