



rural development & land reform

Department:
Rural Development and Land Reform
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

USE THE LAND WISELY AND FRUITFULLY FOR THE COLLECTIVE BENEFIT OF THIS COMMUNITY

By Tshepo Diale

"We are here to make right those wrongs and to say to our people, here is your land and no more shall you be a slave in the land of your birth. We say today, this land of your forefathers, is now restored to you and your future generations," these were the words by the Deputy President David Mabuza, during the land handover ceremony for settled land claims at Ubizo Community Sports Grounds, Empangeni – KwaZulu-Natal.

The ceremony was attended by the Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform, (DRDLR), Maite Noakana-Mashabane, the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Senzeni Zokwana, the Deputy Minister of DRDLR, Candith Mashego-Dlamini, the Kwa-Zulu Natal (KZN) Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for Human Settlement, Ravi Pillay and MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Themba Mthembu. Also present were King Cetshwayo District and uMhlathuze Mayors Nonhle Mkhulisi and Mdu Mhlongo, neighbouring amakhosi and Induna Mhlongo.

The Ubizo Community's land claim consists of 2547 hectares of land and is made up of 149 households who were dispossessed and there are 894 land restitution beneficiaries (30% of which are women), who are direct descendants of the community that will benefit from the handover. The total value of assets is R136 million.

Addressing the Empangeni community, the deputy president said that the land claim settlement was among the first settled and finalised land claims that government had unlocked to hand over to its rightful beneficiaries.

"The claim was first lodged in 1995, wherein Inkosi Cebekhulu sought justice and dignity for his people by demanding the return of his people's land, which had been taken from them as far back as 1927," he said.

"It is on land that we are able to engage in agricultural production, build human settlements, and drive manufacturing and industrial development in order to create jobs. We are proud to stand on this hallowed lands of their birth; to reach deep into the spirit of those who came before, those who have paid a price for us to be here."

"Now that you have your land back, take it and keep it, use it wisely and fruitfully for the collective benefit of this community and our country. This land is an instrument of your dignity and socio-economic development. You must till this land and produce. From this land, opportunities must come for employment and entrepreneurship," Mabuza said."

"The government was determined not only to restore land, but also to empower people to 'feast, eat, and produce from the land'. It was creating a new era of access and

opportunity. It was about empowerment of the people through broadening of access to land. Those of us in government must work with speed in implementing interventions that will take us forward. As we implement our Land Reform Programme, we shall do so within the prescripts of our laws," he concluded.

INkosi Nsikayezwe Cebekhulu, asked the government to assist with resources and to equip local residents with skills so that they can run their sugar cane farm successfully. 'We are currently working with Tongaat Hulett and they have agreed to mentor one of our local residents, but the relationship we have with them will soon lapse,' said Cebekhulu.

Minister Nkoana-Mashabane said: "Fundamentally, this land must help you answer aspects of our national question, not only about land restitution but about women emancipation and all other struggles and forms of discrimination".

"Here women must no longer have a lived reality of scant livelihoods, struggling without the means of production, without the means to support life, and without the means to create self-worth. They too must see the crackling rays of this victory. Women, more than any of us, have paid the price. They are the birth mothers of our freedom, freedom that we have earned freely on their unpaid labour," she said.

"We must imagine a new generation of women who never allow men to buy their surrender with money or any other social instrument of power because they own their land and productive capacity. We must also use this land to empower young people. They must see, from this land, new opportunities that will potentially change their lives. They must see this as a genuine avenue for development," highlighted the minister.

The community members celebrated throughout the day as they were relieved after getting their land back after many years of struggle. They also appreciated the DRDLR keeping the promised of delivering their land back since they lodged the claim in 1995.