

SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE MEC FOR PUBLIC WORKS ,
MRS LYDIA JOHNSON AT THE OFFICIAL HANDING OVER
OF TITLE DEEDS TO CORNFELD COMMUNITY: 18
OCTOBER 2008.

Programme Director

Mayor of Umtshezi Municipality

Traditional Leaders

Councilors

Senior management, Public Works and Land Affairs

Ladies and gentlemen

I greet you all

It is great pleasure that we have gathered here today on this special day. I say this is a special day because this event will mark the beginning of a new life for the people of this community. The apartheid regime grabbed the land from its bona-fide owners and passed laws led to displacement of black people in particular. This led to black people losing their valuable asset which used to be their source of income. All the arable, fertile land was taken by the oppressors and they forced our people to provide cheap labour in their farms.

Farm workers had been the hardest hit in terms of exploitation and discrimination. They were denied the right to associate themselves with trade unions because it was known that unions will mobilize them and challenge working conditions in the farms.

It is worth mentioning that we are aware that even today, in the new dispensation there are farmers who still ill-treat and exploit workers. I wish to warn them that they will face the full might of the law. It is high time that they begin to embrace transformation and work with the government in enhancing respect for human

rights. Farm owners should stop treating their working like animals because they are not sub-human.

Therefore the activity that we are engaged in today is part of government land redistribution programme. The government is committed to restore the dignity of the previously marginalized people. We are here to heal the wounds caused by the apartheid system. The government views the issue of land restitution in a very serious light. Land is wealth and in the light of the current economic hardships and uncertainty due to escalating food prices, land can play a critical role in ensuring sustainable economic development.

Today we celebrate that our government has delivered on its mandate in this community. Today the beneficiaries will proudly gain ownership of Ramawitof farm. You will be the decision makers regarding the management of the farm. I encourage you to take full ownership of this farm.

Not only the owners of the farm will benefit but we believe that there will be a multiplier effect so that other families also benefit through employment opportunities. We understand and believe that you have the capacity to manage the farm properly as most of you have years of experience in this sector.

The government will ensure that you are provided with the necessary support to ensure expansion and sustainability of your business. Therefore you should optimally utilize this asset so that future generations will also benefit.

Our government has declared war on poverty and agriculture has been sited as a critical sector which needs urgent attention. Therefore, there are prospects for growth and investment in this sector. This sector has a potential to address various socio-

economic challenges mainly poverty, malnutrition and unemployment. Therefore this sector should be prioritized.

As the Department of Public Works we also have programmes which have been designed specifically to enhance the empowerment of the previously marginalized groups. I encourage you to seize these opportunities as you are entitled to benefit from government service

The Department has initiated a poverty alleviation programme called **Izandla Ziyagezana**. This is a site clearing programme aimed at clearing government vacant land. Instead of using one contractor with a tractor the Department creates job opportunities by hiring local people. **The programme was launched in Hammersdale on 26 July 2008 and 18 people benefited. It was also launched at Hibiscus Municipality in Portshepstone and Margate where 10 people benefited.** The Department, communities and local municipalities work together with regards to identification of beneficiaries. Through this programme many families will be able to put ends meat on their tables.

The Department has also initiated a programme called Masakhe Emerging Contractor Development programme. This programme is aimed at ensuring progressive grading of emerging contractors and enhanced partnerships.

Our Department has successfully implemented the Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP). **In the financial year 2007/2008 the Department had a target of 16000 jobs the total number of jobs actually created is 17499.** This is evidence of effectiveness implementation of this programme.

The National Youth Service programme has also been successfully implemented. This programme is aimed at providing construction related skills, mainly plastering and bricklaying to our

youth. The youth receive theoretical training for 6 months while receiving a stipend of R600 and practical training under a well established contractor for 6 months and receive a stipend for R1000.

The Department has also formed **Contractor Forums in four regions. These forums are used as platform for constructive engagements and enhanced consultation.** Issues pertaining to construction are discussed and inputs are made regarding the construction business.

Apart from these programmes the Department also provides **bursaries and internships** for students who specialize in Engineering, Quantity Surveying, Architecture, Project Management and Real Estate. The youth from the previously disadvantaged are the main beneficiaries on these programmes.

All of these programmes are aimed at ensuring that the previously marginalized groups have a share in the wealth of the country. The Department is also using its programmes to contribute in the attempts to close the gap between the first and second economy.

Therefore I believe that with this farm you will grow and acquire more farms in future and enter the mainstream economy. The government will always create an environment conducive to growth. This is testimony that our government is committed to create a better for all.

I thank you