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Creating over 2 million EPWP work opportunities is proof that working together we can move our nation forward, says DDG of EPWP

Article by: Michael Mokoena

Pictures by: Emmanuel Jiyane



Creating over 2 million Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) work opportunities between 2014 and 2016 is proof that when we work together we can move our nation out of poverty, inequality and joblessness, the Deputy Director General (DDG) of the EPWP Branch in the Department of Public Works, Mr Stanley Henderson said on 26 February 2017 in Pretoria.

Mr Henderson said creating over 2 million EPWP work opportunities was also proof that the government was gradually moving towards creating 6 million EPWP work opportunities by 2019.

"We continue to work with South Africans from all walks of life to tackle poverty, inequality and unemployment through creating work and training opportunities for the poor and unskilled South Africans. The EPWP is also vital in delivering key community assets and services that bring about social cohesion, development and socio-economic prosperity," Mr Henderson said.

Providing a breakdown on the work opportunities created, Mr Henderson explained that "during 2014/15, government created 1 103 983 EPWP work opportunities while 741 540 were created in 2015/16 and 497 624 work opportunities have been created by the third quarter of 2016/17.

"It is important to note that numbers cannot start to quantify the

impact of the EPWP in our communities. For instance, the Working on Fire teams that assisted in fire fighting operations in various parts of the Western Cape in January 2017 contributed in saving lives, protecting property as well as conserving our vegetation in areas such as Stilbaai and others. A number of school children are currently being assisted with their school work by EPWP's School Assistant participants who are placed at various schools across South Africa."

"The services that are offered by EPWP participants are benefiting communities across the country from the work of EPWP community care givers who are working under the Departments of Health and Social Development as well as various NGOs across South Africa who provide community health services. Thousands of households in South Africa do not go to bed on an empty stomach as a result of EPWP participants who are helping these families with food from community food gardens across the country. The work opportunities created through the EPWP continue to contribute immensely to the development of our communities," Mr Henderson explained.

He added that training of participants remained at the heart of the EPWP Phase 3. "Training remains the only way to achieve sustainable livelihoods for the participants in the programme. For instance the government has partnered with various SETAs and private sector companies to provide EPWP participants with skills in artisan, pharmacy assistant, small business development as well as community caregiving. The type of training provided is aimed at ensuring that participants are armed with skills they can use to enter the mainstream economy," the Mr Henderson said.

He pointed out that "over 67 percent of people who found opportunities in the EPWP between April and December financial year 2016/17 are women, while youth who benefited from the EPWP during this time stood at 44.73 percent".

Further breaking down the number of work opportunities created for the period April to December financial year 2016/17, Mr Henderson explained that "the infrastructure sector contributed more numbers with 199 196 work opportunities created followed by programmes in the environment and culture sector which created 126 183 work opportunities and social sector with 97 852 while the non-state sector created 74 393 work opportunities."

By the end of quarter 3 of 2016/17, KwaZuluNatal had created 102 695 work opportunities followed by Eastern Cape with 73 520 work opportunities. Western Cape created 36 817 work opportunities while Gauteng and the Free State created 46 516 and 17 686 respectively.



The work that Ms Sindane and 65 of her colleagues in the Programme do include guarding parked vehicles in the centre of the town as well as cleaning the town in general. They also report suspicious criminal activities in the town to the local police who then respond accordingly. Another participants who praised the EPWP is Mr Sithembele Mbete, who works as a Community Work Programme (CWP) participant in Keiskammahoek. (CWP is one of the EPWP programmes). "As CWP participants we undertake a number of useful work in our community such as doing community gardens as well as cleaning work in the area.

The work that we are doing contributed to the development of our community," he added.

During his 2017 SONA address in Parliament on 09 February 2017, President Zuma also stated that: "Of the work opportunities created, more than one million have been taken up by the youth. During 2015/2016, more than sixty one thousand work opportunities were created through the Environmental Programmes such as Working for Water, Working for Wetlands, Working on Fire and Working for Ecosystems. More than 60% of the beneficiaries were young people."

Participants' testimonies

Ms Thobile Sindane – a participant in the EPWP Ehlanzeni Safety Ambassadors Programme in Nelspruit, Mpumalanga – said: "My life has changed for the better since I joined the EPWP. The monthly income I receive from the project has afforded me an opportunity to provide for my loved ones," she explained.



The EPWP continues to deliver assets and services that bring about the socio-economic development in our communities, Deputy Minister Jeremy Cronin says

Article by: Michael Mokoena
Pictures by: Emmanuel Jiyane



A total of 210,368 children across South Africa have received Early Childhood Development (ECD) services from the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) by the end of the third quarter of 2016/17, the Deputy Minister of Public Works Jeremy Cronin said on 06 March 2017. Speaking at the start of the 5-day EPWP workshop, (6-10 March 2017) in Pretoria, Deputy Minister Cronin further said there was massive developmental work being done by the EPWP participants across South Africa.

“Although we have created 497 624 work opportunities by the third quarter of 2016/17, it is important to note that the EPWP is not only about fighting poverty through the creation of work opportunities, but the Programme is also about delivering public assets and services that contribute to the development of our people. By the end of the third quarter of 2016/17 a total of 161,185 households received home-based care services through our EPWP participants. The delivery of these assets proves that we remain a caring government,” Deputy Minister Cronin said.

He further talked about the assets and services delivered through the EPWP by the end of quarter three of the 2016/17 financial year; the Deputy Minister said a total of 21,054 kilometers of low volume roads in South Africa had been constructed and maintained.

“These roads are maintained by our participants within various EPWP programmes such as the successful Zibambele Road Maintenance Programme, where women in the rural KwaZulu-Natal are responsible for doing maintenance of the rural roads,” Deputy Minister Cronin said.

He added that the EPWP programmes within the Environment and Culture Sector removed alien plants on 416,145 hectares and rehabilitated 2,614 hectares of wetlands.

“We have also created and rehabilitated 466,298 community parks in various communities,” Deputy Minister Cronin added.

Turning to speak to officials about the workshop, Deputy Minister Cronin said it was vital for officials who work within the implementing space of the EPWP to constantly improve their understanding of the Programme.

“This workshop should further capacitate you to effectively implement the programme, especially as we move towards creating over 6 million work opportunities by 2019. We also hope that this workshop will provide you with ideas that can help us to improve the implementation of the programme,” Deputy Minister said.

He added that training of both participants and officials was vital in the successful implementation of the EPWP.

“Since the start of EPWP Phase 3 in 2014, we have provided training to over 50 000 participants. Of the 50 000 EPWP participants trained, more than 31 000 participants have received accredited training. The types of accredited training provided include apprenticeship training, contractor development, pharmacy assistant programme, caregiving and other such programmes.”

“Participants who have been trained have contributed in the delivery of services that benefit our communities such as caring for the disabled, those with HIV/Aids as well as the elderly. The training has also assisted the government to provide key basic services and assets. For instance, participants trained in the Vukuphile Contractor Development Programme have provided infrastructure services that benefit our communities while participants trained in the delivery of extra school support have ensured that school children are being assisted with their school work in various schools where the programme is being implemented,” Deputy Minister added.





The Deputy Director General (DDG) of EPWP in the National Department of Public Works, Mr. Stanley Henderson said training workshop was vital in ensuring that managers better understand ways of upscaling the EPWP.

"It is vital for managers to look beyond work opportunities created through the EPWP. Workshops such as this one are vital in assisting our managers and all those working in the implementation sphere of the EPWP to better understand how to effectively implement the programme," DDG Henderson said.

The officials who attended the workshop came from various parts of the country. One of the attendees Mr. Thabani Mazibuko said he hoped the programme would provide him with better understanding of implementing the programme.

The objective of the workshop was to impart information and knowledge about the EPWP reporting system, compliance to the ministerial determination as well as EPWP recruitment guidelines.

The course covered the following:

1. The mandate of the EPWP
2. The exit opportunities within EPWP
3. It contextualizes the Programme in terms of key government policies such as the National Development Plan (NDP – Vision 2030).



Pheko Ka Kopanelo NPO contributes to community development in Qwa-Qwa, Free State

Article by: Michael Mokoena

Pictures by: Mosina Ndlazi



The health and well-being of patients at the Mofumahadi Manapo Mopeli District Hospital in Phuthaditjhaba in the Free State is improving as a direct result of the care given to patients by the EPWP caregivers. According to the Ms Nonkululeko Hermia Matshoba, the Head of Nursing at the hospital, the caregivers provide for general patients, including women who are in labour, with basic healthcare assistance.

“Due to the shortage of medical staff at the hospital, the caregivers have become the eyes and ears of the medical staff at the facility. The work the caregivers do includes: looking after patients, assisting to feed them, bath them, the bedding of those others to access toilets facilities at the hospital, etc.

“The caregivers also assist women who are in labour in various ways, such as talking to them to ease any anxieties associated with pregnancy, advising them on how to properly breastfeed, and offering other basic healthcare needs,” she said.

Ms Matshoba stated that this project had brought down the number of complaints and litigations against the hospital.

“Because of the shortage of medical staff at the facility, we had a few cases of patients dying due to not being attended to. The presence of these caregivers at the facility has brought such cases down. The complaints we used to receive about patients not being properly cared for have also been drastically reduced. The patient survey of the hospital is now positive. In fact many of the patients want to stay longer at the hospital because of the high level of care given to them by the caregivers. The caregiver programme has been wonderful,” she said.

Ms Matshoba added that the hospital offered caregivers training in basic healthcare before being allowed to work at the facility.

The caregiver hospital project is one of the four EPWP projects that the hospital is implementing in partnership with the Pheko Ka Kopanelo Community Development Non Profit Organisation (NPO). The NPO is responsible for implementing EPWP NSS projects.

The four projects that are implemented by the NPO at the hospital include Ward Aider Project, the Cleaning Project and a project to contribute to the hospital's Back to Basic Health Strategy.

The NPO is located in Qwaqwa within the Maluti-a-Phofung Local Municipality in the Thabo Mofutsanyane District Municipality in the Free State.

The programme activities implemented by the NPO include Home and Community Based Care (HCBC); Hospice; Food and Security Gardens; Community Cleaning and Road Maintenance; Chicken Farming and Poultry; Computer School and Learnership Programmes; Coffin-Making; Nappy Manufacturing; Vegetable Canning and Atchar-Making as well as the VIP Toilet installation.

One of the good stories to come out of the NPO is that of 26-year-old Mr Kananelo Koetepe, who started in the NPO as a programme coordinator and through the skills he acquired from the NPO, he owns a construction and events management company.

“I joined the EPWP in 2010 after I dropped out of university in Johannesburg. I was given a learnership by the NPO as a programmes coordinator. I was responsible for coordinating all the EPWP projects that the NPO was implementing. Many of the projects that the NPO is implementing have improved the lives of the residents in the area. For instance community members were taught skills of setting up food gardens in their own backyards – this projects has contributed in the fight against poverty in the area. Other community members have even gone into business, selling their produce with in the community,” Mr Koetepe said.

He said that the skills and the experience he acquired from the EPWP had assisted him to efficiently manage his construction company.

“The work at the NPO taught me a lot, including managerial and administrative skills. I learned how to write proposals, how to engage with stakeholders and other business-related skills. Today, I'm using all the knowledge I received from the programme to effectively manage my companies. As we speak, my construction company has created 50 work opportunities in the community,” Mr Koetepe said.

His company is currently doing road maintenance work and filling of potholes in the area of Phuthaditjaba.

Mr Koetepe is also a motivational speaker who has recently been given a contract to motivate children at underperforming schools across the Free State.

The NPO's project manager, Ms Mimi Khatlisi, said there were many good stories to tell about the developmental work done by EPWP projects they had implemented in the area.

“The projects have contributed to the development of our communities



in terms of work opportunity creation, skills development and income transfer to poor households. The developmental aspect of our EPWP projects is extensive – for instance we save the lives of our people through the caregivers projects; we contribute to an economically vibrant community through the opportunities we create for our people and the services we offer such as the coffins we manufacture and sell to the poor; we fight hunger through the food gardens we are setting up in the community; we restore the dignity of our people through the toilet structures that we install in our communities,” Ms Khatlisi said.



The NPO started to implement the EPWP NSS in 2009 with only nine participants. “We currently have 600 participants in the NPO,” Ms Khatlisi said. The opportunities created through the NPO form part of the 2019 target of six million work opportunities set by President Zuma.

She added that all participants were on a 12-month renewable contract.

Ms Khatlisi explained that the NPO also conducts household profiling to ensure that it selects the poorest community members into its EPWP projects. The NPO also works with ward councillors to widen their recruitment process.

SMME development

The NPO has also created work opportunities through its small, medium and micro enterprises (SMME) and sustainable development projects. The NPO’s SMME projects are coffin-making and nappy-manufacturing projects. The coffin-making project has created 18 permanent jobs. The NPO supply small undertakers in surrounding areas with coffins, and the local municipality with paupers’ coffins. With the profit generated, the NPO has managed to take 13 youth to university and four women to Maluti TVET.

Through the nappy-manufacturing project, the NPO has created 15 permanent jobs in the area. The NPO trained a total of 25 young women in the production of disposable napkins which are sold to the communities. With the proceeds from this project, the NPO managed to procure six wheelchairs for local people with disabilities.

Training

Since the NPO participation in the EPWP NSS, a total of 550 participants have been trained in a range of accredited and non-accredited courses.

Vodacom has trained 200 participants in an accredited Computer Literacy and IT course.

The Department of Health has provided 192 participants with training on a course in Home-Based Care.

The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) provided 150 participants with skills in agriculture (Food Security). The course was not accredited.

ABSA provided two participants with accredited course in Financial Management.

The Thabo Mofutsanyane District Municipality trained six participants in Road Maintenance and Project Management. Non-accredited course.

“The training we received has empowered us with skills that we can use when we leave the programme in the future,” Ms Matlokotsi Mabuya, a caregiver at the NPO said.

Partnerships

The NPO has formed partnerships with both private and public entities. The NPO has a solid partnership with the Mofumahadi Manapo Mopedi District Hospital and is implementing a number of EPWP projects at the facility (hospital). The NPO also has partnerships with the Department of Health; district and local municipalities; the DAFF and a range of NPOs such as the Youth with a Purpose, Khomanani, Helping Hands and Thusanang.

Vuk'uphile Contractor Development Learnership Project empowers emerging Contractors in Limpopo

Article by: Herman Makhopye
Pictures by: Herman Makhopye



The number of road accidents involving children and the elderly in the community of Ramatsowe in the Capricorn District of Limpopo have been reduced as a result of the sidewalk pavements that are constructed by the government through the Vuk'uphile Contractor Learnership Programme, says residents in the area.

The Principal of Lephalele Primary School, Mr Maila Daniel Mochaba, said the sidewalk pavement project had contributed to safer roads for all in the area. "We are truly pleased with this government's intervention. Our children will now be safe because they will use the sidewalks when they go to school and when they come back home. We also welcome the initiative of the learner contractors of marking pedestrian crossings in our roads," Mr Mochaba said.

He added that as a result of the Vuk'uphile paving project, schoolchildren in the area were even starting to develop an interest in the field of construction. "Young people in the area are seeing that programmes such as this are vital in the development of their communities," Mr Mochaba said.

A local businessperson, Ms Tsakani Manganye, said the programme was vital in stimulating local economy. "The learner contractors are procuring the construction materials from us; this has contributed to the growth of our small businesses, which in turn will also create the much-needed jobs in the area. She said. Ms Manganye manages the Laduma Hardware Store in the Vhembe District.

Other community members spoke of how the sidewalk pavements would make it easy for wheelchair-bound residents to access facilities easily such as schools and clinics in the area.

The pavement project in Waterberg is one of the 35 Vuk'uphile projects that are currently being implemented in the province.

The Deputy Director for the Vuk'uphile Contractor Learnership Programme in the NDPW, Mr Osborne Neluvhalani, explained that some of these projects were implemented in Vhembe, Sekhukhune and Mopani districts.

"The Vuk'uphile Contractor Learnership Programme is contributing a lot in the transformation of the construction sector. The programme provides emerging contractors with technical, administrative, contractual and managerial skills in the construction sector," Mr Neluvhalani said.

He added: "In Limpopo", we currently have 35 learner contractors and 40% of them are women, while 6% are people with disabilities and 42% are young people."

Learner contractors

"The programme has capacitated us with the knowledge, skills and understanding of the construction sector. We are able to construct vital community assets through the use of labour-intensive methods. In my project, I have provided people work opportunities. While I gain work experience in the management of the project. Mr Tshagofatso Molopyane, a learner contractor said.

Mr Molopyane was given work to pave 0.65 metres of one of the roads in the village of Ramatjowe. The total cost of the project is R1 588 623.85 and was completed in December 2015.

He entered the Vuk'uphile Learnership Programme in January 2015 and is expected to complete in December 2017. His company is currently at Construction Industry Development Board Level 2.

"The impact of the work that we do in the lives of our communities is massive. For instance, wheelchair-bound patients can now use the pavement we have constructed for easy access to hospital and clinic facilities in the area. That to me is significant because it means the EPWP Vuk'uphile Learnership Programme is contributing in improving our people's access to health services," Mr Molopyane explained.

He added that the programme provided him with skills in business management, financial management, project management and money saving.

Another learner contractor, Ms Selina Musobi, from Malamulele pointed out that the programme was contributing to the growth and sustainability of small businesses in the province.

"The skills that we have acquired include strategies of growing and diversifying our businesses. The programme is also vital in the growth of local enterprises because most of the material we need to do our work is sourced locally. That also contributes to the creation of work opportunities within the sector," Ms Musobi said.

She is responsible for a paving project of 1.40 meters of the road, at the cost of R2 541 789.16 Musobi's project is in Malamulele, in the Vhembe District.



The learner contractors have been awarded contracts to pave sidewalks. They have been given different kilometres each to pave. The budget of the projects range between R1 500 000 to R2 600 000.

In terms of training, the learner contractors are exposed to both theoretical and practical training in construction.

The assets they are creating through the programme are strategically located next to public institutions such as schools, hospitals and police stations – to ensure full mass impact.

EPWP participants

Being one of the key EPWP projects, the Vuk'uphile Learnership Programme emphasises the use of labour-intensive methods in the delivery of assets. As a result a number of EPWP participants are recruited in these projects. The participants in the project work 20 days per month and earn a monthly stipend of R1 900.

Ms Grace Masekela, 45, a resident of Mopani, said her participation in the project has provided her with valuable skills she is using to better her life.

“The project has improved my life and that of my family. Through the wages I receive, I have managed to purchase my own stand and build a home for my family. I also managed to buy school uniform for my children,” she said.

Ms Masekela joined the paving project in 2015. Her main duties are to mix cement, join bricks for paving and fill the spacing between the bricks with the mud.

She added that the project has helped a lot in poverty alleviation within the community. “Today we can also easily access facilities such as schools and clinics because of the pavements that have been constructed through the project,” she added.

She called on the government to bring more EPWP projects in the area because her community was still battling with a high unemployment rate.

Ms Musobi, who has a disability, is passionate about her work. “This programme has restored my dignity – I even at times forget that I am disabled!” she said.

She joined the programme in January 2015 and will finish in December 2017 year.

All the learner contractors are receiving formal training accredited by the CETA.

The Vuk'uphile Learner Contractor Programme has learner contractors in all five districts in Limpopo – nine of them are in Sekhukhune, eleven in Capricorn, three in Waterberg, seven in Mopani and nine in Vhembe.



Working on Fire fighting veld fires in Nelspruit, Mpumalanga

Article by: Faith Nonyana and Lerato Moeng

Picture by: Kgomoetso Mathuloe



Thousands of young men and women are saving lives, protecting the environment and restoring the dignity of communities by answering a call to fight veld fires that plague South Africa from time to time. Who can forget the brave sacrifice made by these young people in 2015 when parts of the Western Cape were engulfed by raging fires that threatened to destroy property and the biodiversity of the province?

These men and women are part of the WoF – a government-funded, job-creation programme focused on implementation of the Integrated Fire Management in South Africa. According to www.workingonfire.org – the organisation currently “employs more than 5 000 young men and women who are fully trained as wildfire firefighters and are stationed in more than 200 bases across South Africa”.

The WoF is one of many EPWP subprogrammes spearheaded by the Environment and Culture Sector and it is implemented by the DEA.

In Nelspruit, Mpumalanga, the WoF has 21 participants who are stationed at the programme’s offices at Badplaas Resort, which is used by the team as a training camp.

The manager of the resort, Mr Frans Lousber, said the programme was contributing a lot in fighting veld fires in the province.

Of the 21 participants on the site, six of them are women and 15 are men. One of the women has a disability and her work is to manage the team’s equipment storage.

Recruitment strategy

The recruitment of the participants into the programme is done through the placement of advertisements of vacancies in the local media and circulation of information to the residents in the area from the Mbombela Local Municipality through ward councillors.

Before being appointed, participants must successfully complete a

physical training programme to determine their level of fitness to participate in this programme. The pre-selection physical training includes doing 40 push-ups per minute, 40 pull-ups per minutes, 40 seat-ups per minutes as well as doing a four-kilometre run.

Training

Once recruited into the programme, the participants undergo training to assist them to execute their duties. The participants attend classes at the WoF Academy in Nelspruit. All the courses are accredited by the South African Qualifications Authority.

After graduation, participants are placed at camps such as the one at Badplaas where they execute a range of activities. The participants work with firefighters in Nelspruit to extinguish veld fires in the province. Mr Loubser explained that every year from August to November, the province experiences increased incidents of veldfires. “During this period, participants work with firefighters in the province to douse any fires that occurred,” he said.

Some of the activities the participants do include grass-cutting and removal of alien plants. Participants are given opportunities to progress within the programme from firefighters to crew leaders and base managers.

Mr Loubser said the participants also get a chance to be employed by other private or public sectors entities, because they received accredited training in a range of disciplines such as first aid, grass-cutting and chainsaw operation.

Participants Testimonies

One of the participants in the programme is Ms Nqobile Magagula, who joined the WoF team in March 2012 after being unemployed for many years. She has been in the programme for over three years now and with her experience she has been appointed as one of the supervisors on the site.



The WoF has provided me with various skills, such as firefighting and grass-cutting. As a grass-cutter one must first know the safety procedures of how to operate the grass-cutting machine; this includes watching out for ejected material from the machine and ensuring that no person or animal is placed in danger while operating the machine.”

“I have also learned the importance of working in a team because during our fire extinguishing operations, we rely on each other to execute a safer and a successful operation,” she said.

Ms Magagula added that before joining WoF, she was a college student studying Office Management but could not complete her studies due to lack of funds. “I have saved part of my wages which I will use to further my studies once I have left the programme,” she said.

For Mr Mfanakhona Nkosi, from Mooiplaas near Nelspruit, the WoF has given him an opportunity to learn more about firefighting.

“I joined the WoF team after I completed my matric in 2013. I developed an interest to join the programme after reading about it in one of our local newspapers. Once in the programme, I developed passion for the work we do here. We save lives, protect our natural resources as well as property,” he said.

Through hard work and dedication to the programme, Mr Nkosi is now responsible for health and safety of the Badplaas firefighting team. Part of his duties is to monitor activities of firefighters during firefighting operations, analyse perceived risk, ensure the establishment of safety zones, collapse zones, hot zones and other related matters during the operations.

“I have attended a health and safety course, First Aid, and the herbicide applicator course which have helped me to effectively execute my roles and duties in the field,” he said.

Mr Nkosi added that one of the good things that have happened in his life while in the programme was being part of the WoF team that went to extinguish fires in Canada recently. “That was a once-in-a-lifetime experience for me. Coming from a poor family, I never thought that I could go overseas one day. I thank the government for providing me with this opportunity”.

Safety Ambassadors project contributes to crime-combating in Nelspruit, Mpumalanga

Article by: Herman Makhopye
Pictures by: Herman Makhopye



South Africa's blueprint for a safer and better South Africa – the Vision 2030 – states categorically that a safer society can only be achieved through an integrated approach that is focused at tackling the fundamental causes of crime. The NDP states that achieving a safer society requires mobilising a wider range of state and non-state capacities and resources at all levels and active citizen involvement and co-responsibility. One of the important aspects in this integrated approach is the role played by community members in tackling crime.

Through the EPWP interventions, the community of Ehlanzeni in Nelspruit in Mpumalanga is actively participating in the fight against crime, thereby contributing to a safer community. The Ehlanzeni Safety Ambassadors – an EPWP initiative – has collaborated with the local police and various community structures to reduce crime in the town.

“The crime rate in the town has reduced from 12,61% in June 2015 to 7,8% by June 2016. This is as a direct result of the collaborative crime combating work done by the local police, the Ehlanzeni Safety Ambassadors and residents in the town,” said the Station Commander of Nelspruit Police Station, Colonel Brian Muller.



The participants in the programme execute a range of activities, including guarding parked vehicles and cleaning the town in general. The participants also report suspicious activities in the town to the police officials who then respond accordingly.

“We work very well with the participants in the programme and we value their contribution in the fight against crime. Without them we would be having a serious challenge in tackling crime,” Col Muller added.

The role of the safety ambassadors stretches beyond participating in broader community crime fighting to providing people – especially tourists – with information about the town.

The Edgars store manager in Nelspruit, Ms Evelyn Perumal, hailed the crime-combating work done by the safety ambassador. “They are helpful in dealing with incidents such as shoplifting where armed responses are not necessary. Because of their work, the theft of the stock we sell has reduced. The safety ambassadors also serve as a link between the community and local businesses,” Ms Perumal added. An official from Woolworths store in the town, Mr Aubrey van Eck, also “appreciated the support given to us by the safety ambassadors”.

He said parking around the store was safer for the customers. “There is reduced car theft. There is no more grab and runs in the area. We request that the project continue and be extended to other areas around town,” Mr van Eck said.

The Tourism Assistant Manager in the Ehlanzeni District Municipality, Mr Steven von Bardeleben, explained that the Ehlanzeni Safety Ambassadors project had created the much-needed work opportunities for the residents in the area.

“The project has contributed in poverty alleviation in the area. It has provided a source of income that was never there before for these car guards (participants). In addition the participants are receiving training that provide them with skills they can use to enter the formal job market. As we speak, some of the participants have received accredited Grade E and D security training. Most importantly, this project has given our people a sense of dignity and well-being,” Mr von Bardeleben added.

About the project

The project started in 2012 with 66 participants. The number of these participants feeds to the government's 2019 EPWP target of creating over six million work opportunities.

The participants are recruited from a database of car guards that is held by the Mbombela Local Municipality. The database gets submitted to the South African Police Service (SAPS) in order for participants to be screened for any criminal records. The project also adheres to the Ministerial Determination and the EPWP Code of Good Practice. For instance, the participants have annual, sick and maternity leave.

The projects adhere with the COIDA and it also contributes to the participant's UIF. Since the Safety Ambassador project is part of the EPWP, participants only work for 123 months in the project.



The project was funded through the Social Sector Incentive Grant in the 2015/16 financial year.

The stakeholders who are involved in steering the project include the SAPS, Ehlanzeni District Municipality, Mbombela Local Municipality, Community Policing Forum, J&M Security and the Nelspruit City Improvement District.

Participant

"My life has changed for the better because the monthly stipend I receive from the project has given me the opportunity to provide for my loved ones," Ms Thobile Sindane said.

The 33-year-old mother of two primary schoolchildren explained that she joined the project in 2016. "I had been unemployed for a very long time and life was very hard for us at home. But because of this project, I now live a better life," Ms Sindane added.

For 30-year-old Ms Lindiwe Ntiwane, participating in the project has kept hunger at bay in her family. Ms Ntiwane, who resides in Nkomazi village, says that she uses her monthly wages to provide for her family.



NYS School Support Programme infiltrates young minds in Kimberley, Northern Cape Letshego Primary School in Kimberley benefits from the EPWP

Article by: Lesego Moretlwe

Picture by: Lesego Moretlwe



Letshego Primary School is situated in Ward 5, Kimberley in the Northern Cape. This is one of the schools benefitting from the EPWP-NYS project. The other schools benefiting from the school support project in the area are Masiza and Kgolo Primary schools. The DBE in the Northern Cape implements this programme, which has created work opportunities for youth in the area.

Ms Mpho Molopi is the school principal who assumed her duty at the school in January 2016. Currently (2016) the school is operating with 25 teachers and 762 learners from Grade R to Grade 7 and performing on average level. Ms Molopi was enthusiastic to mention that "I want to speed up the process of instilling high goal-oriented mood and make some positive changes here and there that will allow us to perform better.

"We are thriving to achieve excellent school administration services. Our administration officer and the EPWP participant, Ms Maserame Mabilo, are doing well in ensuring the smooth administration services of the school. Ms Molopi has described Ms Mabilo as a vibrant, eager to learn and a hardworker whom she values her contribution at the school", she concluded.

EPWP-NYS participants' testimonies – Project's impact

Ms Mabilo, joined the EPWP-NYS Programme in 2014; her daily activities include coordination of meetings and general administration. She spoke highly about the work opportunity that the EPWP has afforded her.

Ms Mabilo remembered vividly how she got this opportunity that she will always cherish. "Two weeks after submitting my curriculum vitae, I got the call to come for an interview. I could not believe it and that is when I got this life-changing opportunity. After having passed Grade 12 in 1997, I enrolled at South African Skills Institute to study Information and Communications Technology (ICT). That was an advance course which I believe has also contributed and placed me at an advantageous position to get this opportunity," she said. Ms Mabilo has also received EPWP training on Information and Computer Driving Licence.

"I work five days a week and I am professionally, financially and socially empowered. The stipend of R1 700 makes a huge impact in my life as I am able to pay R400 for my child school transport and cater for my daily needs. The EPWP has taken me from a point of being nobody to being somebody in the society. I come from a background where I had nothing and could not even afford to buy myself a newspaper to look for job advertisements. Thank you EPWP, for as long as I am within the programme, I am willing to do my best to serve the community with dignity and respect", Ms Mabilo concluded.

Participant for Masiza Primary School

Ms Itumeleng Ntshepeng, 24, joined the programme in April 2016 after hearing from a friend that the DBE, through the EPWP, was offering South African School Administration Management System (SA-SAMS) opportunity to young unemployed youth. She had been applying for a job for months after completing her studies.

Her duties at the school are to communicate information from the principal to the teachers or from teachers to the parents, arranging meetings to be held at the school and handling general administration work. From time to time she liaises with school feeding scheme service provider to submit invoices after rendering a service, and checking the quality and quantity of the food requested by the school.



Part of her responsibility is to render secretarial support to the principal, typing of minutes after the meetings, drafting agendas, answering telephone calls and handling incoming and outgoing mail. Recording of the learners results on the SA-SAMS is one of the things she has to do monthly also retrieving information for the teachers through the system.

"Since isiXhosa is the official home language at Masiza Primary school, I got an opportunity to learn a new language. I love the fact that I am helping the parents to be more involved in knowing how their children perform in class," Ms Ntshepeng said. She is a middle communicator between teachers and parents, and whenever there is a problem with learners she sets up meetings to help resolve the situation.

With no working experience when she joined the EPWP, she had never typed a formal letter before, let alone develop a presentation. She has now mastered these duties. Her typing speed has since improved from typing 10 words per minute to 45 words per minute.



She is also responsible for procuring stationary and office furniture, and arranging school trip as instructed by the principal. She has developed communication skill and technical skills such as operating the copy machine, setting up a projector and filing documents.

Ms Ntshepeng studied Psychology at the University of the Free State and graduated in 2016. As a young graduate, she was frustrated to be unemployed for six months after being constantly mocked by her peers that despite her university degree, she was unemployed like them. She knew that waiting for a job that she studied for could take time and she decided to apply for the EPWP post with the hope for bettering her life. The stipend money helps with posting/mailling applications forms when she applies for relevant jobs. "Waking up in the morning to go to work, performing my best at work and serving the community inspires other youth. I have become a role model to other unemployed females.

"It is safe to say that the EPWP has restored my dignity. For me it's not about just working, it's about contributing to bettering our community and the development of the next generation of youth. Staying with my grandmother, mother and sister we depended on our grandmother pension grant to survive. Earning a stipend has really helped our family a lot; now we can afford to buy enough groceries in the house and I can even afford to buy new clothes."

According to Ms Ntshepeng, the EPWP is a life-changing opportunity for the youth and community. "Without any working experience it is hard to get a job but through this programme we are gaining experience, have a chance to be employable and we can apply for job in the public sector. This programme is not just developing the community but its giving back hope to the community in these tough times when the rate of unemployment in the country is so high," she said.

"There should be more of such programmes in the communities because as a young person development is essential. We are the future of tomorrow; if we not working now what future do we have? This is a good initiative done by government to empower youth and better their skills to enhance our chances of employment and to participate

in the economy. This programme will help in changing the mindset of people about the EPWP.

"I believe that we all need to start somewhere in life to get to achieve our goals and for me the EPWP is that door-opening opportunity. From here I know there are greater opportunities to come – this is just the beginning," Ms Ntshepeng said.

Another participant, Ms Naledi Tshabile, started working in this programme in 2013 at the age of 21. She is currently placed at Kgolo Primary School and now aged 24, she is grateful for the opportunity to participate in the programme. She has been in the programme for more than two years and every day she learns something new. In 2013 she received basic training from the school administrative clerk on how primary school administration is operated.

Before joining the EPWP, she had volunteered to do administrative work at the Thabene High School and was rewarded with R600 per month. She has an idea of what working in a school environment is like. "Volunteering doesn't always mean that you will always be paid at every end of the month, but because I knew that I wanted to learn, I never gave up and always believed that an opportunity will come for me to get a job," she said.

Some of her duties include liaising with service providers who render services at the school to submit their quotations or invoices and checking if the necessary documents submitted are correct, under the supervision of the principal. She also records results using the SA-SAMS; assists teachers to organise meetings with the parents of the learners; records incoming mail; answers the telephone; schedule staff meetings; arranges transport for learners when there is a school trip; maintains the stationery storeroom, and orders new stationary.

As a mother of one, in a family of five and being the only breadwinner, her family depends on the stipend she receives every month to survive. She provides for basic needs of the family such a groceries and electricity. "Being able to take care of my daughter and my family is the most important thing for me, that's my driving force every morning when I wake," said Ms Tshabile.



“My responsibility at the school is not just to perform administration work but I am helping our community to grow by offering better service delivery to them and for them coming to the school to register or enquire and receiving full assistance makes the parents happy and it makes the school to be more efficient. The programme is bettering the community because the youth unemployment rate is a challenge and skills development is the only solution to reducing the unemployment rate,” she said.

She added: “The skills we acquire help us to apply for employment. Through this programme I believe that government has been able to contribute in bettering my life and the lives of those around me. Unemployment doesn’t only affect families but it affects the community as a whole because our peers end up opting to do crime just to make a living and as we know crime doesn’t pay. I also help with teaching learners basic computer skills such as how to switch on and off a computer in a proper manner and how to set up an email address, etc.

“I have been given an opportunity to attend a training course at the South African advanced skills institute and I have acquired administration skills such as making copies, printing, Word, Excel and PowerPoint presentations and interpersonal skills. These are essential skills to apply in the working environment. Knowing how to communicate in the office and life skills training assist us to deal with some of the personal situations we come across in life. The skills I have acquired will not just help me perform my job to the fullest but will help me in future when I apply for a job in the public sector.”

She said to her the EPWP is a real job, because “if it was not for this programme I don’t know where I will be today. I can support my family and daughter through this stipend. Some people may say it is too little, one thing I told myself is that if I say the stipend is not enough what am I comparing it to because if I am not working there’s no income at all. I am so grateful for the money we are getting and the experience we are gaining. The skills that I am gaining will assist me to get permanent employment.”

The total budget for the EPWP-NYS projects within the Northern Cape for the 2016/17 financial year is R2 925 000, with an intake of 136 EPWP participants provided with a stipend of R1 768.41 for 12 months.

Project manager

According to the project manager of the NYS School Support Programme in Kimberley, Northern Cape, Mr Olebogeng Modise, the project commenced in 2013/14 with 129 beneficiaries and this current financial year the number of participants has increased to 136 EPWP participants. This initiative is a partnership between the National Youth Development Agency, EPWP-Social Sector and Northern Cape DSD.

The number of participants in this programme, according to the designated groups, is Women (91), Youth (136) and people with disabilities (3). Since the commencement of this project, 10 participants have graduated into formal employment, seven have been permanently employed at different Northern Cape provincial departments and three at primary schools around Kimberley.

Training of participants

Training of EPWP participants remain critical within the EPWP, hence 20 EPWP ICT participants were undergoing an accredited NQF Level 3 End User Computing Course in the 2016/17 financial year. The training was funded by EPWP training through the funds received from DHET. This project complies with the EPWP minimum wage and employment conditions in accordance with the Ministerial Determination and Code of Good Practice. The participants within this project – who have been made aware of the NYS conditions of service and their employment contracts, including the code of conduct – are paid R1 768.41 per month.

Community development

Through the SA-SAMS, parents are able to access learner information and progress reports are issued on time. The analysis of quarterly results can be made available to parents and SGBs during meetings and one-on-one sessions between parents and teachers. Young people are empowered through training and work opportunities offered to them, and therefore community members regard them as change agents within their households.



Photo Gallery



Photo Gallery

