



**MINISTRY
HUMAN SETTLEMENTS
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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Facilitator, MEC for COGHSTA, Lebogang Mothlaping;

Premier of the Northern Cape, Dr Zamani Saul;

Executive Mayor of the Frances Baard District Municipality, Cllr Wende (Patrick) Marekwa;

Deputy Minister of Small Business Development, Jane Sithole;

Deputy Minister Masondo Tentative;

SALGA Provincial leadership;

Northern Cape SAPS Provincial Commissioner, Lieutenant General Otola;

Deputy Provincial Commissioner, Vispol, Major General Besnaar;

Acting District Commissioner Frances Baard, Brigadier Mtongana;

Acting Provincial Head, Inspectorate Colonel Malgas;

Station Commander, Hartswater, Lt Colonel Ntidi;

Deputy Director Generals present;

Community Representatives, and Community Members;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good afternoon! Goeie middag! Dumelang!

Let me begin where every honest conversation must begin with gratitude.

To the people of Phokwane, thank you. Thank you for welcoming us not only into your municipality, but into your lives. Thank you for receiving us with open hands and open hearts. Thank you for speaking to us not in whispers, but in truth.

Your words today were not complaints. They were a compass.

Today we began our programme with visits to several important sites, including the Vaalharts/Taung Irrigation Scheme, the Vala Zonke Project and the Pecan Nut Processing Plant. Those visits gave us first-hand understanding of both the enormous potential that exists within this municipality and the challenges that continue to hold back development.

This outreach forms part of the work of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Service Delivery, chaired by Deputy President Paul Mashatile. It is intended to ensure that Government leaders do not govern from offices in Pretoria alone, but that we come directly to communities.

In the spirit of Oliver Tambo, who taught us to go to the people and learn from the people, that is why we are here to listen where you live, to assess progress on the ground, and to coordinate speedy, practical solutions.

The Deputy President, who initiated these outreach visits, had hoped to be here with you today. Unfortunately, on the advice of his medical team, he has had to temporarily scale down his public engagements. I want to assure you however, that the issues raised here today will be reported directly to him, together with the observations we have made.

Programme Director, the people of Phokwane have spoken clearly.

You have raised concerns about unreliable water supply, ageing infrastructure, potholes, sewer spillages, electricity interruptions, housing backlogs, unemployment, youth development, healthcare services and land matters. These concerns are legitimate. They are the daily measure of dignity.

Government acknowledges that the municipality continues to face significant challenges. With an unemployment rate of approximately 43%, many households remain without sustainable income, particularly young people, women and persons with disabilities. Yet this is a municipality blessed with agricultural potential, resilient communities and hardworking people.

Our Freedom Charter made a solemn promise: the people shall share in the country's wealth. Here in Phokwane, that wealth is in your soil, in your water, in your harvest. The challenge before us is to ensure that economic opportunities truly benefit local communities.

When we visited the Vaalharts Irrigation Scheme today, we saw one of the most important agricultural assets in South Africa. We also heard concerns regarding infrastructure, investment, and the desire of local communities to participate more meaningfully in the agricultural value chain. Government will immediately engage all relevant stakeholders to unlock the full economic potential of this strategic asset.

To the residents of Pampierstad, we have heard your concerns regarding asbestos pipelines, recurring pipe bursts, sewer blockages and sanitation challenges.

There is a truth that President Nelson Mandela left with us, that **the purpose of freedom is to create it for others**. That is what clean water is. It is not a privilege. It is freedom flowing from a tap. It is a constitutional right. Government is implementing projects to upgrade bulk water and sanitation infrastructure, but we acknowledge that more needs to be done and that communities expect visible progress.

As Deputy Minister of Human Settlements, I fully understand the frustration of families who have been waiting for housing opportunities for many years. We are aware of the housing backlog, the shortage of serviced sites, and delays associated with bulk infrastructure. **We are also aware of projects underway in Ganspan, Bonita Park, Kingston, Masakeng, Andalusia and Nkandla.** We acknowledge that the pace of delivery is far from satisfactory. Housing is more than shelter. It is dignity, social justice and an improved quality of life.

To our young people, perhaps the most painful issue raised today is unemployment.

We have seen young men and women who completed their studies years ago and are still searching for employment. They wake up each morning with hope, only to go to bed feeling discouraged.

Some of you here know exactly what that feels like. You have sent out countless CVs, travelled long distances for interviews, and taken whatever work you could find just to put food on the table.

This is why the words of President Oliver Tambo must haunt us and guide us: a nation that does not invest in its youth does not deserve its future. Our young people are not asking for favours. They are not asking for handouts. They simply want a fair chance to work and build a better future.

We therefore have a responsibility, both as Government and as the private sector, to do more. Every infrastructure project, every agricultural investment, every housing development must become a vehicle for local job creation, skills development and enterprise opportunities.

I call upon the Phokwane Local Municipality, major employers, agricultural enterprises, local businesses and investors to strengthen local recruitment, local procurement, skills development initiatives, internships, apprenticeships and learnership programmes.

Government cannot solve unemployment through the public sector alone. However, we are committed to strengthening skills development, entrepreneurship, EPWP opportunities, Community Work Programmes, and partnerships with the private sector.

We have also heard the call for a TVET College so that young people do not have to leave their communities to access education and training.

I was particularly encouraged by organisations such as the Thabang Community Development Centre and House of Thabang NPC, which are equipping young people with practical skills.

Programme Director, some community members asked: why does Government keep coming to meetings while our lives remain unchanged? That is a fair question.

Our elders have an answer for moments like this: **talk without action is like a cloud without rain. It is a proverb that must humble us. While progress has been made in some areas, implementation has not happened at the speed communities deserve. Today is therefore not merely an exercise in listening. It is part of holding all spheres of Government accountable for delivery.**

When it comes to roads, Government is implementing the Kolong Road Project and the Vala Zonke Programme. However, we acknowledge the infrastructure backlog remains significant. Another concern relates to ageing infrastructure, network constraints, vandalism and electricity theft. **Investment is being directed towards electrification and network upgrades, but infrastructure protection is equally important.**

As Government, we do not claim to have all the answers. But we have listened. We have taken note. We have seen your challenges. Most importantly, we have witnessed your resilience.

The District Development Model teaches us that no sphere can work in isolation. National, provincial and local Government must plan together, budget together, and deliver together. The people of Phokwane do not care which sphere is responsible. They simply want services, dignity and opportunity.

Today's engagement is not the end of the conversation. It is the beginning of a renewed commitment.

We leave with a clearer understanding of your challenges, but also with confidence in your potential. The future of Phokwane is defined not by its challenges, but by the agricultural potential of Vaalharts, the entrepreneurship of local businesses, and the aspirations of young people.

Together, we must build a municipality where every household has reliable basic services, where every young person has a pathway to opportunity, and where economic growth translates into jobs and hope.

It would be remiss not to encourage every eligible resident to make their voice heard in the upcoming Local Government Elections. Democracy is strongest when citizens actively shape the future of their communities.

On behalf of Government, I thank you for your participation and your commitment to building a stronger Phokwane.

Let us continue working together to turn today's commitments into tomorrow's results.

I thank you.

Ke a leboga. Baie Dankie!