

IMPROVING THE LIVES OF OUR PEOPLE THROUGH DEVELOPMENT

**ADDRESS BY PUBLIC WORKS MINISTER THOKO DIDIZA AT THE PUBLIC
PRESENTATION OF THE IDT ANNUAL REPORT 2006/7**

- KWA-HLABISA, 8 NOVEMBER 2007 -

Chairperson of the IDT: Ms. Pumla Radebe

Members of the Board

Chief Executive Officer of the IDT: Ms. Thembi Nwedamutswu

Senior Government Officials

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

This year, our President in his State of the Nation address again reminded the country that the social problems that we face cannot be resolved outside of the context of job creation and poverty eradication. These twin challenges are at the heart of government's national development agenda.

Furthermore the accomplishment of our development goals is inextricably linked to the co-ordinated success of the combined efforts at national, regional and local level. As government we are deeply reliant on the strength and capability of the all the spheres of government and its related institutions to work together to implement the range of programmes, designed to respond to the country's developmental challenges. Excellence in performance across government sectors and the optimal use of resources is critical, and non-negotiable.

The release of the annual report by the Independent Development Trust records an important milestone in our journey towards making a difference and facilitating development where it is needed most. The release of the IDT's annual report results are key performance indicators, on the road to reduce inequality and poverty, especially in the rural areas.

Even after thirteen years into our democracy and despite the concerted and successful programmes initiated by government, the disparities between South Africa rural and urban populations remain stark, with rural areas still recording the high levels of unemployment and poverty. A core concern of government is to establish initiatives that will ensure sustained growth and economic development in these areas.

There have been critical interventions, such as a focus on infrastructure development with an EPWP bias, interventions into the economy through ASGISA, JIPSA and the Jobs for growth programme etc. But by all definitions achieving sustainable economic development in a developing country is a tall order. However as the leadership we remain convinced that through investment in communities, capacity building initiatives and the use of innovative ideas we can achieve our long-term goals of sustainability.

Looking at the work of the IDT and the successes that it has recorded, re-affirms my belief that the goals set by government can be achieved. Your achievements in key development areas, are important strides that complement the work of government.

And I would like to congratulate the Board, CEO, management and staff of IDT for their contribution to development and for achieving a fifth consecutive unqualified **audit financial report**. It is a commendable achievement and is by all accounts worth

celebrating. It suggests that the IDT has established an acceptable benchmark in the management of its financial resources and overall performance.

The results that the IDT has recorded in making an impact on communities through their social infrastructure development and capacity building programmes, is key to achieving its development mission. To say that infrastructure development is the lifeblood of development is to state the obvious. No country can record high and sustained levels of growth without investment in critical infrastructure such as schools, clinics, hospitals etc.

At the Department of Public Works we have a slogan that says *South Africa Works Because Of Public Works*. With this kind of philosophy, there is no question that, for a developing country like South Africa, infrastructure investment must pave the way for growth and poverty eradication. Poverty eradication and economic development depend on sustained growth, which in turn depends on productive activities supported by healthy infrastructure.

In addition to economic growth, social infrastructure development has a very tangible impact on people's daily lives, especially on the lives of the poor and marginalised. An overarching objective of development and empowerment is to help marginalized communities become sustainable, accumulate assets and improve their economic well-being. Measuring the results of programs dedicated to such goals is essential to maximizing the impact of these programs whilst managing and maximizing scarce resources.

Given our goals and needs within the country, it is critical that we evaluate our initiatives and measure outcomes on community development and economic empowerment programs. This can be challenging as the outcomes these programs intend to achieve, are often quite difficult to measure and may not become apparent for relatively long periods of time. Initiatives aimed at these complex economic and social challenges, that are a result of decades of under-development require much time and economic investment, before the actual long term goals are achieved. However, I would like to submit to the IDT that this is the challenge of their work and interventions.

In general however, the IDT also needs to be commended for its consistency and responsiveness to communities in need. Earlier this year, two of our poorer provinces viz the Eastern Cape and Kwa-Zulu Natal were hard hit by tornadoes in the area. Recognizing the plight of these communities and the need to rebuild, the IDT of its own initiative decided to commit R150 million of its funds to work on the so-called "Mud Schools Programme." This Programme has since been adopted as a Presidential Lead Programme and National Treasury is considering awarding R2 billion to the programme of further boost the coffers of this worthy initiative. For the communities in this area, this initiative will translate into job creation, safe and improved education facilities for their children and the opportunity to capitalize on new opportunities. And this is what communities need: not political eloquence, or robust promises but concrete interventions that bring about development.

Whilst on the topic of Presidential Lead Programmes, I should also state that the Hlabisa hospital which we will later tour, was also a designated Presidential Lead programme aimed at facilitating development in this part of KZN. Today the hospital is up and running, fully servicing the community of Hlabisa and 16 local clinics in the area. I was also informed that patients used to wait in long queues for days are now getting the needed services of qualified personnel, without the long queues. Furthermore, I am particularly proud of the fact that hospital was able to recruit as much as 14 doctors from the UK and Germany.

Another positive spin-off of the project is that community members, who received technical training during the construction of the Hlabisa hospital, are now working on the construction of the nearby mall. This development momentum is what is needed to ensure that communities experience maximum benefit from government programmes.

We need to look at infrastructure investment as an investment in the future of our people. It is my view that a broad, strategic and comprehensive approach must ground all infrastructure programmes, so that is able to meet the needs of today and tomorrow. We must plan for outcomes at the beginning of projects, to ensure maximum benefit for community development and prosperity.

While the IDT mandate is to support government to achieve its development objectives and to eradicate poverty, the organisation has come to the realisation that this needs to be done in framework that recognises the importance of women-targeted development. Given the deepening feminisation of poverty, the IDT created a new niche area to

facilitate and create sustainable livelihoods in underdeveloped areas by focussing on women as targeted beneficiaries in the development process.

The IDT's corporate shift recognizes that women require a concerted transformative effort, if a quantum and qualitative change is to be effected in mainstreaming women into economically active members of society. Furthermore this corporate shift overcomes an important barrier to facilitate development for women in the economic and social spheres. And more importantly this shift begins to level the playing field to give women an equitable start.

One of South Africa's award winning author's Andre Brink writes in his work 'On the Contrary' that: *"There is an occasion on a journey to look past beginning and beyond end,"* and it is within these parameters that I congratulate the IDT, as this is what it is doing. It is looking beyond the narrow, to what can be achieved... and this is what we expect from a leading development agency in service to its people and country.

Thank you.