

1.5 OVERVIEW BY THE ACCOUNTING OFFICER MAGGIE KISAKA-LWAYO



Rural development has been identified as one of the developmental pillars of the South African Government's development agenda. In the rural sphere, Agriculture is still one of the major economic activities and is also regarded as one of the catalytic sectors to drive growth in rural economies. The role of appropriate technology in driving rural development can also not be ignored. In the past 25 years, the Eastern Cape Appropriate Technology Unit has focussed on driving community development in the areas of agriculture and food security, facilitating access to water and sanitation, building infrastructure and alternative energy sources using innovative and appropriate technologies. This has resulted in both upstream and downstream beneficiation. ECATU has remained committed to creating awareness about the importance of appropriate technology in driving sustainable development while undertaking basic research to identify areas of intervention for project implementation and management.

In many developing countries and parts of South Africa, appropriate technologies are providing essential products and services that can relieve the pressure on the farm economy while developing the non farm economy. Appropriate technologies have a huge role to play to complement government's efforts to address current backlogs in the province in the area of: (i) housing- using the soil-cement technology also referred to as the ECATU brick; (ii) water-using the improved bio-filter water purification systems to ensure clean water for rural communities; (iii) sanitation –using ventilated improved double pit systems for communities and schools with no water; and (iv) alternative energy- using biogas and solar energy to provide lighting and cooking options for rural households. There are a number of reasons why appropriate technology solutions are an integral part of the rural development 'story', and why it is destined to become increasingly important over the coming years.

Over the past 25 years, ECATU has pioneered the practice of using appropriate technology to address community needs. Focus has been on the soil cement interlocking brick. Now, tens of thousands of rural communities in the province particularly the former Transkei are doing it for themselves to address their housing needs while transferring skills and generating income.

Aldo Leopold, the great American environmental thinker, once said: "Don't worry too much about how fast you're going, as long as you are going in the right direction." The robust solutions of appropriate technologies, based on the best of local knowledge and rigorous science, are now taking Africa in the right direction.