



## **'Women in EPWP continue to move South Africa forward'**

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“Through programmes such as the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), the Government of South Africa is providing women like us with opportunities to contribute in the development and the betterment of our communities. Today (24 August 2015), through training and support from EPWP’s Vuk’uphile Learnership Programme, our small companies are working together with women and the youth of Maake Village in Tzaneen to deliver a community asset that will provide road safety for all our people in the area,” Precious Mhlari and Ntombi Madume explained.

Mhlari and her colleague Ntombi Madume are small construction business owners who are working in partnership with EPWP’s Vuk’uphile Learnership Programme, the Limpopo Department of Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure and the Greater Tzaneen Local Municipality to install community infrastructure in the area of Tzaneen. The two women are part of a group of 160 women that are currently receiving contractor training and support from Vuk’uphile Learnership programme across the country. Vuk’uphile Learnership Programme is currently training a total of 343 contractors.

The Vuk’uphile Learnership Programme is an EPWP contractor development programme aimed at training and developing emerging contractors within the construction industry and focuses on labour intensive construction. The aim of the programme is to develop administrative, technical, contractual, managerial and entrepreneurial skills of the learners within a learner contracting entity. The Vuk’uphile Learnership Programme is a sub-programme of EPWP Infrastructure Sector.

Mhlari and Madume’s small construction companies are both at level 3 according to the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) Register of Contractors. **The two women are receiving training and mentorship support from Vuk’uphile Learnership Programme to construct a pavement along the Ramalema Road in Maake Village in Tzaneen.**

“Through this project, the community is not only benefiting in terms of the work opportunities created, but the asset (pavement) we are constructing will contribute to the safety of the people in the area. Once the project is complete, members of the public, especially children from the two

schools located on this stretch of road, will be able to use the pavement to walk instead of walking in the streets where there's traffic,"

"This shows that when women are given opportunities in EPWP, they do not only push for the creation of work and training opportunities for the people, but they also ensure that communities benefit through the assets and services that are delivered. It is a fact that women in EPWP move the South Africa forward," the two women stated.

Mhlari and Madume currently employ 93 people on a temporary basis to construct the pavement. "Over 70 percent of our workers are women, which tells you that women in our community are driving this programme forward," they added.

Mackaukau added that Vuk'uphile Learnership Programme Phase 1 - 2004 to 2009 - trained 476 contractors and all of these contractors have exited the programme. A total of 108 of these contractors are currently active on the CIDB Register.

Mhlari and Madume are shining examples of the work of women in EPWP. Like the women of 1956 who changed the course of history by marching against the rule of Apartheid and its unconstitutional pass laws, women in EPWP are breaking new grounds in the development of our communities and in the fight against poverty and unemployment.

There are many other EPWP projects and programmes led by women throughout the country. In fact women in EPWP are excelling in fields and industries that were previously male dominated.

The EPWP Zibambeke Road Maintenance Programme is another shining examples in relation to women excellence in EPWP. The Zibambeke Road Maintenance Programme constitutes 100 percent women representation.

During the successful EPWP Women's Month celebration event in Inanda, in Durban on 27 August 2015, the Deputy Minister of Public Works Mr Jeremy Cronin led senior Government leaders and the media on a visit the Zibambeke Road Maintenance Programme site.

"EPWP sub-programme such as the Zibambeke Road Maintenance Programme alleviate poverty by offering the most sustainable work opportunities for our people. Such programmes also nurture and promote social cohesion in our communities," Deputy Minister Cronin said.

One of the women in the project Ms Mhlongo said "I am a widow and have a responsibility as a mother to uphold the dignity of my family through provision of basic needs and before I was given an opportunity to participate on Zibambeke Road Maintenance programme. I could not sustain my

family. I thank government for providing us with such good opportunities to sustain our families”, she concluded.

Currently about 40 000 women are employed on a temporary basis in the Zibambele Road Maintenance Programme.

The KwaZulu Natal Department of Safety and Liaison committed R400 million towards the Zibambele Road Maintenance Programme in the 2015/16 financial year.

The EPWP Women’s Month event was held under the Government’s 2015 women’s month theme: Women United in Moving South Africa Forward.

The Deputy Director General (DDG) of EPWP, Mr. Stanley Henderson pointed out that “what is interesting about women in the Zibambele Programme is that they have used the EPWP to diversify and grow their wealth by establishing a range of financial products such as stokvels (savings or investment societies)”

“They use these stokvels to not only maximize their wealth but also fund other expansion mechanisms. The creative use of EPWP by women in Zibambele Programme is indeed a good story to tell because it shows how women are using Government programmes to improve the socio-economic conditions of their families and communities,” Henderson explained.

Other EPWP projects and programmes where women have provided excellence include the Extra School Support Programme where EPWP participants (mostly women) are assisting school children with their homework; the EPWP’s Home Community Based Care (HCBC) where women (caregivers) assist and care for the sickly and the elderly in our communities; the Pharmacy Assistant Programme which develops the skills of young women in pharmacy assistant; women are also playing an important role in the recently launched EPWP Artisan Development Programme and in the National Youth Service (NYS) programme. Women in EPWP are also a driving force in the Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme; School Nutrition Programme; EPWP in Tourism and Creative Industries; and in many more other programmes.

“By analyzing all EPWP projects and programmes, one can see that without women, EPWP would not be as successful as it is today,” Henderson added.

To also properly capture and understand the role of women in the success of EPWP, it is vital to look at their participation in the programme in its 11 years of existence.

In 2004 when EPWP was first implemented, the programme created 83 869 of work opportunities for women. In the same year, EPWP created a total of 174 845 work opportunities. The participation

of women in EPWP in the first 5 years of its implementation stood at 45 percent from the overall total of 1 617 697 work opportunities created.

During EPWP Phase 2 - between 2009 and 2014 – the participation of women stood at 54 percent of the total of 4 071 292 work opportunities created.

In 2014 the honourable President of South Africa, Mr Jacob Zuma, launched EPWP Phase 3 and committed the Government to create over 6 million work opportunities by 2019. President Zuma emphasised the importance of women in moving EPWP Phase 3 forward by allocating them 55 percent work opportunities from the overall 6 million target.

Minister of Public Works Mr T.W. Nxesi commended the increase in the participation of women in year 1 of EPWP Phase 3 (from April 2014 to March 2015).

“Women participation in the first year of EPWP Phase 3 went up to 63 percent. These figures illustrates that women in EPWP are united in their passion to move South Africa forward,” he stated.

EPWP Phase 3 created a total number of 1 103 983 work opportunities in its first year of implementation, surpassing its target of 1.04million.

The EPWP is one of an array of government strategies aimed at alleviating poverty and unemployment through the provision of short to medium term work opportunities to the unemployed South Africans. The objective of EPWP Phase 3 is to provide work opportunities and income support to poor and unemployed people through the labour-intensive delivery of public and community assets, thereby contributing to development. Government, through all municipalities, government departments as well as state owned enterprises (SOEs), is working together with the private sector, nongovernmental organisations and members of the public to implement EPWP in all its four sectors, namely Infrastructure, Environment and Culture, Non-State and Social Sector.

To read more about EPWP logon to: [www.epwp.gov.za](http://www.epwp.gov.za).

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