

MEDIA RELEASE



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Department of Water Affairs and Forestry - Chief Directorate: Communication
Services

IRELAND AID TARGETS SOUTH AFRICA'S POOREST PROVINCES

Embargo: 14:00

Date: 12 December 2001

Nearly R63 million in aid from the Irish Government is set to significantly boost water and sanitation developments in Northern Province, KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape, it was announced today by Water Affairs and Forestry Director General, Mike Muller and Ambassador Hugh Swift of Ireland.

The grant will supplement grants provided by the European Union and member states towards the implementation of the R2,2 billion. Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Support Programme (WSSSP) Masibambane in the areas of capacity building, improved service delivery of essential services and contributing to the strengthening of good governance. " In keeping with international development aid trends Ireland Aid has chosen to take the sector wide approach contributing to a common pool of donor funds for a sector programme driven by Government .My Department welcomes this approach", said Muller.

Commenting further on the approach Muller said, " rather than donors managing their own projects and programmes, this approach indicates confidence in the South African Government and the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry in particular. From a South African perspective it is also an effective way of co-ordinating donor support and ensuring that it is directed to meeting our strategic goals".

" Today's announcement covers a period of two years beginning in January 2002 and ending in December 2003 and is designed to accelerate the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry's service delivery in bridging the water and sanitation backlog in three provinces, KwaZulu-Natal, Northern Province and Eastern Cape. This assistance demonstrates our commitment to assisting the South African Government in achieving its priorities in the water and sanitation sector", said Ambassador Swift.

Currently the Masibambane Programme is implemented in collaboration with the European Union, United Kingdom, the Netherlands and France. The objective of the programme is to provide basic water supply and sanitation services to rural communities. This is done through a variety of activities, including the support to strategic policy development, water and sanitation services provision to selected poor rural communities and institutional support to various levels of public sector institutions.

Ireland's bi-lateral assistance programme for South Africa has the particular aim of assisting those who have been disadvantaged by apartheid. The overall objective is to support the Government of the Republic of South Africa in the implementation of its policies aimed at achieving poverty reduction and human development. Since 1994, Ireland has contributed over 90 million Rand to support the democratic transformation of South Africa and to initiatives that enable people's participation in this transformation. Ireland has long been a supporter of the people of South Africa.

During the apartheid years the Government, the people of Ireland and Irish Missionaries made an important contribution to alleviating the suffering of the oppressed majority.

Ireland has been supporting the Water and Sanitation sector through the NGO Mvula Trust and the National Community Water and Sanitation Training Institute (NCWSTI) since 1996 and has disbursed over 13 million Rand to the sector since that time.

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