

SPEECH DELIVERED BY MS BARBARA SCHREINER ON BEHALF OF THE MINISTER OF WATER AFFAIRS AND FORESTRY AT THE LAUNCH OF NATIONAL WATER WEEK AT THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE EASTERN CAPE COMMUNITY WATER SUPPLY PROJECT (FUNDED BY THE JAPANESE GRANT AID) AT THE MOYAKE JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL IN THE DIDI VILLAGE ON 24 MARCH 2004

Honourable guests:–

Representatives of Eskom, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great honour for me to address you at this event for National Water Week 2004, and to be hosted by the community of Didi Village, Ngqeleni Magisterial District.

Once again we have come together to celebrate water, and to celebrate the delivery of Government. Yes, today we celebrate 10 years of freedom and democracy in our country. We celebrate our progress that we have jointly achieved, people and Government working together for the past 10 years. Yes we have strived over the past ten years to ensure that through water, a better life for all has been gained, and that through water, we have taken great strides to wash away poverty. Indeed Water is Washing away Poverty .

This year's National Water Week celebrations co-incides with our Ten Year Celebrations of our democratic government. We have come a long way in the past 10 years. In 1994, about 14 million of our people did not have access to safe drinking water and approximately 21 million of our people did not have access to a basic level of sanitation.

This year we will celebrate the 10 millionth person receiving access to water since 1994. Yes, this Government has shown it is possible to create a better life for all our people, especially the poorest of the poor. For the 10 million, there is no more carrying heavy water containers long distances, no more taking water from polluted rivers and streams, no more walking long distances up and down hills, no diseases because of polluted water, no more deaths from crocodile attacks. Yes we are creating a better life for all our people. To date, Free Basic Water services are been provided by 87% of local governments; and this basic level of service is reaching:

64,4% of the national population; and

49,4% of the poor population.

But we must remember that our work is not completed. We must make sure that those who have not yet received water and sanitation services, receive them in the shortest possible time. Your Government is saying we are working towards ensuring that by 2008 those of our people that are not yet receiving water will have access to clean water and that by 2010 all our people will have access to basic sanitation.

Our Government is determined to eradicate poverty and to provide a better life for all and to improve the lives of all citizens. Despite the challenges we face, much has changed over the past ten years.

Providing water services in the country is a major challenge. Of particular concern is the Eastern Cape, which at the present moment is one of the poorest provinces in the country. In this province, OR Tambo District Municipality has the highest backlog in terms of water and sanitation. Many reports have highlighted the fact that a significant percentage of people in the rural areas is living below the poverty line. The reality of poverty that our people are facing in this province is also of great concern to our government and to my Department.

The development of our water services programme by all role-players in the Eastern Cape, including Local Government, has ensured that we receive financial support from donor countries like Japan, the EU, France, the UK and the Irish government. Through initiatives such as the Masibambane Programme, which is an inter-sectoral collaboration programme aiming at addressing water services backlogs, we are working closely with local governments as well as with other Departments to provide water services in a strategic and programmatic manner.

To illustrate our commitment to addressing service backlogs in the province in this financial year alone, a total of R304m will be spent on water and sanitation. Through the Masibambane Programme, my Department is successfully contributing to the institutional capacity-building of Local Government. In the Eastern Cape alone over 2,5 million people have been served with clean water, and close to 2 million with sanitation.

It is my pleasure to be here with you to celebrate the launch of a Water Services programme funded by the Japanese Government. This project entails the construction of sustainable water supply and sanitation facilities to the 21 rural villages, with 49 446 people to be served in the OR Tambo District Municipality in the Eastern Cape. This is delivery! This is creating a better life for our people!

The project places important emphasis on the use of groundwater. The constructed facilities are boreholes, water supply facilities that comply with the current RDP facilities. This project was divided into two phases for ease of implementation. Phase 1 consists of 13 villages and the remaining 8 are Phase 2 villages.

The Japanese Government extended to the South African Government an amount of 630 000 000 Japanese Yen or approximately R39 million and these funds were made available in March 2003 for Phase 1 of the project. The population served for this phase is 23 354 people. This phase

consists of 11 small schemes serving 13 villages. In these schemes the following facilities have been constructed:

12 boreholes have been drilled and equipped with electric powered pumps;

12 control rooms;

Pumping mains to reservoirs;

14 concrete reservoirs ranging from 20 kl to 100 kl; and

Reticulation networks to a total of 114 communal taps.

This phase was completed at the end of February 2004. The total labour employed as at the end of August 2003 was 28 500-person days. Of this figure 30% of the person days were for women, and we are still aiming to increase this.

My Department in partnership with the OR Tambo District Municipality has taken responsibility for the following:

Social and institutional development of communities;

O R Tambo has and will in the second phase participate in the implementation of the project, including setting aside funds for institutional development of communities; and

Commitment has been made by the OR Tambo District Municipality, as the Water Services Authority, to operate and maintain this infrastructure through setting aside funds from the equitable share.

A good working relationship has been established between all stakeholders, The Japanese Government, the Communities, the Local Government Structures and the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry. The work that has been completed has created hope for the realisation of the vision of a society in which all our people enjoy the benefits of clean water and hygienic sanitation services.

In conclusion, it is clear that all of us in this Province are still facing a number of challenges in the water services sector. National government is working together with my Department towards ensuring that those who still do not have safe water and sanitation will be receiving these services in the quickest possible time. The national government, through a consultative process has set targets to meet the basic levels of service. And I am convinced that we can meet these targets if we continue working together and harnessing our resources.

Let us therefore approach the next Ten Years with an undying and everlasting commitment to work together with all our peoples, so as to ensure that their lives are changed for the better.

Let us remember what our President has said. He said that all South Africans have to stand up and lend a hand in creating a better life for all – VUK'UZENZELE. Let us use water for the common good, to enrich the lives of all our citizens. Let us all work for a better South Africa. Let Water wash away Poverty.

My Department and I wish to acknowledge sincerely the financial support received from donor countries such as Japan.

Thank you honourable guests:

A special thanks to the Japanese Ambassador and delegation, to all our sponsors of National Water Week, especially Eskom,

Amanzi ayimpilo!