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EPWP must formalise Early Childhood Development: Minister of Social Development says

By Michael Mokoena
Picture by Michael Mokoena



The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) Social Sector must formalise its Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme in order to develop cognitively strong and confident children, the Minister of Social Development honourable Bathabile Dlamini said.

Closing the four day annual EPWP Social Sector Conference on 04 March 2016 at the Ingwenyama Lodge in Nelspruit in Mpumalanga, Minister Dlamini said:

“The National Development Plan (NDP) prioritises early childhood development. Through ECD programmes we can develop cognitively strong and confident children who will not be intimidated by things that intimidate us,” Minister Dlamini said.

She pointed out that the first building block for the formalisation of ECD programmes was the provision of quality education to ECD practitioners. “In some countries ECD practitioners study for 5 years to ensure that children they work with do not miss any developmental phase as they grow up. It is therefore important for us to train our practitioners in such a way that they can provide quality care to our children,” Minister Dlamini added.

She pointed out that provision of training was also vital to ensure that when at some point government decide to convert ECD practitioners to become full public servants, they (practitioners) would have had proper skills.

Turning to the conference, Minister Dlamini congratulated delegates for the hard work they had done to move the sector forward. Among the resolutions that were adopted by the conference, was the inclusion of Artisan Development Programme into the EPWP social sector.

The conference resolved to recruit young people, particularly women, into the EPWP Social Sector programmes as part of a wider strategy to revitalise distressed mining communities, this is in line with the theme for the 12th EPWP Social Sector Conference which is “Advancing People’s Power for Revitalising Distressed Mining Communities through Social Sector Interventions”.

The following are some of the resolutions undertaken and to be implemented by various EPWP Social Sector partners

- The recruitment of youths from households that are affected by the ongoing retrenchments in the mining sector into EPWP.
- Mainstreaming disability within the Social Sector. “(mainstreaming disability with full access to facilities, verify statistics of participating persons with disabilities within EPWP and also provide training to national and provincial managers on mainstreaming disability in the sector)
- Interface EPWP system with other public body utilised systems.

The conference was a resounding success as it was attended by the Deputy Minister for Social Development honourable Hendrietta Bogopane-Zulu, the Mpumalanga MEC for Social Development honourable Nomsa Mtsweni as well as high ranking government officials within the EPWP Social Sector throughout the country.

One of the EPWP social sector participants Ms Nthabiseng Shongwe praised the EPWP for changing her life for the better. “I am a caregiver (EPWP participant) with the Soncoba Umjindi Home Community Based Care (HCBC) in Barberton and through my participation in the EPWP I have managed to assist in the development of my community.

Through the stipend I am receiving I have 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 I provide assistance to the most vulnerable people. She added.

The Vuk'uphile Learnership Programme contributes to local economic development of communities in Potchefstroom

By Michael Mokoena and
Pictures by Emmanuel Jiyane



The Tlokweng City Council in Potchefstroom in the North West Province has undertaken Vuk'uphile Learnership Programme as one of the key interventions to drive entrepreneurship development, boost local economy and deliver valuable community assets.

The programme is coordinated by three departments in the municipality i.e. Economic Development, Infrastructure and Finance. The team consist of Ms D. Hoho, Ms E Nkaunyane and Mr M Galeng.

"Entrepreneurship development is vital in the economic development of our communities. If you create entrepreneurs, more jobs will be created which will boost the economy. The Vuk'uphile Learnership Programme does exactly that – it affords us an opportunity to develop entrepreneurs in the build and construction sector," the manager for Enterprise Development at the municipality Mr Moss Galeng said.

The Vuk'uphile Learnership Programme is an Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) Contractor Development Programme. It is a sub-programme of the EPWP Infrastructure Sector and it is aimed at training and developing emerging contractors within the construction industry.

The programme develops the administrative, technical, contractual, managerial and entrepreneurial skills of the learners within a learner contracting entity. The Vuk'uphile Learnership Programme uses labour intensive methods of construction and the opportunities that are created through the programme feeds to the 6 million EPWP work opportunities to be created by 2019.

Mr Galeng explained that Tlokweng City Council had appointed nine (9) learner contractors to be part of the programme for a period of three years.

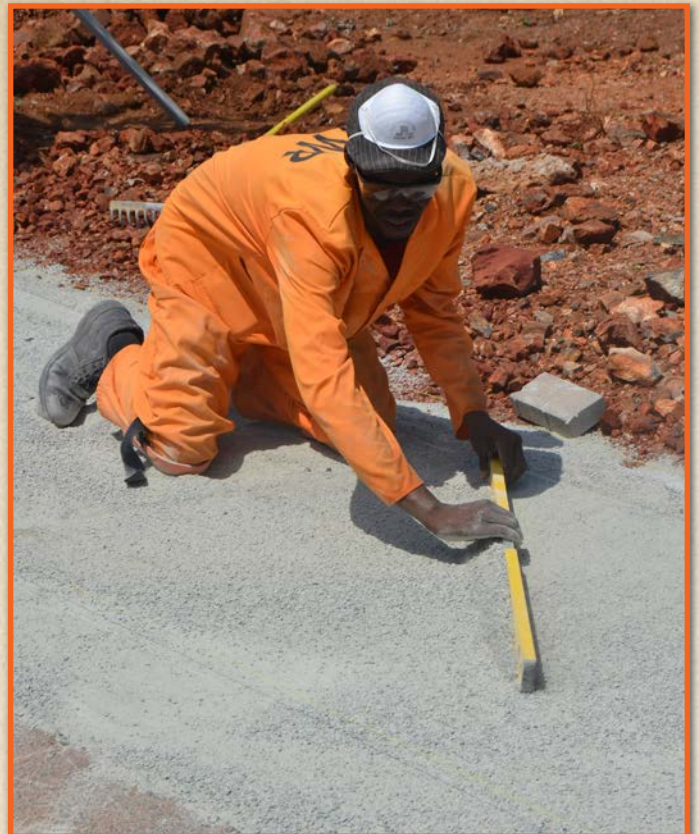
"The learner contractors started work in October 2014 with the construction of a pipeline connecting the community of Promosa Extension 4 to the municipality's water reticulation plant. Upon successful completion of the water reticulation project the learner

contractors commenced with a second project which is the paving of sidewalks pavements across a number of Wards in Ikageng Township. Each of the learner contractors have been given about 1 km of the sidewalk to pave, which collectively make 9km of the sidewalk to pave," Mr Galeng added.

He pointed out that the projects had created work opportunities for the local community. "As we speak, there are 159 community members who are working on the sidewalk pavement project. This project will last for five months. What is equally important is that the local people who have been appointed in the project spend their money (wages) in their very community, which bodes well for local economy," Mr Galeng stated.

He said the municipality had identified EPWP programmes such as the Vuk'uphile Learnership Programme as vital in its plan to deliver valuable community assets.

"For instance the sidewalk pavements will improve the road safety and pedestrians will now use the sidewalk pavements instead of walking in the middle of the road. This will improve the flow of traffic in the area which in turn will allow goods to be moved easily through our roads," Mr Galeng added.



Mr Galeng's sentiments were echoed by community members in the area. "As parents we worry about the safety of our children when they

walk to school. The sidewalk pavements will ensure that the roads are safe for the little ones,” Mr Tsidiso Nonyana said.

He added that “it is also important to emphasise that these sidewalk pavements are constructed by us – the community members. The project has created work for us as residents”.

To ensure that the learner contractors deliver quality public assets, the National Department of Public Works appointed a mentor to

He added that once the learner contractors completed the paving project, they would move to their exit project in the programme.

Participants Testimonies

“The Vuk’uphile Learnership Programme has brought hopes in the lives of the people of Ikageng. With unemployment being a challenge especially among us young people, the programme has given us an opportunity to earn wages through the work that we are doing here,” one of the learner contractor Mr Letlhogonolo Sekamogeng said.

He pointed out that, “the programme has capacitated me to become an entrepreneur. I have learned various technical skills in relation to the management of big construction contracts. I believe that the kind of training I’m receiving will ensure that by the time I exit from the programme, I will be able to find construction work by myself”.

Mr Sekamegeng’s small company LRT PTY (Ltd) is currently at CIDB level 3ce. “My aim is to use the training and the exposure I have received from this programme to push my company to CIDB level 9. I want to be responsible for massive projects!”

Another learner contractor Ms Windie Morabe explained that being one of women contractors in the programme was testimony that government is prioritising the development of young women.

“I believe that being a female manager in the construction sector is a motivation to young women in the area. The community and the municipality have also been very supportive of us. I thank the Vuk’uphile Learnership Programme for this opportunity,” Ms Morabe added.



provide them (learner contractors) with technical skills. The BPPM Construction has been appointed to provide mentoring function for the learner contractors in this programme.

“Our work is to capacitate the learner contractors in this project. We help contractors with a spectrum of things such as how to efficiently run their businesses, how to understand contract data as well as how to deal with labour relations matters on site, but most important we assist the learner contractors to ultimately make a profit from the project,” the administration and client liaison manager for BPPM Construction Ms Molemo Makhetha-Kraziya said.

The Deputy Director for Vuk’uphile Learnership Programme in the national Department of Public Works Mr Osborne Neluvhalani explained that the programme was an innovative way of not only developing young and emerging contractors, but also to allow government to deliver community assets in a cost effective manner.

“The government is getting value for money from the Vuk’uphile Learnership Programme. For instance, the project to install the sidewalk pavements is worth R11 million and what is interesting is that the project is about 80 percent complete yet we have spent about 50 percent of the value of the project. This tells you that the municipality will be able to complete the project on time and within the allocated budget. This is also good for the learner contractors because they will make a profit,” Mr Neluvhalani explained.



EPWP Knowledge Management Committee meeting

By Emmanuel Jiyane

Pictures by Emmanuel Jiyane



The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) Knowledge Management Committee held its quarterly meeting which was aimed at continuing work on the development of an electronic Central Repository (CR). The Deputy Director for Knowledge Management in EPWP Ms. Andiswa Qiqimana said that the committee was moving at a great speed to ensure the development of the central repository.

“We have done a lot to ensure that we move the Knowledge Management function within EPWP forward. Among the work we have done is the formulation of the terms of reference for the committee. The terms of reference speak to the short to medium term deliverables. We have approached the Department of Public Works to allow us to temporarily use their electronic document management system in order to store EPWP information while we are working on a permanent solution,” Ms. Qiqimana said.

She added that the Department of Public Works has already procured 13 bulk scanning machines for the purpose of scanning EPWP documents into their electronic document management system.

Ms. Qiqimana indicated that “the electronic central repository would contribute to the efficiency and effectiveness within EPWP by making information and documents on EPWP easily accessible to all senior officials in all sectors of EPWP with a simple click of a computer

button. What is also exciting is that we want the officials to access information from wherever they are in the world.”

The Knowledge Management Committee is composed of various national government departments such as Social Development, Environmental Affairs (DEA), Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (Cogta) with Public Works leading the committee.

The Knowledge Management (KM) is a process of creating, acquiring, capturing and using knowledge wherever it resides to enable learning and performance in an organization. According to the Deputy Director of Knowledge Management in EPWP Ms. Andiswa Qiqimana, the effectiveness of knowledge management depends on how it's aligned with an organization. The objectives of knowledge Management are to:

- Fast-track service delivery through quick information retrieval and dissemination processes.
- Avoid reinvention of the wheel.
- Promotion of culture of learning by sharing knowledge on various platforms and interfaces.
- Preservation of organizational memory.
- Classification of information and publications.
- Management and protection of intellectual property and documentation.

Expanded Public Works Contractors Development Workshop

By Lerato Moeng

Pictures by Lerato Moeng

Contractors and stakeholders who are participating in the implementation of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) built and construction projects must comply with all South Africa Revenue Services (SARS) processes such as VAT and filling of tax returns.

The statement above was made by SARS' representative Ms Caroline Maree who on 25 February 2016 addressed the EPWP contractor development workshop held in Vosloorus in Johannesburg. Ms Maree stressed that it was important for contractors to comply with all relevant government financial regulations.

"Always record your income and expenses accurately because accurate records are essential for efficient management of your organisations. Record keeping of all your business transactions is also important. For instance some of the items you must keep records of include invoices, pay slips and investment income. You must also keep records of your expense – here we are talking about invoices, till slips, bills and paid accounts" said Maree.

Mr Moeketsi emphasized that every employer and employee must know all labour relations matters, particularly legislation affecting EPWP.

One of the guest speakers Mr Tebogo Pitso, a business consultant, gave the contractors pointers on how to grow their businesses. "It is vital for you as a contractor to have a business plan as it gives you the direction about the kind of business you want to start. In fact business plans are used for planning out specific details about your business and they comprise of three sections which are the business concept, marketplace and financial".

The Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) was represented by the provincial manager at CIDB Gauteng Mr Nkosingithi Kuseni who in his address provided information about the work done by his organisation. "Our function entails promoting a regulatory and development framework and our focus is on sustainable growth, capacity developments and empowerment and improved industry performance.

Mr Kuseni also clarified how all CIDB grades worked and highlighted the requirements for each.



She urged contractors to not hesitate to visit SARS when there are issues they would like to clear with the tax-collecting agency.

The EPWP Deputy Director: NYS Contractor Development Initiative in the Gauteng Regional Office Mr William Moeketsi enlightened contractors about the EPWP's compliance requirements, registration process and the assistance offered by EPWP to enterprises.

"In order for your business to be eligible for selection into EPWP projects and programmes, you must meet a range of requirements, including employing qualified people, having an active bank account, having good references and your company name must also be registered on the EPWP's database" he said.



EPWP shoe manufacturing cooperative pioneers establishment of rural manufacturing sector in the Free State

By Michael Mokoena

Pictures by Michael Mokoena

The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) could just be the answer to the Xhariep District Municipality's intention to establish the small agricultural town of Trompsburg into a manufacturing hub of the Free State Province. The town is home to the only shoe manufacturing cooperative that is supported by the EPWP and the Xhariep District Municipality. The cooperative is called Xhariep Leather Designs. It (the cooperative) utilises the warehouse which is located at the premises of the district municipality in Trompsburg to run a small scale operation.

"Although the cooperative is doing work at a minimal scale, it has the potential to grow and provide sustainable employment for the people of the Free State. We also believe it has the potential to boost the local economy and create a strong local manufacturing industry. The cooperative has at some point been approached by a number of businesses such as Edcon to manufacture shoes at a large scale," the local economic development and tourism officer at the municipality Ms Kelebogile Molatedi said.

She explained however that the technical challenges the cooperative was currently experiencing had let-down its plans to work with Edcon and other big businesses. "The cooperative was not able to take up the Edcon order because the machinery they are using is mainly for training purpose and is not geared for mass production," Ms Molatedi stated.

Trompsburg is one of the Presidential Poverty Nodes – one of the poorest areas in South Africa that are characterised by underdevelopment, contribute little to the GDP, and incorporate the poorest of our urban and rural poor. The gloomy economic situation prompted the Xhariep District Municipality to establish the cooperative in 2010 to not only tackle poverty, unemployment and underdevelopment but to also unlock the potential of creating a manufacturing sector in the area.

"We recruited community members (EPWP participants) who were already doing work in shoe repair and clothing design. The cooperative currently has seven community members (participants). As the municipality we then appointed a service provider to provide the members with training in shoe design and manufacturing. Although most of the training was for manual production, we have now appointed a mentor to provide further machinery training," Ms Molatedi explained.

She pointed out that the district municipality was currently funding the operational work of the cooperative while the National Department of Public Works through the Social Sector Incentive Grant was paying their monthly wages.

The workers are currently receiving the daily wage of R90 and they work three days a week.

"The municipality has also played a big role in the marketing of the cooperative. We normally assist the cooperative to exhibit at the key international, national and provincial tourism events that take place in the province such as the annual Bloem Show, Mangaung African Cultural Festival (Macufe) and other such events. We have also linked the cooperative with potential funders such as the Small Enterprise Development Agency (Seda), the National Development Agency (NDA) and other funding institutions," Ms Molatedi said.

She indicated that the products that the cooperative was producing was currently being sold to the people of Trompsburg and surrounding towns. "Some of the biggest customers are the community members who are receiving social grants. On the day of the grants pay-out participants normally sell their products at the pay-out points in Trompsburg and at the surrounding towns," Ms Molatedi said.

She added that the municipality would soon approach the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) to work on the quality assurance matters relating to the produced goods.

The community members in the cooperative are mentored by Mr Godfrey Mass, who is an established shoe designer who used to manage a shoe factory in Bloemfontein.

"My role is to provide training to the participants on how to design and physically put together the shoes using these machines (he points at the machines that are lining in the warehouse). I started working with these members in 2014 and I am happy with the work that they are doing here – they are coming alright," Mr Mass said.

Participants Testimonies

For Ms Rethabile Chakalane, designing shoes has become a passion. "I love every part of my work here," she smiles.

"The whole process starts with the design for the pattern, then we move to the drawing of the pattern on the leather material. From there on we proceed to cutting of the material then the material is taken through various mechanics until it get to the finished product. It is important to be meticulous to avoid mistakes. Mistakes are costly in this work," Ms Chakalane explained.

Mr Mass interjected – "Working on the design is the most complex phase in the manufacturing of the shoes. Once you have a good design the rest is less complex because you rely mostly on the machines".

Ms Chakalane said that the training they had received had provided her with the necessary support to master the skill of designing and manufacturing shoes. "I am also using the skills at home where I have a small business of my own."

She added that the monthly stipend allowed her to care for her family.

Another member in the cooperative Ms M R Dywili expressed joy over the contribution and the difference that the government has made in her life. "The government through the district municipality and EPWP have given me and my family a better life," she said.



NYS School Support Programme contributes to delivery of quality education in the Northern Cape

By Michael Mokoena

The Northern Cape Department of Education is implementing the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) as one of the interventions to improve the quality of education at some schools in the Province. The Department through its National Youth Service (NYS) School Support Programme, is temporarily employing a total of 20 young people at schools to deal with administrative and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) needs.

“Basically the participants assist both the teachers and the school’s administrators with the administrative functions at the school. The programme contributes to the delivery of quality education at the said schools by removing the administrative functions from the teachers. As a result teachers have more time to focus on their core function of delivering quality education to the learners,” the department’s Chief Education Specialist Mr Olebogeng Modise explained.

He pointed out that some of the functions that the participants were performing included working on the computer to compile the learners’ quarterly reports, compile other important school reports that are needed by the department as well as performing general maintenance of the schools’ computers.

“The participants also assist the children with extramural activities such as sports and the performing arts,” Mr Modise added.

He stated that the programme was receiving positive feedback from different role-players in the education fraternity including the parents. “The fact that children at schools where this programme is being implemented are receiving their quarterly performance reports on time has brought joy among parents,” Mr Modise added.

He pointed out that although the programme was currently only being implemented in the Province’s Frances Baard District Municipality, “we intend to roll it out to all schools in the Province.”

The programme is funded through the social sector incentive grant.

Mr Modise further stated that the programme had afforded the department an opportunity to contribute to the government’s bold programme to create over 6 million work opportunities by 2019. “Through the work opportunities that have been created, we contributing in the fight against poverty and unemployment”.

Training

EPWP’s Northern Cape programme manager Ms Winnie Swartz explained that the National Department of Public Works has enlisted the services of the South African Advanced Skills Institute to provide computer skills training to the participants.

The participants are studying a National Certificate: Information Technology End User Computing Qualification. “The qualification is a 12 months learnership programme. The participants will spend 30 percent of their time in class doing theoretical work and 70 percent will be spent at schools where they are located to do their practical work,” Ms Swartz explained.

The computer training started in February 2016 and will continue till September 2016.

“The training is important because it will provide the participants with skills that they can use to look for permanent jobs after they’ve exited the programme,” Ms Swartz added.

She indicated that the participants were receiving a daily training allowance of R78.86 for attending classes in addition to their monthly stipend for working at the schools.

The schools where the participants are located are also contributing towards their Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF).

Participants Testimonies

The participants were mostly recruited through the existing EPWP schools projects such as the School Nutritious Programme. All of them are based at various schools across the Frances Baard District Municipality. The participants expressed gratitude for being recruited into the programme.

“The opportunity has given me and my loved ones hope for the future. For instance, I have used the monthly stipend I’m receiving through this programme to fund my education at the North West University. I’m currently doing final year National Diploma in Education,” Ms Kebitsamang Molehane said.

Ms Molehane is stationed at the Kgono Primary School in Pampierstad and is studying at the university on a part-time basis.

For Mr Shane Thabapelo, being part of the programme has exposed him to the exciting world of computers. “Before I joined this programme I never knew anything about computers but today I know a lot. I believe the skills will assist me to look for permanent work even after I have exited from the programme,” he added.

Another participant Ms Lusanda van Wyk said that she submitted her Curriculum Vitae at the Greenpoint Primary School and was later recruited into the programme. “The Programme has helped me and my family a lot because I am the only one at home who is currently employed.

The stipend we are receiving has allowed me to look after my parents and my siblings,” she said.

She added that being part of the programme has also encouraged her 9-year-old brother to love school. “My little brother did not like school in the past but now that I work there, he is excited and goes with me to school every morning,” she said.

Ms Van Wyk added that EPWP has also brought hope in the lives of the community of Greenpoint. “Young people in my community are excited about the various opportunities offered through EPWP,” she said.

EPWP to create more work opportunities despite South Africa's gloomy economic outlook

By Michael Mokoena

Picture by Michael Mokoena

With the global economic challenges expected to continue to affect South Africa for a few years to come, the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) is more pertinent than ever before as one of the key government initiatives to fight poverty and unemployment faced by the country, the EPWP Deputy Director General in the National Department of Public Works Mr Stanley Henderson stated.

Mr Henderson was speaking at the last day of a three day EPWP branch strategic planning meeting held between 10 to 12 February 2016 in Benoni.

"What is clear is that for the next few years our economic situation will be fairly bad, especially for the poor. What this means for us as EPWP is that we have a very increasing role to play to address the high unemployment rate faced by our country," Mr Henderson said.

Honourable President Jacob Zuma in his State of the Nations Address delivered in Parliament on 11 February 2016 painted a gloomy picture of the state of the country's economy.

"Our reality right now is that global growth still remains muted. Financial markets have become volatile. Currencies of emerging markets have become weak and they fluctuate widely. The prices of gold, platinum, coal and other minerals that we sell to the rest of the world have dropped significantly and continue to be low. The economies of two of our partners in BRICS, Brazil and Russia, are expected to contract this year. The third, China, will not register the kind of robust growth that it is known for. Because our economy is relatively small and open, it is affected by all of these developments," the President said.

The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank predict that the South African economy will grow by less than 1% this year.

The EPWP strategic management meeting

Although the objective of the meeting was to discuss the performance of the EPWP in the 2015/16 and set the plans and targets for the next financial year (2016/17), Mr Henderson also used the gathering to thank all EPWP staff members for taking their work seriously.

He welcomed the new EPWP officials, especially the interns. "For the interns, the EPWP branch is a good environment to hone your skills. You will learn a lot from EPWP professionals who are operating in different fields within the branch".

Mr Henderson congratulated the outgoing Chief Director of Operations Ms Kelebogile Sethibelo who recently moved to the Department of Arts and Culture.

Shifting to the importance of the three day strategic meeting, Mr Henderson pointed out that it was vital for staff members reflect on the journey travelled from EPWP phase 1 to the current phase 3.

"In EPWP phase I (between 2004 and 2009) we had a target of 1 million work opportunities, we over archived on that target and we reported about 1.4 million work opportunities. In EPWP Phase 2 (2009 to 2014) we targeted to create 2 million work opportunities which we have achieved. Whereas the EPWP Phase 3 (from 2014 to 2019) is also about creating work opportunities, the phase will be characterised by the services delivered and the assets created for the development of our people. Phase 3 is also about the EPWP's contribution towards the creation of sustainable livelihoods as well as placing community participation at the heart of EPWP," Mr Henderson explained.

The Chief Director for Monitoring and Evaluation Dr Eric Musekene presented the overall performance of the EPWP branch in the 2015/16 financial year. His presentation was extensive as it covered progress in all aspects of the branch – from the performance of national departments, provinces and municipalities as well as the performance of the sectors as well challenges experienced.

Dr Musekene stated that the performance of EPWP in the 2015/16 financial year was less satisfactory in relations to the work opportunities created and reported. "Where we are today is still below our annual target".

He once again raised alarm bells regarding the challenges of underreporting of work opportunities created. "We are not doing enough to report the work opportunities created in the EPWP reporting system. We need to see a turnaround on this matter".

He warned that hard work lay ahead if the government is to achieve its target of creating over 6 million work opportunities by 2019.

There was however a silver lining to Dr Musekene's presentation as he revealed that the gap that existed between the work opportunities and the Full Time Equivalent (FTEs) was diminishing. "It is the most interesting thing because people were saying that there's a disjuncture between the work opportunities and FTEs, but we are starting to see a link between the two items," he added. Other chief directors in the EPWP branch also presented their plans for the 2016/17 financial year.

The EPWP strategic management meeting was attended by over a hundred EPWP staff members from all over the country.



Photo Gallery

