



agriculture & rural development

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agriculture
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PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

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SPEECH BY MEC FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, MR CYRIL XABA AT THE EVENT TO HANDOVER FINANCIAL COMPENSATION VOUCHERS TO THE TRADO B LAND CLAIMANTS IN VRYHEID 01 AUGUST 2015

Program Director

Chief Director for Restitution Support, Advocate B Mbili

Abaqulusi Mayor, Cllr P N Khaba

Ward Councillor Mr H V Khumalo

Chairman of the TRADO B Land Claimants Committee, Mr A. Dlalisa

Officials Present

The TRADO B Community Land claimants

Ladies and Gentlemen

I have been very fortunate to attend a number of Land restitution events where communities have been given land or where if this is not possible, they have received financial compensation. It is always very uplifting to see the joy of the older generation, not just because of the compensation, but because the pain and suffering which they endured is being recognised.

But, what has struck me at these events is that these communities were once very close to the land. They were successful farmers, with many running very profitable businesses.

Members of the Trado B community I have been told, had been owners of thriving farming enterprises and other businesses. All of this was lost by a stroke of a pen.

What happened to you is particularly tragic and highlights one of the more shameful chapters of our history. You were moved under an apartheid regulation known as the Betterment Planning Polices.

But, you soon learnt that instead of getting better, your situation became much worse.

Betterment planning was used to create and arrange space in the former homeland areas. According to the history books under "Betterment," areas were divided into distinct zones - for residential, planting and grazing usage - and people were forced to move into these zones. The Trado B Community were forcibly relocated to Emadresini which was set down as a residential zone under the Betterment Policy. In the process you lost residential, planting and grazing land which had been in the community for generations. The tragedy of it all was that you were never compensated for your loss.

A book on forced removals in South Africa known as the Surplus Peoples Project says and I quote, "betterment has forcibly removed more people in more places with greater social consequences and provoking more resistance than any other category of forced removal in South Africa."

While finding out more about this Betterment, I came across the words of Nyaniso Gxekwa, who was a victim of the policy. Those of you who were around in 1962 when the community was moved will know what he is talking about.

He said: "We were living happily before Betterment. There was good neighbourliness and mutual support. We helped each other with ploughing, planting and working the land. When it came, we started to experience death, because things that people had worked hard for, were taken from them. People resented that, and as a result, they died. There was hunger because we were forced to use poor, small land and our stock were culled. We are no longer united; now we fight with each other."

In fact, here in Vryheid your situation became much worse because the little land you were given began to shrink even more when families who were also being forcibly removed from other areas were brought here. This is how the township of Emondlo was established. In other words, the land taken away from the TRADO B community was used for the development of Emondlo.

The community was moved in 1962 and by 1963, the township was established. Emondlo came about because of the process of forced removals due to the Group Areas Act as well as the Native Trust Land Act of 1963. Under this Act, freehold land owned by black people in areas surrounded by white farms became known as Black spots and the Act allowed for people to be removed from these black spots.

Residents of KwaBhanya (Besterspruit), Kingsley, the Khambule mission, as well as farms surrounding Vryheid were taken to the land that the Trado B community had lived and farmed on. This was near the Mondlo mountain, approximately 28 kilometres outside Vryheid and within the boundaries of the KwaZulu homeland, and left to establish a new community.

The history of the area shows that as with most township areas, the apartheid government invested little in infrastructure and the people had to struggle with inadequate housing, sanitation and water supply. In addition, being more than 28 kilometres away from the nearest town, transport costs were high, with few job opportunities in the area. People who were once farmers became migrant workers. Government has embarked on a process of not only giving families redress for the land that they lost but it also finds itself having to address the poor investment in infrastructure in township areas.

We are here today because government is committed to the process of improving the lives of our people. We are here to celebrate the fact that the Trado B community which had lost everything are finally getting compensation.

The Community initially did not want financial compensation but land to go back to farming and development projects. Your claim was finalised in 2007 and you asked that your settlement be used to buy alternate land. Unfortunately no suitable alternate land was found despite a diligent search over six years by the Land Claims Commission, the Department of Rural Development and Land Affairs as well as community members. The community has now settled to take financial compensation.

Today, 153 households made up of 550 beneficiaries, will be sharing compensation of R70million. To the beneficiaries, I say please use the money in a responsible manner and never forget the sacrifices that were made by the older generation of your community. I thank the officials of the Land Claims Commission for the work that was done in verifying this claim and recording what happened to the community. To the younger generation here, I say go and find out the stories of your grandparents and ask them to tell you about Betterment that turned out to be worse and about the successful farmers and business people that were members of the community and how they lived before their land was taken away.

I thank you!