

EPWP Social Sector Asked to Change Gear in the Mining Sector

The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) Social Sector should refocus its strategy from counting heads of people employed through the programme and begin to play a role of reuniting and strengthening family units and building capacity in the mining sector, said Social Development Deputy Minister Hendrietta Bogopane-Zulu.



The Deputy Minister Bogopane-Zulu was officially opening the 12th EPWP Social Sector Conference, which is currently underway at Ingwenyama Lodge and Conference Centre in Nelspruit.

“In the past, the mining sector was used to create broken family units because you would find that men working in the mines would take long periods without returning home. Through our National Family Policy we seek to change this, and strengthen unity and building stability within families.

Social Development is tasked with implementing the National Family Policy and provides training in family-preservation services, marriage preparation and enrichment.

“The question is, to what extent do we utilise the programme of the EPWP Social Sector to reunite and strengthen families of these miners...to what extent as the social sector do we provide support to women of these men working in the mines?” asked Deputy Minister Bogopane-Zulu.

The Deputy Minister challenged policy makers and implementing Departments of EPWP to review their approach in implementing the EPWP activities and to begin to create programmes which will encourage men in the mining sector to regularly return back to their homes to be with their families, saying this practice will strengthen family marriages.

The Department of Social Development has a responsibility to protect and improve the social well-being of children, said the Deputy Minister Bogopane-Zulu, noting that it was common practice in the mining sector that the money of miners do not follow their children but was used to entertain cohabitation. "How do we use EPWP programmes to change these behavioural patterns in the mining sector?" she asked?

The money of miners does not normally follow the children because their fathers give money to the person they cohabit with, said the Deputy Minister. The Conference continues from the 01 to 04 March 2016, under the theme: "Advancing People's Power for Revitalising Distressed Communities through Social Sector intervention".

The EPWP Social Sector is led by the Departments of Social Development and the Department of Public Works

The conference also serves as an opportunity to assess progress made by EPWP Phase Three of the Social Sector. Participants who benefited from the EPWP social sector shared testimonies about the impact of the social sector initiatives towards the improvement of their lives.

At the launch of EPWP Phase 3 in October 2015, President Jacob Zuma indicated that Phase 3 target for EPWP (2014 – 2019) is six million work



opportunities, and out of this overall targeted figure the projected work opportunities to be created by EPWP Social Sector was one million and thirty seven (1 037 000) work opportunities by the year 2019.

The Social Sector has created two hundred and seventy two thousands and seventy three work opportunities as at end of the third quarter of 2014/15 financial cycle.

President Zuma also emphasised during the launch that, "In particular, in Phase 3 we want to place increasing emphasis not just on reaching work opportunity targets, but also pay greater attention to the quality of the services that are provided and the new assets created – schools, clinics and multi-purpose centres built with EPWP participants."

Conference delegates will participate in various commissions to discuss topics relating to labour, Distressed Mining Communities, Social Sector Training Strategy, Interventions on Monitoring and Evaluation and Reporting as well as Mainstreaming and Institutionalising Disability in EPWP Phase 3.

In attendance were Mpumalanga Provincial DSD MEC Ms Nomsa Mtsweni and the MMC Mokoena, the Acting Director-General Mr Thokozani Magwaza and DSD Head of Department, Ms Ninegi Mlangeni.

EPWP changing lives of participants for the better

Community members in Mpumalanga who participate in the EPWP Social Sector programmes gave testimonies on how the programme has empowered them and contributed to their successes.



Sifiso from Witbank

"I am a professional chef and opened a community creative concept, helping people on theatre and drama, especially youth whose parents died of HIV and Aids. I assist in industrial theatre.

I now registered an NPO called Five locks and two fish, for feeding scheme and to provide after -hours extra classes for young kids."



Belinah Lubisi from Nkomazi Thembelihle Drop in Centre

"I joined the centre in 1999 as a care worker and a coordinator of orphaned children. Through the activities of the Centre and the stipend I receive from the centre, I managed to enrol for training in basic counselling skills. After completing the counselling course, I then later joined the local clinic as an HIV counselor.

I am now a health promoter and conducting basic counselling on health issues. I was earning R250 in 1999 and increased to 550. I have managed to register for my ABET certificate."



Nthabiseng Shongwe from Soncoba Umjindi Home-Based Care in Barberton

"I joined Soncoba Home-based Care in 2010 as a caregiver, mainly because I wanted to assist my community to develop and to pay for my higher education fees.

Through the stipend I received from this HBC, I managed to complete my degree in psychology and I am now registered for an Honours Degree in Psychology. I love my work as a caregiver because we have assisted people to recover from various diseases. We also encourage people to go to the clinics and not stay home while sick. I live with my mom, my 8-year-old brother, and my mother is not earning enough money.

When I completed my matric, my mother felt obliged to send me to University, and I enrolled at the University of Johannesburg. When I was there, I realised how financially it was costing my mother and I decided to drop out within a month to assist her. I had to find a job to fund my higher education studies, which is why I joined the HBC to raise funds for my studies. And as I said I am now studying towards my honours degree through stipends I earn from the centre."