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Minister Macpherson Embarked on a Listening Tour in Northern Cape

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In a determined effort to transform the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) into a catalyst for eradicating socio-economic challenges faced by communities, the Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Dean Macpherson, recently held the third leg of the EPWP Listening Tour at the Northern Cape Rural TVET College in Upington.

In his keynote address, Minister Macpherson emphasized the primary objective of the tour amongst others is to listen to communities and understand the impact of EPWP in various communities. He acknowledged how EPWP improves access to services through participants' daily tasks and stressed the importance of engaging with communities to identify solutions and fully comprehend their challenges. "Our task is to ensure that the voices with solutions within communities are heard, and that we fully understand the problems they are facing," concluded Minister Macpherson.

MEC for Roads and Public Works (DR&PW), Fufe Makatong delivered a message of support highlighting various skills development programmes offered by her department. These initiatives include women empowerment programmes launched in collaboration with the Department of Higher Education. Key projects include enrollment in the Second Chance Matric Programme and the End-User Computer Programme, both aimed at enhancing participants' qualifications and skills. These programmes are designed to upskill EPWP beneficiaries in preparation for their transition out of the programme, contributing significantly to the municipality's goal of creating 60 000 jobs.

During the Listening Tour, community members also seized the moment to raise their respective concerns about the challenges they face. One of the issues raised was the duration of work opportunities, they suggested that EPWP work opportunities should have a longer duration. Concerns were also raised about the exclusion of some of the Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) from the programme, with some claiming they have never received support despite being registered since 2014.

The Minister was also joined by Ms. Mase Monopole (Agriculture, Environmental Affairs, Rural Development, and Land Reform), along with distinguished Mayors from across the Province. These included representatives from ZF Mgcawu District Municipality, Frances Baard District Municipality, Pixley Ka Seme District Municipality, Kheis Local Municipality, Dawid Kruiper Local Municipality, Kai! Garib Local Municipality, Tsantsabane Local Municipality, and Kgatelopele Local Municipality.

One participant, Jan Albert, who works as a handyman, shared his success story during the event. He expressed heartfelt gratitude for the skills he has gained through EPWP, which he now uses to contribute to his community's development.

Reflecting on his experience, he stated: "EPWP is more than a job; it is an opportunity to gain valuable skills and a stepping stone towards a brighter future."

Albert also urged unemployed youth to actively seek EPWP opportunities at their respective municipalities when vacancies are advertised, emphasizing the transformative impact the programme can have on their lives.

