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NORTHERN PROVINCE

POLICY GUIDELINES

ON

PUBLIC WORKS

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ANC POLICY GUIDELINES ON PUBLIC WORKS

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of the policy guidelines is to create an understanding of the position and vision of the organisation to the broad membership and to allow inputs into the policies through participation and debates on Public Works matters.

2. ROLE OF PUBLIC WORKS IN THE DELIVERY OF SERVICE

The democratic break through of 94 ashered in an interim constitution which provided the establishment of Provincial government. The schedule 6 of the interim constitution stipulates in clear terms which functions are to be executed by the Provincial governments as distinguished from other national competencies. Then, it was up to various heads of provinces to allocate these functions to the ten departments given to each province. Roads and Buildings constitutes part of the functions allocated to provinces. The two functions constitutes what conveniently can be labelled Public Works in the Province.

Having outlined the legal frame work, it will then be important to contextualise how these functions will be translated as services within the provisions of Government policy. The policy framework of the current government makes provision to redress imbalances and cater for the needs of those historically disadvantaged. And the genesis of this assertion would not have been adequately expressed, if the programmes do not touch and alter the lives of the ordinary people particularly those who are obtained in the periphery of the country. Then, as Public Works 's major thrust is infrastructure provisioning, it should operate within this policy framework. Public Works in its roll it should ensure the following:- i.e.

1. Transform the procurement procedures to be accessible to those historically excluded.
2. Change rules governing the provision of infrastructure to increase labour intensity and lead the transformation of construction industry.
3. Encourage and train small contractors to enter the main stream economic activity.
4. Facilitate community participation, empowerment, skills training and reducing unemployment rate.
5. Contribute towards sustainable programmes of poverty alleviation in rural areas through integrated rural development. This will require inter-sectoral cooperation.
6. Assist other Government Departments in developing policy and programme for infrastructure delivery.
7. Develop a consistent programme on retraining and training the civil service to perform to the highets proportionate to those of the recipient of the service.

3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Throughout the history of South Africa, Public Works was designed and set up to provide services to communities on the basis of the laws and practices of an Apartheid system. The type and level of services differed according to the race or colour of communities. Facilities equipment, funds and Public servants were employed and deployed along racial lines.

The disparities in the allocation of resources resulted in the unfair delivery of services and the creation on one side of a developed and well maintained infrastructure and on the other hand extremely poor infrastructure or no infrastructure at all.

The creation of the erstwhile administrations of Venda, Lebowa and Gazankulu to take over the already impoverished infrastructure served no other purpose than to further deepen the crisis and to increase the backlog in maintenance and development.

After the 1994 general elections the new Government was set up and the new administration inherited a Public Service with serious handicaps. Some of which were identified in the Draft White Paper for Transformation of the Public Service and are outlined below.

3.1 LACK OF REPRESENTATIVENESS

The administration as a whole was characterised by its lack of representatives of all the people of South Africa. The administration of Government was dominated by the white minority even though it had a majority black population. This was particularly the case within the management echelon, which in 1994 was 84 per cent white. The Public Service was also heavily biased in terms of gender. In 1994 only 3 per cent of senior management was female.

3.2 LACK OF LEGITIMACY

Because public officials were seen by the majority of the broader South African community as the agents of the apartheid state, they lacked popular legitimacy. Even where officials tried honestly and diligently to implement constructive policies, as some did, they met opposition and hostility among the communities they were attempting to assist.

3.3 LOW CAPACITY FOR SERVICE DELIVERY AND DEVELOPMENT

In the experience of the majority black population, the apartheid public service in South Africa failed to live up to what should have been its essential mission and purpose, that of

serving the people. The system of service provision that developed historically was both discriminatory and exclusionary, and was based largely on the assumption that communities were passive recipients rather than active participants in the limited services that were provided. The notion that the public service could or should play an important developmental role did not enter into the apartheid lexicon. The purpose of state officials was to administer, control and, at best, to hand down services, not to work closely with communities in ways that might enable them to take control of their own development and empowerment. Development, if it happened at all, was something done to people not with them.

3.4 CENTRALISED CONTROL AND TOP-DOWN MANAGEMENT.

Because the public service was a control mechanism against the majority population, it became of necessity highly authoritarian, centralised and rule bound in its operation. It was characterised, in particular by the development of a vertical, top-down management structure in which the lower level (as well as clients) were hardly consulted and seldom dared to question a decision. Democratic practices were discouraged, both internally and in interaction with the public. There was little or no incentive for creativity and no culture of service and responsiveness to the needs of citizens and clients.

3.5 LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

Accountability within the service, tended to be limited to administrative and budgetary accountability. Employees were held accountable for adherence to rules and procedures rather than for efficiency and productivity. The performance audits introduced lately by the Auditor General covered only a few areas and seem not to have had much impact on improved output and increased public insight.

Wider accountability of the service to the public was not in evidence. In fact, the various public services were characterised by their secretiveness and the exclusion of public scrutiny. Information was closely guarded and released only under pressure. Decisions with a strong impact on the public were frequently made outside the scrutiny of the various Parliaments let alone that of the population as a whole. All this created space for widespread inefficiency, mismanagement and misappropriation of funds and increased the illegitimacy of the government in the public's eye. The state under these circumstances became very much a law unto itself.

3.6 ABSENCE OF EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT INFORMATION AND FINANCIAL CONTROL.

No fully deployed management information systems were installed to promote information sharing and efficient monitoring and revision of public sector programmes. One important consequence of this is that there are few reliable statistics on the staffing and composition of the public service today.

Budgetary proceedings were formalistic, unrelated to past performance and future programme goals, and exclusive of public participation. Rigidity in procedures and detail locked resources into inappropriate or badly-planned programmes. And overall control of expenditure and the prevention of corruption were not effective.

3.7 LACK OF A PROFESSIONAL ETHOS AND WORK ETHIC

Many of the problems outlined above have served to inhibit the development of a professional work ethic and commitment amongst public servants. Some islands of efficiency did exist, however, and some civil servants showed impressive dedication and capacity under the most unfavourable conditions. In many parts of the service, however, inefficiency, mismanagement and corruption became the norm. In the former "TVBC states" and "self-governing territories," for example, lack of commitment to one's work was seen by some public servants as a subtle form of opposition to the Bantustan system. Unfortunately, over time this lack of commitment tended to become a way of life.

4. VISION, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

Policy framework and deliberations should first and foremost be centred around addressing the inherited Public Works resources and mechanisms together with the problems and backlogs that go with it. For these issues to be tackled successfully it is important that serious thought be given to transform the present Public Works.

The transformation process should be guided by a clear and commonly accepted vision of the goals and values in line with the overall policies of the organisation which is that of providing a better life for all. Values and principles to underpin the process of policy formulation should inter alia be:-

4.1 PARTICIPATION

People affected must have access and be part of decision making.

4.2 USER FRIENDLINESS

Accessibility by users should be a norm.

4.3 EQUITY

People of the province have a right to fair treatment.

4.4 DEMOCRACY

Interests and needs of all should be represented, planned for and implemented through a democratic process.

4.5 ACCOUNTABILITY

Officials and civil servants shall work in a transparent way and constantly refer to feedback and recommendations.

4.6 DECENTRALISATION

Services should be planned and developed at a local level where possible to allow maximum community and user participation.

4.7 DISTRIBUTION

Equality benefit to society should be allocated in a way to equalize distribution of resources and opportunities.

5. FOCUS OF POLICY

The focus should be on public service delivery to meet delivery targets in the RDP policy framework.

5.1 IMPLEMENTATION OF RDP

The RDP should be implemented without compromise especially in meeting basic needs in the delivery of Public Works at Provincial and Local Government levels.

The RDP should be a vehicle to restructure and transform the built environment.

The implementation of the NPWP should be programmed into short term, medium term and long term delivery.

5.2 HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Development of human resources is central to enhance excellence services delivery.

To realise objectives of reconstruction and development, Public Works should serve as a one stop information center to facilitate opening of opportunities in the construction industry and its restructuring through training and empowerment of disadvantaged section of society.

5.3 SUPPORT FOR GOVERNMENT POLICY ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC OBJECTIVES.

In the process of policy formulation efforts should be made to understand the Government's Green Paper on Public Works and this should be translated into programmes for implementation at Provincial and Local level.

5.4 COMMUNITY BASED PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMMES.

Community Based Public Works Programme is a sub-programme to bring immediate benefits to communities in the areas of poverty relief through jobs provision of infrastructure, capacity building and skills training.

5.5 BUDGET PROCESS

The budget process should reflect the priorities of the province, interventions in the previously marginalised sector of society and a well thought, planned and systematised maintenance programmes in Roads, Buildings and Community Based Development.

Budgeting should reflect integration on reconstruction and development, where rationalisation of function in departments which are not structured to deliver, Public Works i.e. budgeting for maintenance of public buildings should be re-routed to Public Works as a function to eliminate apportioning of blame when that service is not rendered.

5.6 TRANSFORMATION

Transformation is a critical policy instrument and need a strategic focus where programming is outlined and meeting of targets is reported to the electorate.

Participation in the process should focus in transformation the electorate into being social citizens rather political citizens who only votes but who vote and participate.

A Critical Provincial Public Works Programme be erected as part of the transformation process to allow maximisation of job creation as policy. The implication is that the private sector in the province look upon government as creator of wealth instead of the other way round by so doing spending on construction should carry a mandatory clause to create jobs in line with reforming the procurement system sectors to focus - roads, construction of public facilities, tourism, agriculture housing etc.

6. CONCLUSION

It will require the organisation to generate broader debate and dialogue to reach a sufficient consensus that the above constitutes the parameters within which Public Works should operate. Then, the out come of such an exercise (debate) will ensure that the ownership of the product resides with the collective and not few individuals. This will avert deviations/alienation from policy framework by the very members of the organisation.

Having understood our roles and capacity, we will then be required to develop clear strategies identify policy instrument and set clear targets for us to carry these tasks through.