



public works

Department:
Public Works
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

Official Launch of the Myra Primary School

Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati District, North West Province

26 July 2012

Keynote Address: Honourable T W Nxesi MP

CHECK PROTOCOL

- Programme Director
- MEC(s)
- Mayor of the Naledi Municipality
- District Mayor
- Ward councillors
- Traditional leaders
- The good Reverend
- IDT and contractors
- Departmental officials, and most importantly
- Parents and learners – and a special word of thanks must go to the choir. Thank you.
- Ladies and gentlemen

Let me start by thanking you – the school community - for inviting me to join you today for this important event. We are here to mark the completion of a new school building – but more than this – we are here to celebrate the success of this school community – by which we mean the school management, teachers, learners and their parents – as well as the wider community and the Department of Education. We need to have all these stakeholders working together for a school to succeed.

We see this approach in the way that stakeholders were involved in the preparations for this launch event today – the municipality, the provincial departments, the Premier's office and local stakeholders.

This is crucial: that the wider community owns and supports the school.

Myra Primary School

Let us pause to pay tribute to this school with its long history of striving to provide service to the children of this community.

Historical background

The school started way back in the 1950's, using the premises of the Methodist Church. As the school enrolment grew, other churches pitched in with their premises serving as classrooms of the school.

A formal structure was built by parents through contributions in 1975. It had 19 learners in its first year of existence but this increased over the years as parents continued contributing and adding more classrooms.

More recently, as the old school deteriorated, government of the North West province demolished the old and dangerous structure and built five classrooms.

In 2006, the IDT built 20 toilets for the school and in 2011 the 7 old classrooms and admin block, which were in a bad state, were demolished and replaced with a totally new structure – which you see here today.

This structure comprises the following: Administration block with water and sanitation, 12 classrooms with sanitation and showers for the grade R block, 6 toilets for learners and a nutrition room.

Myra Primary and the community

Myra primary currently has an enrolment of 430 learners, 13 educators, 1 admin assistant and 2 volunteering support staff.

In recent years the school has been doing exceptionally well even though there is still a need to improve here and there. In 2009 the school produced a 70% pass rate, in 2010 it obtained 74% and 71% in 2011.

I am hoping that with the new building – and an environment conducive to learning and teaching – Myra Primary will move rapidly to a 100% pass rate.

Myra primary school is a crucial part of this community - not only producing future leaders, but also by assisting to make community programmes successful.

The school is used to provide shelter to the elders of the community who attend ABET classes in the afternoon. The community also makes use of the school's facilities for sports and also for community meetings.

Again we see this winning formula: the school and the wider community working together for mutual benefit. You provide a model for other communities to emulate.

Alternative Construction Methodologies

I first saw for myself how Alternative Construction Methodologies could be successfully used for building schools when I opened the Phakamani Senior Secondary School in Ngcobo in the Eastern Cape – to great excitement by the local community. Phakamani was one of 8 such schools to be built in that province. Two such schools have also been constructed in North West Province – Myra Primary and Setumo Secondary Schools.

These schools were part of an Alternative Construction Methods Pilot Programme funded by the National Department of Public Works and project managed by the Independent Development Trust (IDT). This means using new and cost effective building methods.

These methods produce buildings that are in many respects superior to conventional buildings - more sustainable, cheaper and quicker to erect. There are also important gains in terms of job creation and skills transfers to local communities.

The Independent Development Trust (IDT) is the implementing agent, whilst CSIR (Council for Scientific and Industrial Research) has researched into the quality of the new school buildings. The materials

used were quality assured by Agreement South Africa. Agreement and IDT report to the Minister of Public Works.

As Public Works – nationally and in the province – we have invited leaders and representatives from other province – from departments of education and public works - to come to North West and to see for themselves the products of Alternative Construction Methodologies.

My own thinking is that – especially in our campaign to replace mud schools and unhealthy or dangerous school structure as rapidly as possible – we must make use of these new technologies.

National Infrastructure Development Plans

I want to use this opportunity to share with you the implications of the national infrastructure roll-out plans announced by the President in his State of the Nation Address at the beginning of this year. The intention is to use large-scale infrastructure building programmes to drive economic development, to break down apartheid geographic separation and to combat the triple evils of poverty, unemployment and inequality.

The conceptual work has been done: 17 major long-term Strategic Integrated Projects (SIPs) have been developed with planned major positive effects on regional economies and job creation. Let me just mention **SIP 13**: National school building programme:

- Replacing mud schools – the Department of Public Works and the Department of Basic Education have been tasked to come up with a rapid programme to address this continuing scandal, and
- The longer term refurbishment of established schools.

IDT has a critical role to play here – it has the experience and the necessary track record to help us succeed.

The general point here is that government has committed resources to address the country's massive infrastructure backlogs. The crucial issue now is how we implement these decisions – to ensure success.

Rebuilding the Culture of Learning

In my previous employ – as General Secretary of SADTU – we worked hard to establish the principles and practices of the Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign. We said that each of us – as stakeholders - have separate and distinct responsibilities:

- Educators are expected to be on time, on task and professionally behaved at all times;
- Learners must attend school punctually, do their work and reject anti-social behaviour;
- Parents must support their children – and maintain contact with the school. So also the teachers must engage with the parents;

- The community must look after the school – and provide a safe environment for education to take place. This means not allowing liquor to be sold to school children and other bad influences;
- Most important, it is the responsibility of the Department of Education to provide an enabling environment for quality education to take place – classrooms, desks and chairs, learning materials as well as training and development for teachers.

We won't succeed in education – whether in the Eastern Cape or the North West or anywhere else - until all the stakeholders take these responsibilities seriously.

The point is that working together we can do more.

I thank you.