

Transforming

Returning land is important to revive the pride of people who were forcibly removed from their land. Government has returned land to over 150 000 families.

the land

"The government has also paid millions of rands to people whose land could not be returned because it was turned into an industrial area (where factories were built or houses have been built)," he said.

■ Progress

Gwanya said before 1994, 87% of land was owned by white people, whereas only 13% was in the hands of black people.

"We have managed to return the land belonging to 172 769 families. This has been an important achievement," he said.

The cut-off date for land claimants was December 1998. And December 2004 was the date by which all claims should have been resolved, but this was extended so that remaining claims could be dealt with.

■ Forced removals

So far, the commission has given 887 093 hectares of land to people who have applied to have their land back.

"We are sure the remaining

claims will be resolved in the next three years," he said.

In July 2005, the government organised the Land Summit in Johannesburg. The meeting was attended by several community-based groups and leaders of political parties.

It was at this meeting that the Agriculture and Land Affairs Minister Thoko Didiza promised that unfair forced removals would remain something of the past.

■ Speed up

Didiza said in the first years of democracy the government had created laws to speed up the return of land to its rightful owners.



By Justice Mohale

Land is everything to many poor people. It is a means of survival. Taking it away from people who depend on it to produce food to feed their families is equal to condemning them to a life of poverty.

This was why the democratic government of 1994 started the land reform programme. It was aimed at giving people who

have no land ownership, rights to a piece of land. Another programme was the restitution of land rights – its purpose was to return people to their land who had been forcibly removed under apartheid.

■ Land claims

The Commission on Land Rights was set up to deal with these issues.

Since the commission was

formed it has received 79 696 land claims of which 59 345 claims have been settled.

The Chief Land Claims commissioner Tozi Gwanya told *Vuk'uzenzele* that the return of land was important to revive the pride of people who were forcibly removed from their land

In the next nine years, he said, the government will have provided 30% of agricultural land to black farmers.

The Land Rights commission:

- returns the land belonging to black people who were uprooted by the apartheid government;
 - returns the right to ownership of land; and
 - improves the lives of landless people and to help to reduce poverty.
- Contact the Commission: 012 3106500 or 1020