

Handover of the Elundini Local Municipality Bucket Eradication Programme
Speech by Mrs LB Hendricks, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry
Mount Fletcher, Eastern Cape
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MEC
Members of the Provincial Legislature
Honourable Mayors and Councillors
Inkosi
Communities of Ukhahlamba District Municipality
Ladies and Gentlemen

1. Introduction

I am very pleased to be here in Mount Fletcher to celebrate sanitation week with you. Last week on the 21st day of March it was a celebration of a different kind when we celebrated Human Rights Day. This day is an important event on our calendar where we recognise the Human Rights of our people and commemorate the tragic loss of life on March 21 1960 in Sharpsville, when our people were gunned down during their protest against the pass laws – laws that prevented our people from freedom of movement, a basic human right.

Since attaining democracy in 1994 and adopting our constitution in 1996 our government has an obligation to ensure that we promote and fulfil the rights of our people, importantly that includes the progressive provision of basic services such as water and sanitation. It is therefore fitting that we celebrate Human Rights Day in the same month that we have awareness campaigns such as the National Water Week and the Sanitation Week.

Our theme for Sanitation Week is "Sanitation for Health and Dignity" and our government recognises having acceptable levels of sanitation gives people dignity; and we are committed to our people having access to this basic human right. The huge backlog from before 1994 has meant that despite over nine million people receiving access to basic sanitation over the past 13 years, it is estimated that about 15,3 million people in South Africa still do not have access to basic sanitation services. As Government, we are very concerned about the impact of inadequate or no sanitation, as well as insufficient supply of clean water, as this can be seen as impeding on the very rights that we value.

2. Bucket Eradication

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are living in an age of hope and a government that cares. And there is a massive effort by all spheres of government to address the basic, social needs of our people. In particular we are pushing to achieve a number of sanitation targets – which will see us eradicating buckets in established areas by the end of this year; addressing the backlog in water and sanitation in clinics and schools; and providing household sanitation for all by 2010.

Already we have made substantial progress towards bucket eradication in established areas and about 58 643 buckets were removed nationally over the past 12 months. The President during his State of the Nation Address in February has strongly endorsed our programme to eradicate buckets by the end of this year; and the Minister of Finance has ensured that additional funding of R400 million is available for this critical task. Our latest figures show that across the country about 117 000 buckets are still in existence in established settlements, with the most significant number of buckets that still need to be removed in the Free State.

Our confidence in achieving the goal of bucket eradication has been given a boost by the success of this municipality. We have to congratulate Elundini, and municipalities like this one, who have taken proactive measures in delivering services to our people and ensuring that the promise of a better life becomes a reality. Other municipalities must follow the good examples that you have set, particularly in the Eastern Cape where the sanitation backlog has been identified as one of the gravest in the country.

The Eastern Cape Province has the third highest backlog in household sanitation in the country, with 450 000 households that still need access to adequate sanitation. Significant progress has however been

achieved by this province in the eradication of buckets, with the number of buckets drastically reduced from 48 000 in 2004 to about 9 000 at present. An allocation of R148 million has been made available in this year to remove these remaining buckets and the affected municipalities have confirmed that this funding is sufficient to meet the targets.

To support our Bucket Eradication programme the Eastern Cape Province is planning to have a Bucket Eradication Summit in early May, where all the sector partners, especially municipalities, will have the opportunity to share experiences and the lessons learned and to raise issues with myself and the MEC for Housing and Local Government and Traditional Affairs.

We look forward to the municipalities in this province, especially Water Services Authorities, joining us at this exciting forum, where together we will make commitments and come with solutions on how to meet the targets in a sustainable manner.

3. Meeting the targets

Programme Director, for many municipalities particularly in our rural areas there are challenges in their capacity to deliver sanitation services to their community; this challenges is created partly because people with skills are attracted to big cities and are reluctant to remain in rural areas. To support these municipalities my department, the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry has mobilized engineers in a special sanitation programme called "Operation Gijima" to provide assistance and additional capacity, so these municipalities are in a position to eradicate buckets in established areas by December 2007 as well as provide other water and sanitation services. Part of this support includes fast-tracking project registration and implementation. Our support is linked to Project Consolidate, which has been put in place by the Department of Provincial and Local Government to strengthen local government in order to deliver on its service delivery obligations.

The involvement of the community and other stakeholders is also a critical part of the success in delivery by government, and in the Eastern Cape we have established Masibambane Forums, which play a major role in making sure that all sector partners understand each other's roles and work together.

Provincial Water Committees have also been established for the municipalities to meet and share ideas as well as to advise each other and get guidance from the sector at large. The Provincial Sanitation Task Team is one such structure, which assists municipalities in meeting sanitation targets. Municipalities are urged to be part of these forums in order to access support from sector partners.

4. Elundini Project

Programme Director, I am delighted today to acknowledge what has been achieved here by the Elundini Local Municipality and Ukhahlamba District Municipality. Through their effort, dedication and commitment they have successfully eradicated all their buckets in the established settlements in this area earlier than our December 2007 target. I look forward to seeing these new structures and officially handover the new improved sanitation facilities to the communities of Elundini Local Municipality.

I have been informed that in November 2003, the Elundini Local Municipality Council resolved that all buckets should be eradicated and sourced funding from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Traditional Affairs.

Having been briefed on progress within the province and within Elundini Local Municipality I am informed that the Elundini Local Municipality and Ukhahlamba District Municipality have eradicated 2 963 buckets in the towns of Mount Fletcher (300), Maclear (1 378) and Ugie (1 285). I must emphasise that now that these services have been provided you need to take care of your sanitation facilities to ensure their sustainability.

One of our national priorities is to create jobs and reduce poverty - and sanitation is one such area to achieve this objective. In this regard my Department has signed a memorandum of co-operation with the Job Creation Trust to work together in the sanitation programme to create job opportunities in the delivery of sanitation, and to develop the necessary skills so that our people can be employable even after completion of the sanitation projects in their communities. In addition to job creation Government is

committed to supporting youth development programmes and empowering women through our sanitation programmes.

As part of the project implementation in this area jobs were created and skills transferred to the communities where these buckets were eradicated. Both skilled and semi-skilled people benefited from the project; 94 labourers were employed, 21 of whom were females, and three of these females were supervisors. The ultimate goal of sanitation job creation is to have members of the community gaining skills in order to start up their own businesses and create more employment. I have been told that some of these people have been successful in finding employment on other projects.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, ladies and gentlemen, as we continue to expand access to basic services such as water and sanitation we are creating job opportunities for our people. It is not only in the building of the infrastructure that opportunities exist, but also sustainable jobs and business opportunities will arise, for example, in the operation and maintenance required.

This week, throughout South Africa, we are celebrating Sanitation Week and through this awareness campaign we are raising the profile of sanitation, the positive impact on the health of our people as a result of sanitation, and need for hygiene. Yesterday I was in Msinga launching Sanitation Week and I spoke about the importance of washing hands after going to the toilet, and before preparing food. Our message with the Department of Health is that you need to practice good hygiene as it helps to avoid diseases and contributes to a healthy life.

Finally, we recognise and salute Ukhahlamba District Municipality and Elundini Local Municipality for their tireless efforts to create a better life for their community. I would also like to acknowledge the support and commitment of the Provincial Department of Housing, Local Government and Traditional Affairs.

Let us all work together to build a South Africa we can be proud of.

I thank you.