

MEDIA RELEASE - 9 June 2003

KNP helps build the economy

Thanks to a R10 million poverty relief grant from the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT), the Kruger National Park can not only help address its critical staff accommodation shortage but also help to alleviate poverty in the adjacent community.

The grant, as well as an information session regarding the poverty relief programmes in the KNP, was highlighted during the official announcement of the grant, which took place at Mopani Camp last week (Friday June 6, 2003).

According to acting KNP director, Mr Josias Chabani:

"Some of the poorest communities of this country live just beyond the borders of the KNP. These communities are made up of proud people who subscribe to very strong value systems and are conservationists by their nature. However, due to poverty, some of them find themselves having to resort to all sorts of things including poaching. We hope that this project we will bring food onto the plates of a few families and contribute towards the improvement of the standard of living of these people."

"Because of our historical past, there are not enough buildings to satisfy the accommodation needs of our staff. Now, thanks to this generous grant from Government, we have the money to address this desperate need and what better way to 'put-our-money-where-our-mouth-is' than to award these contracts to the emerging contractors we have trained," he said.

During his speech, DEAT's Mr Piet du Plessis said that his department's "deed speaks louder than words.

"It is important that the people from the neighbouring communities of the KNP become good ambassadors as they serve tourists too. We also stress that every rand earned by these contractors thanks to these projects should stay in the area and boost that area's economy. It is really exciting that the KNP has entered into the spirit of development," he concluded.

Mr Blake Schraader, the head of the KNP's Technical Service, explained that the KNP's Emerging Contractor Development Programme had its beginnings in 1999 when he and community leaders met underneath a big marula tree and discussed these and other issues.

"Now seven contractors have finished the first programme and a further 11 emerging contractors have begun their training in this programme. We want these contractors to be sustainable and competitive in the open market but we believe we will get at least seven qualified contractors when the current programme ends in three years time," he said.

The training programme was the first of its sort that registered with the relevant Theta and it fits in with the National Qualifications Framework.



Caption: Viewing the new staff accommodation at Mopani Camp are, from left, Acting KNP Director Josias Chabani, DEAT's Piet du Plessis and KNP Technical Services head Blake Schraader.

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