



public works

Department:
Public Works
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



EXPANDED PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME

EPWP Contributing to Economic Development of Mthatha

The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) participants who were part of the restoration of the Mthatha Airport in the Eastern Cape have contributed to the Province's strategy to grow the local economy and attract tourists to areas in and around Mthatha.

According to Senior Manager: Aviation Infrastructure Operations in the Eastern Cape Department of Transport, Mr Noel Godwin, the 220 EPWP participants "provided general labour during the construction of the new terminal building, the new car hire facility, construction of new security fence as well as paving of parking area at airport".

"The new face of the airport will certainly attract more tourists in the area which in turn will boost local economy and create the much needed work opportunities for our people. The participants must be proud of their contribution to this project - their work has left a lasting legacy for our local economy and tourism. EPWP is indeed contributing to the economic development of Mthatha", Godwin stated.

Mthatha is located not far from the sandy beaches of Port St Johns and Coffee Bay.

Godwin stated that although the refurbishment projects has been completed and most participants have exited the project, "there are about 40 participants that are still on site doing daily cleaning and maintenance of drains at the airport". "The participants that are currently on site are also responsible for the cutting of grass and ensuring that the airport stays clean. The airport is a gateway into Mthatha for most business people and investors - it is important for it to be clean at all times", Godwin said.

The airport restoration project commenced in January 2014 and it has been completed. Although the contracts of participants in the project were supposed to run for 12 months, they were extended to 19 months as there was still work to be done.

Training

The participants received accredited training in Small Business Development. During training, they were taught how to start small businesses as well as drafting business plans. "The skills development programmes that participants were exposed to during this project was tailor made to give them skills that they can use to make a sustainable living post the end of the projects", Godwin said.

The safety manager at the airport, Mr Malombo Somtsewu, said that the participants were appointed through the local community structures such as Ward Councillors and local Chiefs. "Local community structures were used to ensure that the project draws the poorest of the poor. Women representation in the project was also considered as well as people with disabilities", he said.

He said that most of the participants worked on the land side (away from the landing

strip) of the airport. "However when the participants must clean the airside (around the landing strip), we ensure that they have all the documentation and the safety required for them to be on that side of the airport", he added.

Participants

The participants that are currently on site are grouped into two with one group working on Mondays and Wednesdays and the other on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Mfuneko Mgule, 40, is one of the people with disabilities in the Programme. He is the team leader of one of the cleaning groups. "I feel empowered by EPWP. In fact, because of the Programme I do not feel like a person with disability at all. EPWP has not only financially benefited me and my loved ones through monthly stipend I am receiving, but it has also given me dignity and hope", he said.

Olwethu Mgule, 34, who comes from the community of Ncise (a community not far from the airport) said that he loved working in the project. "We start our day with cleaning the dustbins at the airport. Then we proceed to pick-up papers around the airport, he said.

For 37-year-old Mpho Ndandani, the work of cleaning of the airport is contributing to the good image of Mthatha. "The cleanliness of the airport is a reflection of the beauty of Mthatha. When the airport is clean, visitors (tourists) keep on visiting the area. The cleanliness of the airport also shows the world what kind of people live in Mthatha. That to me is important", she said. All participants spoke of how the stipend has helped in reducing unemployment and poverty in their homes.

