

**THE LAUNCH OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS AND THE UNIVERSAL SERVICE AGENCY COLLABORATION WITH THE QALABOTJHA MPCC TELECENTRE HOSTED BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES AND THE MAFUBE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY**

20 September 2005

On Friday, 23 September 2005, the Deputy Minister for Correctional Services, Cheryl Gillwald, and the Mafube Local Municipality will host the launch of the Department of Communications and Universal Service Agency Collaboration with the Qalabotjha Multi-purpose Community Centre (MPCC) Telecentre. Qalabotjha falls within the parliamentary constituency of Deputy Minister Gillwald.

The launch from 10h00 to 13h00 will be attended by various dignitaries that include the Deputy Minister of Communications Honourable Roy Padayachie, as the keynote speaker, and Deputy Minister Gillwald and the Executive Mayor Honourable Ralebenya as hosts. The event will also be attended by officials of the MPCC partners that include the Telkom Foundation Nedcor Foundation, Cell C and the Universal Service Agency.

The Qalabotjha MPCC is located at Qalabotjha Township in Villiers under the Mafube Municipality. Qalabotjha has a population of approximately 40 000 residents. The Municipality is responsible for providing much needed services to communities in nearby towns such as Villiers, Frankfort, Cornelia and Tweeling through the Qalabotjha Multi-purpose Community Centre. The installation of the additional information and communications technology (ICT) services makes affordable and reliable service provision a reality for these communities.

Through the participation of private entities in this project such as Telkom, Nedcor and Cell C, the MPCC has been upgraded to provide ICT services that were distant dreams. The Universal Service Agency was responsible for the upgrading of the Telecentre to include services such as fast speed internet, fax, scanner and photocopying facilities. The Agency also provided business and ICT training for managers and operators of the Telecentre.

Qalabotjha MPCC now also plays host to other government departments that provide various services such as Social Development, Home Affairs and Labour. In addition, students from the six schools (three Primary and three Secondary Schools) around the area will also benefit from the services provided by this MPCC.

This collaboration between Mafube Local Municipality, the Universal Service Agency and Cell C is unique as it is the first rollout of telecommunication services to a rural community with the backing of corporate sponsorship. The Universal Service Agency's subsidy also enabled the Cell C operator to provide the Community Service Telephone to generate revenues for sustainability of the MPCC Telecentre. Cell C has sponsored airtime to jump start the business and contributed generously to the launch of this historic collaboration.

We urge you to join us in celebrating this unique partnership for rural development.

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Issued by: Department of Correctional Services, Department of Communications, Universal Service Agency and Mafube Local Municipality

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