



Address by the Honourable Premier, S.H. Ntombela

State of the Nation Address Debate

Repositioning the Provinces at the Cutting Edge of
Accelerated Rural Socio-economic Development and
Sustainable Livelihoods

14 February 2022
Cape Town

Honourable Speaker Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula

Honourable Chairperson of the NCOP Amos Masondo

Honourable President Cyril Ramaphosa

Honourable Deputy President David Mabuza

Honourable Members of Parliament and NCOP

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

There is no doubt that, of all South Africans, over **eighteen million** people living in our rural areas have been the hardest hit by **COVID-19**.

Livelihoods have been disrupted, jobs lost, businesses closed, poverty increased and the healthcare system strained.

As we speak, things are far from normal. The future is uncertain and we remain vulnerable. But we are beginning to reclaim our lives back.

As we begin to do so, high on the **ANC's** transformation agenda is the reconstruction and recovery of our economy. We want to unleash the potential of rural areas as places of growth, hope and success.

This will require that we confront the injustices of land dispossession, underdevelopment, cheap labour and broken families in our rural areas.

Development in rural areas is about people taking full control of their destiny. Importantly, it is about connecting our rural areas with urban areas for mutual and integrated socio-economic development.

The development success of rural areas depends on the socio-economic wellbeing of particularly young people and women.

These are the most vulnerable, demoralised and victimised.

Honourable Speaker

As a framework for change, the **National Development Plan** envisions integrated and inclusive rural economy driven through land reform, infrastructure development, job creation and poverty alleviation.

This vision goes beyond government's policy objectives for the development of our rural areas. It includes people's need for a better life shaped by their present experiences and future aspirations.

The **National Development Plan** is given practical meaning through the **Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan**.

This is the common programme to rebuild our economy through aggressive investment in infrastructure as the **President** pointed out in the **State of the Nation Address**.

As you said during the **2021 Sustainable Infrastructure Development Symposium for South Africa Mr. President**, the time to bridge the urban-rural divide through investment in infrastructure is now.

And true to this call, the makeover of our rural areas is underway. The **Free State** is working together with **Infrastructure South Africa** and other spheres of government to unlock their economic potential.

People of the **Free State** eagerly await the full benefits of projects such as the **Durban-Free State-Gauteng Corridor** and the **Orange-Riet Canal** that are important for the achievement of the **Plan**.

Once completed, people, towns and rural areas will be connected, and equally have access to water.

Through our **Access Road Programme**, the **ANC** government in the province has upgraded roads in **ten** of our rural towns at a cost of **sixty-four million rands (R64 million)** in the past financial year.

As a result of this **Programme**, **seven hundred and seventy-five** jobs were created in some of the following rural areas: **Cornelia, Edenville, Springfontein, Memel, Arlington, Warden, Clocolan** and **Tweeling**.

The provincial government have set aside special funds for the **Township Revitalisation Programme** to pave internal roads.

Roads in areas of **Botshabelo, Zastron, Allanridge, Frankfort, Koppies, Villiers, Clarens, Paul Roux** and **Vrede** are been paved and **two hundred and thirty-seven** jobs have been created as a result.

The agricultural sector in our province remains one of the key drivers and contributor to the growth of our provincial economy. **One hundred and fifteen million rands (R115 million)** was allocated for the maintenance of our gravel roads and **five thousand** jobs were created.

Honourable Speaker

The **ANC** takes pride in the **Comprehensive Rural Development Programme** to develop and ensure sustainable rural areas.

Specific interventions as part of this **Programme** includes redistributing **30 percent** of the agricultural land, enhancing food security, creating business opportunities and empowering the most vulnerable.

Under this **Programme**, we have created **Farmer Support Production Units** in **Kgolokweng, Thaba Nchu, Springfontein, Wesselsbron, Zastron** and **Kroonstad**

Not only did these projects create much needed job opportunities, ensure food security, but also brought hope of a better future to many of the households living in these areas.

We have also established two agri-village at **Diyatalawa** and **Wilhemina**. We are aware of the challenges confronting these two agri-villages and we are working closely with beneficiaries, who are mostly women, to address them.

The **ANC** places great value in the empowerment of women in rural areas. We want to see them as forces of change and champions of their destiny.

Hundred and seventy-three women owned businesses attended the empowerment workshops conducted jointly with **The Presidency** and **SEDA**, as part of the **40 percent Public Procurement Programme**.

Most impressive is that women owned businesses in the **Free State** are benefiting from **over ninety million** worth of infrastructure projects.

Labour intensive job creation programmes such as the **Expanded Public Works Programme** and **Community Work Programme** have been able to provide **forty-seven thousand, three hundred and ninety-eight thousand** job opportunities.

What is pleasing is that, **75,6 percent** of women, **32 percent** of youth and **0.8 percent** of persons with disabilities were the beneficiaries of these programmes.

Alongside these programmes is the revitalisation of **Industrial Parks** in our rural areas of **Phuthaditjhaba, Botshabelo** and **Thaba Nchu** to put an end to the hardships experienced by many in these areas.

In line with our investment promotion pipeline, the **Maluti-a-Phofung Special Economic Zone** is planning to attract investors with an investment value of **over two billion rands (R2, 6 billion)**.

Currently, **one hundred and sixty-four** job opportunities have been created. But we are aware of the challenges of vandalism and unreliable electricity supply that are hampering potential investment.

Vandalism is developing into a national crisis that we need to confront.

We share the President's conviction of mining as a sunrise industry.

The **Free State** is a great example of this. **Six** companies are mining industrial minerals in **Lejweleputswa** and **three** coal in the **Sasolburg** and **Koppies** with a lifespan of almost **two** decades.

Other mining initiatives by the province is the continuous provision of support to sandstone and sand mining businesses in our rural areas of **Qwaqwa, Fouriesburg, Senekal, Sasolburg and Zastron**.

As a province, we are exploring energy and waste management opportunities with **CSIR** as part of the green economy initiatives.

Twenty businesses in **Botshabelo** are expected to benefit from this.

Thanks to the President's national investment drive, Phase 2 of the **Reenergen Gas Project** with an investment value of over **seven hundred million rands (R700 million)** in the rural towns of **Virignia, Theunissen** and **Welkom** is on track.

We wait in anticipation the completion of renewable energy projects in the province. Apart from creating jobs, these investments will transform our rural areas into vibrant and attractive economic centres.

Honourable Speaker

The **ANC's** commitment that **The Land Shall Be Shared Among Those Who Work It** remains true even today.

After the approval of the **Expropriation Bill**, the **ANC** government will implement land expropriation in accordance with the requirements of the Constitution as you stated **Mr. President**.

In the province, there are **four thousand, eight hundred and seventy-two** land parcels valued at over **eleven billion rands (R11.1 billion)**.

As the **ANC** government, we took a decision that, of these pieces of land, **two thousand, six hundred and twenty-six** will be transferred to the rightful beneficiaries as part our land reform efforts.

Access to land and land ownership is important for agricultural development. For many rural communities, land is a source of income and livelihoods.

On the 14th of January 2022, the **Integrated Vrede Dairy Project** was handed over to its **sixty-five** rightful beneficiaries. The project is now **51 percent** owned by the **Vrede Integrated Farming Trust**.

We have allocated **five hundred and eighty-three** dairy animals and **nine** horses on a **two thousand and ninety-four** hectares of land.

We are encouraging and supporting women, young people and persons living with disabilities to become farmers in our rural areas.

Using our partnership with agribusinesses and commercial farmers, **hundred and seventeen** unemployed graduates were appointed and given work experience in businesses coordinated by **Agri-Free State**.

Farmers that were affected by the recent runaway veld fires were provided with emergency fodder for their livestock. We also received above average rainfall which created challenges for crop farmers.

We have made available about **hundred million rands (R100 million)** to develop on-farm infrastructure that includes irrigation schemes, mechanisation, farm buildings and agro-processing.

For us, agriculture is a lever for youth employment and business opportunities as seen in our **Goats Farming Project in Tweeling**.

You are right **Mr. President** that we live in a region mostly affected by climate change. We sure have to adapt to the effects of climate change.

Government is working with the **International Labour Organisation** to determine opportunities and challenges to address climate change.

This will assist in developing the **Provincial Carbon Emission Plan**.

Other interventions are about increasing the share of our rural tourism to stimulate economic growth and development in the **Free State**.

Strong focus is now on marketing and product development of cultural, heritage, wetlands, wellness and knowledge systems products.

Honourable Speaker

Part of our education success is as a result of our school hostels for farm learners, matric camps for rural schools and the bursary programme targeted specifically for students in rural areas.

Some of our top performing learners in the province like **Rorisang Chobane** and **Kelopilwe Monoana** from **Moroka High School in Thaba Nchu** are beneficiaries of these education interventions in rural areas. This includes **Majori Mphi** and **Petrus Motsahabi** from **Bainsvlei Combined Farm School in Bloemfontein**

The **ANC** government continues to support the **Institution of Traditional Leadership** in enhancing co-operative governance, dispute resolution and gender equality in our rural areas.

As government, we are fostering integrated rural development and cooperation through the **District Development Model**.

Already, this is bridging the gap between rural and urban space economic divide, and promoting mutual inter-dependence.

Both national and provincial **District Development Model** political champions are working together to facilitate the implementation of this **Model**.

Honourable Speaker

Rural areas have massive potential for growth and development. But potential alone is never enough. We need to do more.

I thank you
