



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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Speech delivered by the Deputy Minister of Tourism at the launch of the Ndlambe Community Project - Eastern Cape

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As we celebrate Freedom Month, it is indeed a privilege for me to be here today as together, we write a new chapter in the story that is South Africa - and you are its authors. What a wonderful way to immortalise this legacy!

The community of Cannon Rocks in the Ndlambe Municipality of the Eastern Cape today becomes the proud owners of hospitality facilities that will increase its readiness to host foreign and domestic tourists, and boost revenue from tourism activities.

In line with the theme of the Local Government Tourism Conference held in Gauteng last week: "Tourism: A Catalyst for Local Economic Growth, Job Creation and Transformation, the launch of this project today is testament to that. Indeed, we are a nation at work!

The upgraded accommodation and conferencing facilities form part of the drive by the Department of Tourism to leverage off South Africa's potential as a prime tourism destination, by creating sustainable tourism related projects in rural areas of the country. The project, which started in 2011, brings to fruition one of the Department of Tourism's nine Social Responsibility Implementation (SRI) initiatives earmarked for launching in the 2015/16 financial year.

Ninety six 96 jobs (with the appropriate development of skills) were created during the refurbishment and building phase of the Ndlambe SRI project, which is in line with the principles of the country's Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP). Three existing houses were renovated and refurbished into accommodation facilities, and two new units were built. Each of these units can accommodate 6 people. Another existing house has been converted into a conferencing venue for 40 people. In addition to beautifying the area, each unit has also had conservancy tanks installed. These upgrades will bring this facility in line with the standards required for a 3 star tourism facility grading.

As articulated in the National Development Plan, job creation is one of our biggest challenges. And job creation and skills development and training go hand in hand. To this end, our SRI seek to address among others the backlog of transformation challenges (in the rural /nodal areas) within the tourism sector through geographical, seasonal and rural spread while unlocking economic development opportunities and skills development at local government level.

Tourism has been identified as one of the key priority areas of Ndlambe in the Local Economic Development Strategy. Projects like these are meant to implement the strategy and it is imperative that tourism projects and initiatives within the municipality seek to grow the tourism economy by increasing economic benefits of tourism to the area through community beneficiation.

Tourism is a people-based socio-economic activity: Responsible Tourism ensures the preservation of local heritage and culture, whilst creating an environment for South Africans to share equitably in the economic benefits they generate.

Tourism creates opportunities for small entrepreneurs; promotes awareness and understanding among different cultures; breeds a unique informal sector; helps to save the environment; promotes preservation of culture and everything that is associated with it for the benefit of the future generation.

Our Department's SRI programme provides financial and technical support for small-scale tourism infrastructure projects in predominantly rural or community-based tourism initiatives across all nine provinces. By addressing the backlog of transformational challenges in poverty stricken rural nodes, these projects will stimulate economic development and skills development at local government level by addressing the geographical and seasonal spread of tourism related products.

Some of the most notable early programmes and initiatives under this theme include the Social Responsibility Implementation (SRI-EPWP), the Tourism Enterprise Partnership (TEP); Commitment of Poverty Relief Funding through the Social Responsibility Implementation Programme (SRI) which provided financial and technical support for tourism infrastructure projects that focused predominantly on rural and community based tourism initiatives across all nine provinces.

So today, we have been given further tools to move South Africa forward. Let us continue to be working nation so that we can be a winning nation. Let us honour and celebrate the freedom of our democracy though continuing to build our societies. Let us continue to pump economic blood through the veins of this country. Let us continue to foster social cohesion through the heart of this country. Let us continue to move South Africa forward, together.

I would like to conclude with a quote that I heard recently that has inspired me so. I would like to share that with you today. 'If it is meant to be, it is up to me.' If we employ that as a collective, we can achieve anything!

I thank you.

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