DEPUTY MINISTER PRESENTS ALTERNATIVE BUILDING METHODS TO THE FREE STATE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

The Gombani village in the Vhembe District of Limpopo was the first to launch the Alternative Building Technologies pilot project in August 2011
The Deputy Minister of Public Works has now set to expand this programme which was developed in conjunction with the department through its public entity Agrément South Africa (ASA) to the Free State Province.

The new form of technology was conceived by the Hydraform Company and licensed by Agrément South Africa.

In terms of the methodology, a diesel powered machine runs continuously to mix the soil and the negligible amount of water and cement to produce interlocking bricks, which after 7 days of drying are ready to be laid, requiring little or no cement mortar in between them.

As part of the programme, the building of the two houses in Gombani village was a ploy to showcase the alternative technology and improve the quality of life of rural women in and around the village.

The Department bought the machine and gave it to the 12 women who were formed into a cooperative and registered under the Expanded Public Works Programme. They receive a stipend while assisting each other to build their own homes, using the national specifications as set down by the Department of Human Settlements. This is to ensure a sustainable economic opportunity for these and other rural people still caught in situations of extreme poverty.

In response to the presentation by the Deputy Minister, the Executive Council of the Free State, expressed interest in exploring the technology further, possibly to ultimately identify locations in the province, where it can be piloted. Consequently, the members of the Executive Council will in the near future make an attempt to visit the pilot site in the Gombani village, for the purpose of benchmarking.

According to the statistics from the National Land Committee, between 10 and 15 million South Africans live in areas that are characterised by extreme poverty and underdevelopment. The vast majority of households in these areas are headed by women. That is why the Deputy Minister decided to embark on this programme to contribute to rural development and enhance women's opportunities to economic empowerment.

To this end, the Department of Public Works has now joined hands with the South African Women in Construction (SAWIC) and the Mmabatho Foundation for Women Development, in spearheading the use of alternative technologies. These technologies will improve the quality of life of rural women and facilitate

their active participation in infrastructure development and economic empowerment.

The Deputy Minister emphasised that the project is meant to change the lives of rural women by empowering them to participate in the economic activities. “The overall objective of the government is to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy for rural development that will be aimed at improving the quality of life of rural households, enhancing the country’s food security through a broader base of agricultural production and exploiting the varied economic potential that each region of the country enjoys,” she said.