

Speech by Hon. Faith Muthambi on the occasion of GCIS Budget Vote

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Honourable Chairperson
Honourable Minister Collins Chabane
Honourable Deputy Minister Obed Bapela
Honourable Members

It is with great pleasure that I address this house on the occasion of Government Communications (GCIS) Budget Vote which will be turning 15 years on the 18 May 2013.

I wish to congratulate the Honourable Minister and GCIS management team led by the Acting CEO Ms Phumla Williams for the sterling work they have been doing in ensuring that the voice of government is heard across the length and breadth of our beautiful country.

Purposeful and concise communication between government and its citizens is a moral obligation as well as a pragmatic practice that originates from the very principle of democracy.

To this end, we have noticed that there are communication activations that have been organised in various places across the country to market and popularise the work of government and in particular this Budget Vote.

Honourable Chairperson, Napoleon and other great men like Isaac Newtown, Shakespeare and many others were makers of empires. I call them makers of the universe but some of them were only repairers. Newton made a universe, which lasted for 300 years, Einstein has made the universe, which I suppose you want me to say, will never stop but I don't know how long it will last. Although great men and eminent men have monuments in bronze and marble setup for them, but among great men ever produced in South Africa, there is a man of divine and peace who became enshrined in millions and millions of hearts in the world so that all of us become somewhat of the stuff that he is made of, though to an infinitely lesser degree; and that man is none other than former President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. Mandela's wisdom and action continue to inspire our people especially his lifelong struggle for democracy and passion for service delivery.

We, in the ANC, the majority party in Parliament and the oldest liberation movement in the continent, are thrilled with how the GCIS is being managed and its continued achievements of clean audits year after year, importantly staying consistently within its mandate which was endorsed by this Parliament 15 years ago. To our distinguished members of staff present here today; we are saying: keep it up and sustain the momentum, for we cannot postpone our people's hunger for developmental information.

Honourable House Chairperson: allow me to state that South Africa continues to be better than before April 1994!

As a democratic government, we are committed to ensure all South Africans have access to information that will enable them to change their lives.

Honourable Chairperson and Honourable Members, it is indeed befitting to indicate that the African National Congress led government has made qualitative advances in transforming South Africa into a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society.

Mutshami wa Xitulu, mfumo wa ANC wu ya emahlweni niku humelela loku vonakalaka xikanwe niku khomeka etlhelweni raku hundzuka ka vutomi bya vaaka tiko leswaku byi va eka xiyimo xo antswa hi mayelana ni swilaveko

swo tani hi dyondzo, rihanyu, hluvukiso wa tindzhawu ta le makaya ni misava, ku tumbuluxa ni ku vangiwa ka mintirho, xikanwe ni kulwa ni vughevenga. Visible and tangible progress in changing the people's lives for the better has been achieved particularly in the following areas of our election manifesto priorities:

Education - There are now 192 621 (**one hundred and ninety two thousand six hundred and twenty one**) registered early childhood development centres (ECD) with just under 845 000 (**eight hundred and forty five thousand**) children receiving ECD and partial care services. An achievement in laying the critical foundation for our future generation. The past year has also shown an increase in the number of children that passed their matriculation examinations. Universities have equally recorded an increase in the uptake of students especially from the previously marginalised communities.

Health - The life expectancy of South Africans increased from 56 years in 2009 to 60 years in 2011. South African was announced by the United Nation as one country with the most successful programme of HIV/AIDS programme. Just recently, chairperson the Honourable Minister announced a single pill dosage for the HIV/AIDs patients again further improving the quality life of the HIV patients.

The South African government led by the African National Congress continues to honour its commitments to better the lives of all South Africans.

Rural development and land reform - This ANC government is committed to redress the untold injustices that were brought to rural communities wherein their social settings, cultures and families structures were destroyed. Small black farming communities were destroyed. Through our land reform programme we have managed to restore the dignity of our communities.

Our **Thusong Service Centres**; as Hon Ndlazi has highlighted; setup countrywide have ensured the services of government are brought closer to communities. I should hasten to say the Government midterm review will assist us to take stock on some of the failures we have experienced and assist us to forge ahead in further restoring the dignity of the rural communities.

Job creation - So far the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform's National Rural Youth Services Corps has enrolled 11740 young people in various training programmes. The recently signed Employment Accord by government, labour and business is again taking the challenge of unemployment facing the country in particular the young people to higher level.

It is enlightening to note that all the parties through the true spirit of patriotism ; have committed to work with government in addressing the issues of unemployment. Government has also intensified its efforts around infrastructure development to grow our economy and importantly to create jobs.

In support of these initiatives GCIS has contributed by producing a booklet that offers young people with information that can assist them in tapping in opportunities available in government.

Honourable House Chairperson and Honourable Members

On Fighting crime - The annual national crime statistics that are released by the South African Police continues to show the decline in certain types of crime. To address the continued challenges of gender based violence and abuse of children, the National Council on Gender Based Violence was established in 2012 and Government has increased personnel in units such as the Family Violence and the Child Protection and Sexual Offences units. GCIS has continued to provide communities with information around the issues of Gender based violence.

The National Development Plan, the country's vision of what our country would be in the year 2030 posits priorities which seek to reduce inequalities in our society; poverty and unemployment. This plan provides a framework that was collaboratively developed by government and South Africans.

As this ANC government drives its implementation within the available resources, information dissemination will be central. It will be critical Honourable Chairperson to take society along working towards this 2030 vision as spelt out in the National Development Plan. Honourable Members, despite all these; the battle of ideas is being waged between the theoretical and practical underpinnings of the democratic developmental state and neo liberal paradigm.

Media continues to publish negative news on government disregarding the good service delivery record of government. The media continues to distort and ignore information provided by government in a transparent and accountable manner.

Honourable Chairperson, the Majority party, ANC in Parliament will never allow a situation where our citizens are denied information on government policies and programmes. We will ensure that the ANC- led Government has a pro-active and coordinated government communications. In this regard, Honourable Minister, Government Communications should be strengthened for it to be able to coordinate information flow among different departments and among all the three sphere of government.

Honourable Members, South Africa is a developmental state. Its nature and character is that of intervening meaningfully and practically on the socio-economic conditions of the citizens. In this regard Government Communications should in part base its communication approach on "Development Communication Approach, "as it is best in a developmental state like ours. The definition of this approach by Nora Quebral succinctly confirms the above as follows;

"Development communication is the art and science of human communication applied to the speedy transformation of a country and the mass of its people from poverty to a dynamic state of economic growth that makes possible greater social equality and the larger fulfilment of the human potential."

Furthermore, the development communication approach has the following characteristics;

- It is responsive
- It relies on feedback
- It must be creative and innovative
- It is about continuity and sustainability
- Use of local languages that community members will understand.
- Fosters unmediated communication

It is our firm belief and understanding that the use of development communication approach will go a long way in creating an active citizenry which is capable of meaningfully participating and taking advantage of the opportunities of our democracy and as such the negative reporting by most media houses will never find space in the minds and hearts of our people who continues to vote for us.

Honourable Members, we in the ANC are quite aware of the negative agenda of those who are opposed to our strategic objective of creating a non-racial, non-sexist, prosperous and democratic society. It is an objective reality that part of their strategy will be to use media to spread lies and disinformation as they are already doing. The ANC- led government will never abdicate its responsibilities of continuing to inform and educate our citizens on our achievements and programs of our democratic government.

The Izimbizo approach to public participation resonates well with what the majority of citizens in this country understand. It promotes two -way communication and interaction between the elected representatives and the citizens. It strengthens participatory democracy and accountability.

The people's movement and majority party in this House; the African National Congress fully supports the idea of Izimbizo which includes repeat visits. Feedback remains critical on commitments made during the previous visits. Failure to provide feedback will make our people to lose trust in their democratic government-a situation we in the ANC will never allow.

Honourable Chairperson, we are living in a society where information technologies has advanced and information flows in a speed of lightening. In this regard the use of social media has increased dramatically particularly among the young

generations. We have no doubt in our minds that GCIS has the necessary capabilities of ensuring that government communications across all the spheres of government is able to interact with our citizens in the mediums of their choice like Twitter, Facebook, Mxit and etc.

Honourable Members, indeed South Africa still experiences backlogs in terms of Broadband and other network challenges. This situation cannot be allowed to continue as such. Government Communications working with Department of Communications should profile all those areas without Broadband and connectivity.

The Government's Thusong Service Centres programme formerly known as the Multi-Purpose Community Centres have been identified as the primary approach for the implementation of development communication and information as they offer a wide range of services that communities can use for their own empowerment. These one-stop, integrated community for in their IDPs as the IDP is the entry point for any development initiative at local level. We have no doubt that the Government Communications will double their efforts in the marketing and promotions of these centres for their maximum usage because we cannot allow them to collapse or to become white elephants. Their collapse will mean denying our people the much needed services closer to where they live.

We are pleased that the government communications continues to find innovative and creative communication platforms of showcasing government achievements and successes in the implementation of the government's five priorities. The introduction of the weekly "My District Today" electronic newsletter is yet another positive step in the right direction.

Honourable Members, the ANC- led government will be implementing the Broadcasting Digital Migration Programme in the not so distant future. Primarily, the programme with its many benefits will ensure that the digital television technology is accessed by all, especially the poor, thereby bridging the digital divide. We are confident that Government Communications in partnership with the lead Department (DOC) embark on sustained multifaceted and integrated communications campaigns create awareness on the Digital Migration Programme .

Honourable Chairperson, our country will be celebrating 20 years of democracy next year. We in the ANC, the People's Movement and the majority party in Parliament are proud of the many advances we have scored in our efforts to create a Better Life for All. As we celebrate the successes of our democracy we should not forget to maximise the use of community media. Government Communications should continue to work with community media (print and electronic) to profile successes of our democracy and opportunities created. Platforms should be created to showcase beneficiaries of government programmes .

The battle of ideas could only be won if enough capacity is built amongst communicators. We in the ruling party- the ANC; support the government communication's efforts to train communicators across the board.

Honourable Chairperson, we in the ANC, the majority party in this house regard communication as a strategic tool to speed service delivery. It is our considered view that Government Communications (GCIS) need to be fully capacitated and resourced for it to achieve its mandate. The successful implementation of all the elements of the National Communication Strategy will require additional funding.

I would like to end this address by quoting one of my favourite poets, Aeschilus. He once said and I quote "even in our sleep pain which cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart, until, in our despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of GOD". Let's go as GCIS to our people to constantly remind them of government activities, policies, service and programmes. Remember, the pain they suffered during the dark days when information was not communicated to them!

The ANC supports both MDDA and GCIS budget vote.

Ndo livhuwa!! Ndza nkhenisa Mutshami wa Xitulu!!!!

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- **MDDA-Sanlam Local Media Awards entries for 2014 now open** 26 Nov 2014
- **Entries open for MDDA-Sanlam Local Media Awards** 25 Nov 2014
- **Mandla Langa acknowledges 20 years of media freedom and diversity** 28 May 2014
- **MDDA-Sanlam Local Media Awards winners announced** 27 May 2014

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