

Project Consolidate Community Report Back Meeting
Speech by Ms BP Sonjica, MP, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry
Matjhabeng Local Municipality
9 July 2005

Programme Director
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Introduction

July 9, 2005 will come to be recognized by the present and future generations as a day which marked a turning point for our young local government system. The people of Matjhabeng and by extension of Free State, are fortunate in that government has chosen this municipality for a first community report-back meeting following the launch of Project Consolidate, a hands-on programme of support and engagement for local government.

We come from a history where the majority of our people were excluded from services because of the colour of their skin. Our municipalities are facing a daunting task of making sure that the millions who were previously excluded are brought into the service delivery net as partners and as beneficiaries. However, we must not make the mistake of thinking this will be achieved overnight as the backlogs we inherited from the apartheid system are huge but not insurmountable.

Government has set itself priorities and these include giving all people access to clean water in the next four years, extending basic sanitation to more than 300 000 households this financial year, eradicating the bucket system in all our townships by 2006, and spending over R14 billion in the next two years to give all our people access to shelter. In addition, there is a R1, 2 billion annual programme which will focus on bulk electricity infrastructure in rural areas to address the estimated 3 million household backlog in electricity.

Project Consolidate

With the first ten years of democracy focusing on building strong national and provincial spheres of government, attention has now shifted to strengthening South Africa's municipalities so as to position them to be dependable partners in meeting the targets set out in the May 2004 and February 2005 State of the Nation Addresses.

Core Message

Project Consolidate is about forging partnerships that will result in a practical improvement in the quality of people's lives at local level.

Sub-messages

- Government recognizes progress and achievements made in the First Decade of Freedom. At the same time, Project Consolidate allows government to analyse systematically, the nature of the challenges that must be addressed by individual municipalities;
- It is about working together to address remaining challenges facing local government;
- Project Consolidate is informed by the needs of the people such as increased access to better housing, water and sanitation, roads, electricity, refuse removal and employment creation. It draws from this practical experience and seeks to provide sustainable solutions;
- Project Consolidate will enable government to strengthen all of the 284 municipalities, whilst at the same time providing targeted and hands-on support to municipalities who have the greatest need as identified in the profiling exercise; and

- Project Consolidate provides opportunities for short-term interventions whilst allowing for medium and long-term sustainability in view of the Millennium Development Goals, that of halving poverty and unemployment by 2014.

We know where the problems are

- Government acknowledges that there are massive backlogs and challenges with regard to service delivery in some of our municipalities. That is why we have people like Mr Mavela Dlamini, Managing Director of the Johannesburg Roads Agency, assisting to bring skills and capacity to Matjhabeng Local Municipality.
- He is not here alone. He has mobilised a number of water, roads, construction and project management engineers from the Johannesburg Roads Agency, Johannesburg Water, Mangaung Local Municipality, to come help the people of this locality access these services enjoyed by everybody elsewhere.
- Unfortunately Mr Dlamini did not invite his whole team with him. If he may please come upfront so that you all see how he looks like. You will meet other team members during the course of executing their duties.
- These are the people who will be working with your municipality to help install water and sewer and the taxi ring road at Mamahabane that will benefit 2 300 households, and help with the eradication of the bucket system at Kutlwanong.
- These people are here to augment the capacity that is there in your municipality and help also help transfer the much-needed skills to the people of this area.
- Here in Matjhabeng we are focusing on the eradication of the bucket system through the provision of waterborne sanitation to all residents of Greater Kutlwanong. The construction of flush toilet structures will benefit more than 2000 households, creating hundreds of job opportunities, 60% of which are for women and the youth. We will install water and sewer at Mamahabane to benefit 349 households.

The role of National and Provincial Government

- Important institutional oversight and management arrangements have been put in place to support Project Consolidate. In all of these arrangements, national government will work closely with provinces, organized local government and key stakeholders and partners. These institutional arrangements include the following:
 - a) A national Inter-Ministerial Committee on Project Consolidate has been established. The IMC will exercise oversight and give guidance on the implementation of the initiative.
 - b) An Advisory Working Group (AWG) has been constituted. Its main purpose will be to offer ongoing and periodic advice and guidance to the Minister for Provincial and Local Government on the implementation of Project Consolidate over a period of two years.

The role of the community

- The ability of the Provincial and National Government to monitor the impact and the success of this programme depends to a very great extent on what you as a community meant to benefit from service delivery do.
- There are 69 ward committees in Lejweleputswa District Municipality and 36 of those are in Matjhabeng. We need members of the community to take ownership of this project by monitoring its implementation through our ward committees.
- Councillors must call regular feedback ward committee meetings and you, the members of the community, must tell them whether these programmes are making an impact in your lives. Tell them whether there is progress at all. You must inform councillors about the difficulties you experience as members of the community.
- These ward committees are also there to allow you to help your ward councillors with advice on how best the municipality can achieve maximum results.

- Communities cannot just sit back and be passive recipients of delivery. They must influence the direction of this process, before they go out to the streets and protest.
- The destruction of property and violent protests will become unnecessary under these circumstances.

Free Basic Services

From the government's side, the issue of free basic services is so critical in that we will be convening a national conference on Free Basic Services on the 25th and 26th of July 2005. The aim is to further strengthen and deliberate on how we extend these to the people.

Municipal Imbizo

- President Thabo Mbeki will also be in this district municipality next Saturday to interact with your councillors and ward committee members on how best delivery can be achieved and sustained in Lejweleputswa.
- The President is looking for answers and not complaints. That is why councillors must convene ward committee meetings, and you must attend as community members, to try and come up with suggestions on how best to address the challenges faced by this community.
- Even though resources are limited, government is committed to find them as evidenced by the presence of Mavela Dlamini and his team here in this municipality.

I thank you.