



human settlements

MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Building No 6 & 7, No 7 Government Boulevard, Riverside Park, Extension 2
Mbombela, Mpumalanga, Private Bag X11328, Mbombela, 1200
Tel: +27 (13) 766 6088, Fax: +27 (13) 766 8441

Litiko
Lekuhlaliswa Kwebantfu

Departement van
Menslike Nedersittings

UmNyango
Wokuhlaliswa Kwabantu

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AGRI-VILLAGE DWELLERS RECEIVE LAND AND PROPER SERVICES

After years of struggle and poor living condition in farms, today the community of Jabulani Agri-Village in the Mkhondo Local Municipality (formerly Piet Retief) have all the reasons to smile as they now spend their twilight years in the comfort of their homes after the Department of Human Settlements together with the municipality and other stakeholders built a multi-million housing project to deserving local farm dwellers in the area. The project delivered 115 housing units and other services such as land, electricity, water reservoir, and irrigation scheme, amongst others.

The project was initiated by the provincial government through the Private and Public Partnership (PPP) in 2009 aiming to establish an agricultural village, wherein each family unit or homestead to have the capability of having an opportunity of exercising both crop and stock farming in one site. The delivery comes through the Department's *Farm Resident Housing Assistance Programme* which is a programme to ensure that farm workers have adequate housing and security. The Programme provides subsidies for the development of adequate houses for farm workers close to the farm. This was a multi-partner project with which the Jabulani Agri village was a pilot programme.

The Department's Chief Director for Integrated Human Settlements Mr Doctor Nkosi explained that the project is one of its own kind in the province has been delivered solely to aid the people who live in the farms. "The Farm Dwellers Housing Assistance Programme is essential in the sense that it seeks to improve the lives of people who reside in the farms where there are no adequate services like proper infrastructure. It provides not only shelter but security of tenure and title deeds." Nkosi further elaborated that the village is designed to encourage agricultural activities. The beneficiaries are given plots of 2500 square meters which have enough space for a house and a vegetable garden.

One of the beneficiaries, Mr Elphas Mavuso said that he has been in the farms for more than 15 years and was working in one of the tree plantation farms. "For years, this has always been my life. I have known nothing but to live and work in the farms. I am grateful that today I even own a piece of land and a proper shelter right here, where I have lived most of my life. It feels good and I thank you," echoed Mavuso. Executive Mayor, Cllr Vusi Motha encouraged and thanked all stakeholders for the role they played in ensuring that the project is a success.

Executive Mayor Motha said, "The area has the potential to grow. I wish to see the beneficiaries and many others to use the opportunity and ultimately become competitive players in the economy through their vegetable gardens." Due to the rural context and the inability of most municipalities to deliver the required services, the farm owner is regarded as a key service delivery agent under the programme. The land Jabulani Agri village is on was donated by Mondi. They are the landowners with several tree plantations and many employees who have been working on their farms for years.

ISSUED BY COMMUNICATION SERVICES
MPUMALANGA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS
CONTACT PERSON: FREDDY NGOBE – 013 766 6014 / 082 859 4630/ fngobe@mpg.gov.za



