



water affairs

Department:
Water Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SPEECH DELIVERED BY HONOURABLE DEPUTY MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS, MS REJOICE MABUDAFHASI ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH OF SANDSPRUIT ADOPT A RIVER PROJECT IN SENEKAL, FREE STATE

FRIDAY, 23 NOVEMBER 2012

Programme Director

Mayors

Councillors

Setsoto Women Empowerment Group

Members of the community

Members of the media

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning

During the Women's Month we launched the Caledon Adopt a River project in Ficksburg. Today, we are here in Senekal to extend that project and launch the Sandspruit Adopt a River which was initiated by Setsoto Women Empowerment Group.

One of our biggest challenges in the water sector is high levels of pollution in our rivers nationally which are the sources of water. If we do not address this challenge we will not achieve our development goals. The department cannot address this challenge alone we need communities to come on board and participate actively in the management of water resources and environment. They are the ones closer to these rivers and we believe their indigenous knowledge can be useful in changing the status quo. Thus our efforts promoting community based water resource management.

We initiated Adopt a River project as a response to river pollution I have mentioned. This project aims to encourage the communities and other stakeholders to take charge of river systems in their areas; to fight and prevent pollution. It is one of the projects of the River Health Programme which is a nationwide monitoring system assessing the health of our rivers. It is targeting women specifically as we strive for socio-economic empowerment of women in their communities.

Empowerment of women is one of the smartest investments any country can make towards its development. We believe that sustainable water resources management will be achieved by full participation of women.

Through the Adopt a River project, women have acquired skills in waste management, occupational health and safety, identification of alien weeds and herbicide application, water safety, snake handling, first aid, environmental education and life skills. The other direct benefits are that the health of rivers has improved drastically and job opportunities were created for the locals.

It has also increased women participation in water resource management and capacitated them to advocate for behavioural change and increased caring of rivers and environment in their respective communities. To date this project has created 1000 job opportunities nationally.

The Sandspruit River is a small tributary of the Sand River and is running past the Matwabeng Township. It is often polluted by waste dumped into the river from various sources.

Setsoto Women Empowerment Group identified the pollution in the river and decided to adopt it and embarked on cleaning it to remove the solid waste. This voluntary structure with free membership aims to mobilize resources in this area in order to development themselves and their communities.

This project started originally with 30 women in the Ficksburg area and has now grown to a team of 164 people, of which 56 is from Ficksburg, 36 from Senekal, 36 from Clocolan and 36 from Marquard. The team also consists of 7 men.

The community of Senekal is counted amongst many communities that heeded our clarion call to active participation of communities in water resource and environmental management. It is gratifying to see that this community never took this call for granted they managed to rise up to the occasion.

It is important to mention that these women are not paid, they are volunteers. The Department will engage private sector and donors negotiating for funding of this project as we would like to see it growing bigger and also wish that these women can be involved in economic activities. Training will commence early next year.

These patriots also achieved third place in the 2012 Women in Water Awards, on adopt a river category. We are here today to also celebrate and recognize this great milestone. Congratulations once more we are proud of you. We acknowledge and recognise your patriotism to guard jealousy against anything that might seek to threaten the health of our natural resources.

In Setsoto Municipality we still have other water challenges such as water loss through leaks, water quality etc. There is a need to intensify the existing water conservation initiatives such as 2020 vision programme, war on leaks and others. I am encouraging the Municipality to strengthen the existing partnership with the Department, there is a need for a plan of action to address all the water challenges in this area holistically which should be allocated dedicated financial and human resources.

In conclusion, I would like to encourage the women and men in Setsoto municipality to keep up the good work and encourage others to join in the improvement and betterment of their community and in doing so contribute to the sustainability and protection of our limited water resources.

I would also like to thank the Mayor and team for the co-operation and support. Lastly I would like to thank the Water Affairs team led by Tseliso Ntili for the sterling work always, you have represented us so well in the entire province, we are proud of you

I thank you