In response to high poverty rates affecting rural communities, the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform has launched an agricultural skills programme.

Through its operating agency, the Agricultural Research Council, the department has equipped about nine youths from Ingwe wards 1, 2 and 11 with agricultural skills.

At an event held at the Zidweni Hall in KwaZulu-Natal in September 2013, to mark the start of the rollout of the programme, beneficiaries expressed confidence that their crop-cultivation skills had improved considerably and that their produce would be sold to big businesses.

One of the beneficiaries, Nompumelelo Sibetha, 25, said, “We are working in association with community care givers to fast track ‘one-home-one-garden’.” She said they aim to contribute to child-headed households.

The agricultural training for the youths follows on from Operation Sukuma Sakhe, which identified some wards in Ingwe as “War on Poverty Sites.” The training responds to outcome seven of government’s 12 desired outcomes, namely “Vibrant, equitable and sustainable rural communities with food security for all.”

The programme’s successes include the establishment of 58 food gardens, and training in cultivation for 45 groups of people. More groups are expected to be formed through training.

Nontokozo Ngwabe of the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform said the purpose of training the youth is to make them ambassadors and help realise the department’s vision of tackling poverty through agriculture. “We want to see this group growing bigger, dominating the local market. I had a good working relationship with them because they are so passionate about training. Even after studying they did not wait for assistance from the department. Instead they started doing what they could with limited resources,” said Ngwabe.
The use of technology to improve education is being tested in the rural area of Cofimvaba, Eastern Cape.

The Technology for Rural Education Development (TECH4RED) Project is a collaboration between the departments of science and technology, basic education, of rural development and land reform, and the Eastern Cape’s Provincial Department of Education.

The project is aimed at contributing to the improvement of rural education through technology-led innovation.

It entails creating an integrated large-scale demonstration environment in the Cofimvaba district, to serve as a test-bed for technologies to support the education system, using a "living lab" approach.

As part of the information communication technology (ICT) for Rural Education Development pilot project the Rural Infrastructure Development branch of the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform recently handed over 260 tablets to delighted matric students at the Arthur Mfebe Senior Secondary School in St Marks Village, Cofimvaba. The students were ecstatic, as the tablets will make learning and especially research easy.

The programme intends to investigate the implications of giving rural South African schools access to digital content by using advanced mobile devices such as tablets, e-readers and smartphones.

The project will test various models, in terms of devices, content, infrastructure, connectivity, and integration into the school environment, costs, sustainability, logistics, support and maintenance, operational support and teacher training. The intent is to phase in mobile devices to support teaching and learning inside and outside the classroom as part of a blended learning environment, where various modes of teaching and learning material co-exist comfortably.
KwaSani Municipality held its third annual Cultural and Food Testing Expo in Himeville, KwaZulu-Natal in September 2013, to mark Heritage Month.

In line with the Heritage Month 2013 theme of "Reclaiming, Restoring and Celebrating Our Living Heritage" the Mayor of KwaSani Municipality, Mduduzi Bhanda said, "September is a time to celebrate our heritage and promote social cohesion."

"The Cultural and Food Testing Expo event provides a platform for local residents to showcase the beauty of their culture," said Banda. "People should not be ashamed of their origins. Instead they should attract other people to their culture."

Celebrating this day gives community members the courage to look back with pride, heal the divisions of the past, and move towards the vision of national unity and cultural harmony.

The expo was supported by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Arts and Culture and Sisonke District Municipality. Senior KwaSani Tourism officer Andile Zwezwe said future aspirations for this project include contributing to job creation by assisting local people to start their own food businesses catering for different culture groups.

Drum majorettes lead celebrations during heritage month. African cuisine display during Heritage month celebrations.

Mrs Mwandla of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Arts and Culture, who was the judge on the day, tasted various traditional foods and presented shopping vouchers to the winners. A Basotho dish won third prize, the second prize went to an Indian dish and a Zimbabwean dish claimed first place.

Stakeholders who supported the event and gave their services were Vodacom, the Department of Arts and Culture, Future Leaders, the Mzansi Jazz Association, the Independent Electoral Commission and non-profit organisations.

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Members of the audience raised many challenges that confront them. Some needed immediate interventions with a range of stakeholders. Safety and job creation were the most critical issues addressed at the event.

Fighting crime is one of government’s five key priorities. GCIS facilitated the dialogue and gave an undertaking to create a platform with the South African Police Service, Community Policing Forum and other key stakeholders to deal with the safety of elderly people in the area.

As of March 2009, more than 10 million households (77%) had access to sanitation compared to about 5 million (50%) in 1994.

At a health screening event organised in partnership with Neighbourhood Old Age Homes (Noah) in the Western Cape during Older Persons Week, 30 September to 6 October 2013, GCIS officials presented government messages and gave elderly people the opportunity to engage with government representatives on issues that affect them.

“We are grateful that the President and government is caring about us and we need more events of this nature to speak to our government regularly,” one elder commented.

Another community member said, “Cape Town seems not equally serviced. We are not enjoying the fruit of freedom and yet government addresses equal opportunities as we celebrate 20 years of our democracy”.

The audience demonstrated that elderly people need government to work with them in tackling some of the challenges. Overall though, they were impressed that government believes they have a role to play in building democracy in South Africa.

The event enjoyed media coverage and helped raise awareness in the community about the needs of elderly people.
OUTCOME 7: VIBRANT, EQUITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE RURAL COMMUNITIES AND FOOD SECURITY FOR ALL

Collage for the Limpopo 1913 Land Centenary Exhibition
By Reneilwe Moningi: GCIS Limpopo

Strategic support provided to 416 new emerging farmers through the Recapitalisation and Development Programme, in addition to the existing 595 farms currently being supported at a cost of R1.2 billion.

The official opening

The parade in Polokwane, Seshego and Disteneng

Welcoming the trucks
The tolling of the Gauteng Freeway Improvement Project (GFIP) is not just about building roads and paying for them; it is about investing in our future and building a better country. Last week’s gazetting of the e-toll regulations and the decision by the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA) to dismiss the Opposition to Urban Tolling Alliance (Outa) against the SA National Road Agency Ltd (Sanral) has brought us a step closer to building a better country.

Importantly, the use of the courts and the respect accorded to court decisions demonstrates that we are a maturing democracy. The SCA ruling confirms that the decision to implement the e-tolling on Gauteng’s freeways is lawful and that all procedures including the public consultation process had been followed.

The government believes this latest development will now allow the people of Gauteng and South Africans in general to focus on the benefits we have already gained - and still stand to gain - from improvements to the freeways in the economic hub of Southern Africa.

According to the Department of Transport spokesman Tiyani Rikhotso, “the Minister of Transport will consider the input before making a final determination on the tariffs that motorists will pay on the tolled road network”.

We call on the public to participate in this consultative process to ensure that their views are taken into account. The latest e-toll tariffs are up for comment and are a testament of a caring government; we have more than once reduced the toll tariffs since the first announcement in February 2011. The original tariff for the various classes of e-tag vehicles published in February 2011 was drastically cut after government heard the voice of the people during the public participation meetings.

The user-pay principle was adopted as government policy as stated in the White Paper on Transport in 1996 as it offered an equitable method for motorists to pay only for the section of road used. It ensures that South Africans who do not use the Gauteng freeway will not be expected to finance the construction or upgrading of the road. The argument that funding the roads through the e-tolling was “unreasonable” misses the point and it was dismissed by the Pretoria High Court which had earlier ruled:

“The premise of the unreasonableness argument is that funding by way of tolling is unreasonable because there are better funding alternatives available, particularly fuel levies. But that premise is fatally flawed. Sanral has to make its decision within the framework of Government policy.”

In moving forward we must be mindful that there needs to be a shared responsibility between Government and citizens to support, finance and develop the country’s infrastructure. The upgrades are already assisting in contributing to the economic development of the country. The main benefit of the GFIP is that it lowers the cost of motoring due to benefits derived from decreased congestion.

Over the years traffic congestion has steadily increased, with peak hours extending about 15 minutes every year. In addition, increased productivity from less time spent in the movement of goods and services has a direct impact on South Africa’s overall economic growth.

We hope that this latest development will not lead to a situation that compromises the level of South Africa’s economic growth and the standard of living of citizens, especially the poor and unemployed. We should heed Cabinet’s call when it says: “The e-tolling system is one aspect of the GFIP which has enhanced the movement of people and goods and services has a direct impact on South Africa’s overall economic growth. We hope that this latest development will not lead to a situation that compromises the level of South Africa’s economic growth and the standard of living of citizens, especially the poor and unemployed. We should heed Cabinet’s call when it says: “The e-tolling system is one aspect of the GFIP which has enhanced the movement of people and goods and services has a direct impact on South Africa’s overall economic growth.”

The Cabinet has urged South Africans to work together to make the GFIP a success and to appreciate the remarkable growth of modern infrastructure in the country.