



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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Speech delivered by the Deputy Minister of Tourism, Tokozile Xasa at the launch of the Mthatha Visitors Information Centre

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Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests

It is my honour to address you today as we launch a product that heeds the President's call to action for us to Move South Africa Forward.

So what does that mean and how do we as citizens assist this vision? President Jacob Zuma announced the Nine-Point Plan to ignite growth and create jobs in his State of the Nation Address (SoNA) on 11 February 2015. Government is cautiously optimistic that the economy will grow as a result of the implementation of the Nine-Point Plan in the long-term. However the economy is everyone's business and we all need to work together as part of a collective national responsibility.

The Nine-Point Plan includes the following priority interventions:

- Revitalisation of the agriculture and agro-processing value chain
- More effective implementation of a higher impact
- Advancing beneficiation (adding value to our mineral wealth)
- Unlocking the potential of SMMEs, cooperatives, township and rural enterprises
- Growing the oceans economy
- Resolving the energy challenge
- Managing work conflict
- Scaling up private sector participation
- Cross-cutters (ICT, Transport infrastructure, Science and Technology and Water)

Tourism is a multifaceted portfolio that cross-sections most other portfolios as they all have an impact (directly or indirectly) on tourism. The perception of tourism reflects on the total sum of all things South African.

Crime affects tourism, corruption affects tourism, some of our natural assets are tourism products (Table Mountain, heritage sites, beaches, flora and fauna) economic trends affects tourism, weather conditions affects tourism, the fiscal allocation affects tourism, health scares affects, labour issues affects tourism, sport affects tourism (FIFA 2010). Indeed, tourism is everybody's business.

These portfolios all affect tourism yet none of them are directly managed by the tourism portfolio. We all work together and we are confident that our sister departments will take cognisance of the tourism products that falls within their ambit and manage it judiciously. In this we, we implement the nine point plan – directly or indirectly.

As Tourism forms part of the Economic Cluster, emphasis is placed on the interventions that are job drivers, which will result in immediate and short term benefits. And this is what this launch aims to do. The National Tourism Sector Strategy (NTSS) emphasises the need for South Africa to enhance the visitor experience at tourist contact points in order to deliver a world-class visitor experience and to entrench a tourism culture in order to position South Africa as a globally competitive and recognised tourism destination of choice.

By way of background, in 2009 the National Department of Tourism (NDT) commissioned a study to look into the status of Visitor Information Centres (VICs) across South Africa. The purpose of the study

was to establish the number and general state of VICs and identify existing challenges and opportunities for VICs within the tourism sector.

The study also highlighted some key challenges that VICs faced, which include lack of funding to develop and support VICs; lack of a unified brand for VICs; poor uniformity in the way VICs across the country operate and poor skills development interventions to ensure the provision of excellent visitor services. The challenges identified then still exist now but the NDT has made inroads in the development and implementation of interventions with the Mthatha VIC being one of the interventions in the development of VICs at key tourist transit routes.

Subsequent to the approval of the NTSS, the NDT developed a National Visitor Information Centres Framework (NVICF), and National Tourism Information Gateways Framework (NTIGF) which provide guidelines in the development and support for VICs and NTIGs. Parallel to the implementation of the NVICF and the successful development of the FIFA 2010 Soccer World Cup Legacy VICs, the NDT has continued to support the tourism sector in terms of infrastructure development with the Mthatha VIC and the OR Tambo International Airport NTIG serving as a good pilot project and model for the rollout of NDT's infrastructure development projects that support information provisioning throughout the tourism sector.

As per this framework, the NDT developed and implemented the following projects: Capacity-building programme for VICs and World Heritage Sites, the VIC Brand, VIC Operations Handbook and a Database of VICs across the country, which all led to the development of the VIC Directory.

You might wonder why this VIC is here and not at the port of entry – being the airport. In 2009 the Department of Tourism received a proposal from King Sabata Dalindyebo (KSD) Municipality requesting for funding of their Mthatha Visitor Information Centre and initially they requested the site to be close to the Mthatha Airport. It was later changed to the N2 site due to high demand. The Mthatha Visitor Information Centre Project was funded in 2010 by the Department of Tourism for a budget of R13, 059 000.00 under its Social Responsibility Implementation Programme. The project created 28,786 job opportunities.

The project deliverables were as follows:

- Information Centre;
- Reception Area;
- Boardroom;
- Exhibition Area;
- Offices;
- Booking Centre;
- Furniture;
- Ablution Facilities;
- ICT Equipment and Systems;
- Parking; and
- Electricity and Water Connection.

The project will be operated by KSD Municipality on behalf of Kwalindile Community. KSD Municipality has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that the Information Centre Wing will be occupied by KSD and OR Tambo Tourism Department officials and the commercial wing will be leased out by Bus companies and a Curio shop.

Rentals received will be split into 60; 40 ratio, 60% will go to KwaLindile Community (CPA) and 40% will be managed by KSD for the maintenance of the building. The community of Kwalindile will get first preference when employment takes place.

In line with the nine point plan to build the economy, beneficiaries received the following training during the course of the project:

Accredited Training:

- Construction Plumbing NQF Level 4.

Non-accredited Training

- First Aid;
- Health and Safety Skills;
- Life Skills;
- Business Skills;

- HIV/AIDS Awareness

Let us all continue to work together to build this beautiful country. I urge you all to continue to build this nation brick by brick so that together we can move South Africa Forward. There is a saying that goes "If I cannot do great things, I can do small things in a great way."

I thank you