

**Celebration of the 10 Million<sup>th</sup> South African Household to receive water**  
**Address by Ms BP Sonjica, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry**  
**Soverby, Northern Cape**  
**12 November 2004**

Premier of the Northern Cape, Dipuo Peters  
MECs  
Executive Mayor of the Siyanda District Municipality, David Mbondezi  
Mayor of Kai !Garib Municipality, Anne Brooks  
The Headmaster, Mr Olivier and staff of Soverby Primary School  
Honoured Guests  
Fellow citizens and residents of Bloemsmond, Curries Kamp and Soverby,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

10 Million disadvantaged South Africans have been served with clean, fresh, potable, running tap water since 1994! This is indeed a joyous occasion, especially in our 10<sup>th</sup> year of freedom and democracy, and I am delighted to celebrate it with you today.

I am also delighted at this wonderful event, all the more because I know that it is a good example of co-operative government as all levels of Government and the community have worked together to make this day such a huge success.

We come from a horrible past – one in which people were denied their basic rights because of the colour of their skins. People were denied houses, jobs, access to water, the right to dignity, just because they were black. All that has changed. We now live in a country that recognises people as people, regardless of the colour of their skins. We recognise that all our people have the right of access to sufficient water – water for drinking, cooking and washing. This milestone of providing the 10 million<sup>th</sup> recipient with water supply is a clear indication that we are working towards meeting our targets and to fulfilling the human rights of our people.

In 1994 the new Government inherited a backlog of 14 million people without clean, safe water while 20 million people did not have access to adequate sanitation. Currently five million people still lack access to clean safe water, while 16 million lack access to adequate sanitation.

Over the past ten years, government officials, community structures, private sector companies, black and white, women and men, have worked long and hard to deliver water to our people, particularly to the poor and the marginalized. We are on track to provide safe drinking water to all South Africans by 2008 and to provide toilets for all by 2010. These are the targets set by our Government. We have already long exceeded the target set by the Heads of State at the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations in 2000. They declared that by 2015 the proportion of the world's population without access to basic water must be reduced by half. We have said that that is too slow. We must serve all our people long before that date.

In the 1994 Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), one of the most widely consulted policy programmes in the world, the newly-elected South African Government committed itself to the short term aim of providing every person with enough water for health "by establishing a national water and sanitation programme, which aims to provide all household with a clean, safe water supply of 20 to 30 litres per capita per day and adequate sanitation facilities." We did this and so took our first steps up the country's water ladder.

But we are not going to be content when everyone has got onto the first rung of that water ladder, with access to water at a tap in the street, and sanitation through a Ventilated Improved Pit toilet. Our first task is to ensure that everyone has access to these basic levels of service. After that, we will do our best to improve those levels of service, to give people access to yard connections, to household connections, to improved sanitation facilities. This is a massive task, one that is going to take considerable time and a great deal of energy, dedication and hard work. But it is a task that we are equal to.

The success of this project that we are celebrating today can be attributed to a number of role players and I wish to congratulate the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, the Kai !Garib Municipality, the Siyanda District Municipality, the Department of Land Affairs and the Blocuso Trust, representing the community.

Through your collaboration you have shown that taking hands is bearing fruit and the people of South Africa can benefit from it.

The Blocuso Trust, representing the people of Bloemsmond, Curries Kamp and Soverby, has played a major role in creating a better life for the respective communities. Their actions indicate people who are determined to take charge of their own destiny and to free themselves from the legacy of apartheid, poverty and marginalization. Government needs such partners and the story of the Blocuso Trust can serve as a success story and give hope to other communities.

The Northern Cape is often regarded as a dry and desolate place, yet you have the beautiful Orange River that runs through your province. All along the river belt one sees green and luscious growth – it represents new life. The villages of Bloemsmond, Curries Kamp and Soverby are situated next to the Orange River, between Upington and Keimoes. These communities were for many years dependent on raw water from the Orange River. Until very recently, donkey carts with 220 litre drums were used to transport potable water to the 466 families living in these communities.

Design and planning of the provision of water supply to Bloemsmond, Curries Kamp and Soverby started in 2000. The geographical circumstances and vastness of the area made construction difficult and approximately R4, 5 million was allocated for a water supply up to the level of standpipe standard. The people of Bloemsmond, Curries Kamp and Soverby, being very industrious, made a further R1, 5 million available through the Blocuso Trust, in order to extend this programme to include metered yard connections. Today, Bloemsmond, Curries Kamp and Soverby have three individual water supply systems, each comprising a river pump station, a river main, a raw water storage dam, a package type purification plant, a purified water storage tank and a water distribution network.

We are proud that the approximately 2 000 people of Bloemsmond, Curries Kamp and Soverby now have access to clean, potable, running water. This achievement is indeed creating a better life for all as less time has to be spent on fetching water and purifying it and more time can be spent with families, children and parents. This is especially important for women as it enhances their quality of life and it allows them more productive time. It also means that the risk of water borne diseases can be eliminated as the community now has clean water for cooking, washing, drinking as well as adequate sanitation.

I am pleased to hear that construction contributed to local job creation and that more than 8 000 person days resulted from this. Furthermore, I am satisfied that Government's criteria of 30% women and 30% youth were followed strictly.

As Local Government is now taking full responsibility for the delivery of water services, the role of my Department has changed and we are therefore no longer responsible for the supply of water services. My Department is now responsible for regulation and support as well as for the management of the precious water resources of our country – our rivers, dams and wetlands. The water supply infrastructure is therefore being transferred to the Kai !Garib Municipality, as the responsible Water Services Authority. As a result of the difficult conditions in the area they are also taking responsibility for the Water Services Provider function.

Government is also moving ahead in addressing and prioritising the issue of sanitation. I have been informed that Soverby received household sanitation in the past year and was provided with dry systems according to RDP level standards. A five-year Business Plan for Sanitation has been developed in the Siyanda District and the Siyanda District Municipality is the implementing agent. That means that Bloemsmond and Curries Kamp will be serviced soon and funds will be allocated from the Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG). The Siyanda District has also established a water sector forum where water and sanitation related issues are discussed on a regular basis.

I must add that I am delighted with Soverby Primary School's flush toilets as this is the route that Government is proposing when and if a community can afford it as well as sustain it.

As we celebrate this achievement today we can confidently say that this community will continue to work towards progress. Blocuso Trust already has plans on the table to irrigate 280 hectares of lucerne and vineyards. This water will be granted from the 4 000 hectares which one of my predecessors, Minister Kader Asmal, reserved for resource poor farmers in the Lower Orange.

Let me take this opportunity to announce too that I have recently approved a new policy on Financial Assistance to Resource Poor Irrigation Farmers which will contribute to the development and establishment of this new irrigation land and to the establishment of new farmers throughout the country.

Government is continuously seeking ways in which poor communities can be assisted. As the majority of poor people in South Africa live in rural areas, it is possible in some areas to help them through the development of sustainable irrigation schemes or in certain cases, the revitalisation of existing ones. This will enable them to take charge of their own situations by allowing them to provide their basic food requirements and hopefully, to move on to becoming economically independent commercial farmers.

Let me conclude by saying this Government is committed to creating a better life for all its people. Our promise for the next ten years is to provide basic water and sanitation services to all our people, and, where possible, to move communities up the water ladder, from communal taps to the convenience and dignity of yards connections, and even, in time, hot and cold running water inside the house enjoyed by many more of our people. That is what I mean by climbing the water ladder. As we climb the ladder, so our people will experience better and better standards of supply and services.

This Government is committed to you, its people and will continue to fight for the eradication of poverty and underdevelopment.

I thank you.

**BACKGROUND TO 10 MILLION<sup>TH</sup> RECIPIENT OF WATER CELEBRATIONS  
BACKGROUND BLOCUSO TRUST**

Soverby, Curries Kamp and Bloemsmond are three rural villages situated between Upington and Keimoes next to the Orange River. These villages comprise 466 coloured families who form part of the Blocuso Trust. There are currently 169 houses in Soverby, spread over a distance of 3 kilometres along a side stream of the Orange River. Curries Kamp has 138 houses spread over 2 kilometres, which also stretches along a drainage ditch close by and parallel to the Orange River. Small farmers from both these communities use small parts of land under flood irrigation to make a living. These farms are situated on islands and are usually inaccessible when the water level of the river rises. A more permanent source of income is from work on surrounding farms as well as pensions. Gravel roads maintained by the Siyanda District Municipality provide access to these villages.

Bloemsmond, situated next to the tarred access road to Kanoneiland, is smaller than Soverby and Curries Kamp and consists of 63 houses. Most of the inhabitants work on surrounding farms. Households in Soverby, Curries Kamp and Bloemsmond who earn less than R1500 per month, are 81%, 91% and 92% respectively.

**The success story of Soverby, Curries Kamp and Bloemsmond**

In 1886 Queen Victoria donated the farms, Soverby, Curries Kamp and Bloemsmond to three families, namely Soverby to the Swarts family, Curries Kamp to the Diegaardts and Bloemsmond to Piet Beukes.

In 1914 Soverby and Curries Kamp were sold to white buyers. These farms changed hands again when the then Independent Church of Gordonia paid 2000 and 2500 pounds for Soverby and Curries Kamp respectively. Bloemsmond was sold to Reverend Saul Damon for 1400 pounds. These farms were earmarked for housing and irrigation.

In 1991 the Saamstaan Farmers Union was founded by the 466 families from these communities. In 1996 the farmers union negotiated with the newly elected democratic government in South Africa for the R1 600 housing subsidy that was made available to formerly disadvantaged communities. In this process the Blocuso Trust was established and Soverby, Curries Kamp and Bloemsmond were bought from the Independent Church (then known as the Congregational Church) for R1, 5 million which was paid for from the approximately R7, 4 million subsidy.

In order to obtain full titledeed, R1, 4 million was paid for town planning and quantity surveying costs and a further R1 million to Eskom for electricity for Soverby and Curries Kamp. Although houses were built, the community was still dependent on raw water from the Orange River. Donkey carts with 220 litre drums were used to transport potable water at a cost to the community.

In 2000 planning started for the provision of water to these three communities within the Kai !Garib municipality. The designs of all three settlements were done up to standpipe standard using the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry's (DWAF) RDP rural water supply design criteria. Blocuso Trust made available an additional R1, 5 million to extend the water supply systems to metered yard connections. Three individual systems, each comprising a river pump station, a riving main, a raw water storage dam, a package type purification plant, a purified water storage tank and a water distribution network, are supplying water to Soverby, Curries Kamp and Bloemsmond.

Funds obtained for the project were as follows:

| SOURCE        | DESCRIPTION  | AMOUNT     |
|---------------|--|------------|
| DWAF          | Water supply system to the level of standpipe standard | R4 379 253 |
| Blocuso Trust | Extension of the system to yard connections            | R1 500 000 |
| TOTAAL        |  | R5 879 253 |

Difficult geographical circumstances and the vastness of the area and communities had a huge impact on the cost of construction.

**Construction**

The projects were divided into 3 stages. Attention was first given to complete the project at Curries Kamp by October 2003. Soverby was completed in September 2004. Construction in Bloemsmond started last and will be completed by the end of November 2004.

During construction local job creation involved more than 8000 person days and about R0.5 million was spent on job creation. Government's criteria of 30% women and 30% youth were followed strictly. Community involvement was emphasised throughout the execution of the project. Much effort was given to create awareness regarding water related issues such as water conservation. Local people were also trained and utilised during the project. A project steering committee monitored the process continuously. This project provided yard connections to 216 stands in Soverby, 171 in Curries Kamp and 71 in Bloemsmond. Unoccupied stands are only short of meters.

### **The road ahead**

Blocuso Trust is in the process of providing water rights to 280 hectare potential irrigation land in order to plant lucerne and vineyards. This will be granted from the 4000 ha which DWAF reserved for upcoming farmers in the Lower Orange River. The feasibility plan is currently in its final phase and an official license application will be submitted. The policy document on the Financial Assistance to Resource Poor Irrigation Farmers as approved by the Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry can assist in the development and establishment of the new irrigation land.

Future plans include establishing a Cooperation, which will include the small farmers, and which will serve the area from Groblershoop to Riemvasmaak. The purpose is to enable the small farmers to buy shares and to market their products to for their benefit.