

WORKING FOR WATER'S ANNUAL REPORT INDICATES A PRODUCTIVE FINANCIAL YEAR

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Chairperson of the Working for Water Board*

[Cape Town, 22 August 2000] Working for Water's 1999/2000 annual report reflects a rewarding financial year - 92% of a budget of R 241-million has been spent.

Says Ronnie Kasrils, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry and Chairperson of the Working for Water Board, "The programme has maintained its record of spending virtually its entire budget within the financial year. The balance which was not exhausted, can be attributed to the severe flooding which was experienced earlier this year.

"The increase in our grant from the Poverty Relief Fund from R 120-million to R 230-million – with the security of three year funding – is a major boost for the project.

In line with the national rural development strategy, the *Working for Water* programme has been promoting partnerships with other government departments. In view of this we welcome the decision by the Department of Finance to channel this funding via three core Departments: Water Affairs and Forestry, Environmental Affairs and Tourism and Agriculture.

Since its establishment in 1995, the programme's main aims and objectives have always been to work towards enhancing water security, improving the ecological integrity of natural systems, investing in the most marginalised sectors in South Africa and enhancing their quality of life through job creation, restoring the productive potential of the land, and developing economic benefits from wood, land, water and trained people.

The annual report reflects that the programme has, with much success, achieved notable milestones in terms of realising its aims and objectives, as the following will reflect:

20 999 people were employed during the financial year (10 492 person years), of which a significant portion - 58% - were women, 23 youth and 1% disabled.

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95% of the budget was spent on labour intensive clearing. Of this, 80% was task-based (i.e. payment only for work completed).

A significant highlight of the 1999/2000 financial year is the level of progress made with regard to the empowerment of marginalised sectors of South Africa. This is evident through 884 emerging contractors which are employed by the programme, of which individual entrepreneurs run 85%.

Much progress has been made in terms of clearing invasive alien plant species. 238 823 hectares has been cleared, and a further 51 081 hectares was rehabilitated.

Other significant accomplishments include the 'Best Management Practices for Preventing and Controlling Invasive Alien species' symposium, which attracted many of the world's leading experts on invasive species.

The launch of the Ukuvuka campaign, which was formed in the wake of the devastating fires along the Table Mountain chain earlier this year, has received overwhelming private sector support.

The programme received an Impumelelo Award for innovation for its efforts in conserving our precious water resources.

The programme has worked with a number of departments and looks forward to strengthening these in line with integrated development principles. The programme thanks the Department of Welfare and Land Affairs for their contribution.

"In addition, it has slowed the relentless marching of invading alien plant species across our country, and has made a genuine difference to the well-being of the lives of the most marginalised".

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