



Young people who have graduated as artisans from the EPWP should play a role in the creation of work opportunities in their communities, Deputy Minister Kiviet

By Michael Mokoena and Lesego Moretlwe
Pictures by Pelokazi Baliso and Lerato Mpiwa



The Deputy Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI), Ms. Noxolo Kiviet has called on young people who have graduated as artisans from the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) to play a role in the creation of work opportunities for people in their communities. Speaking recently at the graduation ceremony of young people who have been trained as artisans through the EPWP in Pretoria, Deputy Minister Kiviet urged young people to use the skills they have acquired to set up small businesses and look out for business opportunities in both the public and private sector.

“As you exit the Programme today, I wish to encourage you to use the skills that you have acquired from the training to look for employment in the formal sector. Most importantly, I wish you to work together and establish cooperatives so that you can assist the country in the important task of creating work opportunities for other young people in your communities, we want you to look at yourselves as job creators rather than job seekers”. We urge you to come together and form construction businesses, go look for business opportunities in the public and private sector so that you create work opportunities for other young people in your communities, Deputy Minister said”.

“You may also approach government funding institutions such as National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) or Small

Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) to look for funding to establish your businesses,” Deputy Minister Kiviet said.

The 37 young graduates who graduated passed the trade test and have been awarded the Red Seal certificate issued by the Qualification Council for Trade and Qualifications (QCTO) under Section 26(D) (4) of the Skills Development Act, 1998 (Act No 97 of 1998). The training was offered under the National Youth Service (NYS) – a sub-programme of the EPWP – and it (training) focused on the following artisan trades - plumbing, electrical, and bricklaying. The 37 participants were placed at various sites in Pretoria where they underwent practical training in the respective artisan trades. The training consisted of the following trades: 22 electrical, 12 bricklaying, and 3 plumbing. The training provider appointed was ERGO Water Works in partnership with F&O to carry out the technical works for the success of the programme.

The programme was fully funded through the 5% NYS budget allocation from the DPWI Justice College project WCS 047104 and it consisted of three phases namely: Phase I, was the theoretical phase, while during the second phase, the participants were placed at various companies to gain work experience. The final phase was the completion of trade testing. The test is one of the most important measures to determine the preparedness to be fully qualified artisans.

Deputy Minister Kiviet said that through programmes such as the EPWP NYS, the government was transforming the EPWP to ensure that it provided young people with skills they can use to compete at a high level in the country. "Through such programmes, we are unlocking the potential of our young people. We want you to go and compete at a high level in the construction sector," she added. Deputy Minister Kiviet also thanked parents for supporting participants during their training.

The Deputy Director General (DDG) of the EPWP, Ms. Carmen-Joy Abrahams also echoed Deputy Minister Kiviet's sentiments that the graduating learners should use the skills they have acquired to pursue business interests so they can assist in the creation of work opportunities in their communities. The event was also attended by the DPWI Pretoria Regional Manager, Ms. Tebogo Phiri, EPWP Programme Manager in Gauteng, Ms. Beauty Kutumane as well as Ms Ncumisa Khumalo and Ms Marlene Robbertse who gave messages of support and respectively represented Construction Sector Education and Training Authority (CETA) and training facilitator F&O Technical Training.

Participants' Testimonials

The participants thanked DPWI and all role-players for giving them an opportunity to participate in the Programme. They have also extended a special gratitude to Mr Mhlangabezi Fojela, Deputy Director: EPWP Training in Pretoria Regional Office for his support, commitment and motivation throughout the course.

Ms. Pretty Khumalo – a qualified bricklayer - said that she was pleased with the bricklaying skills she acquired from the Programme. "It is inspiring to be working in a field dominated by males. I chose bricklaying because I wanted to show young women that they can do any work in the construction sector," she said.

Mr. Emanuel Happy Kgori said that they joined the programme in 2019. "I grabbed this opportunity with both hands and as I exit, I will ensure that use the skills that I have acquired to create a better life for myself and my loved ones."

Mr. Bulumko Kona who earlier led the graduating learners in a song, said that his journey in the Programme was rewarding. "even though we had some challenges, quitting was not an option, we are today graduates! We are qualified artisans! This training was a start of our journey for us... We will continue to push so that we find employment opportunities," he concluded.



Government creates over 1 million EPWP work opportunities

By Pelokazi Michael Mokoena
 Pictures by Lerato Mpiwa



Having placed employment creation and poverty alleviation at the heart of its Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan, government continues to create work opportunities for poor and unemployed South Africans through programmes such as the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP). In the 2021/22 financial year, the government created a total of 1, 016, 646 EPWP work opportunities for the poor and unemployed South Africans. This achievement is against the target of 1, 009, 972 work opportunities. These work opportunities were created from a total of 13 952 EPWP projects that were implemented by various public bodies across the country.

In her Youth month message for young people in EPWP, the Deputy Director General (DDG) of the EPWP Branch in DPWI, Ms. Carmen-Joy Abrahams called on municipalities and departments to further develop EPWP Programmes that are attractive for the youth given high unemployment faced by youth. There is a need to apply innovation and strengthen dialogues with the aim of sharing best practice on youth programmes.



EPWP 2021/22 financial year performance per Province

This year's Youth Day and Month is celebrated under the theme "Promoting sustainable livelihood and resilience of young people for a better tomorrow".

KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape continued to lead in the creation of EPWP work opportunities in the 2021/22 financial year with the two provinces creating 224 281 and 212 440 work opportunities respectively. The performance by other provinces is as follows:

Provinces	Creation of EPWP work opportunities in the 2021/22
Free State	62 046
Gauteng	109 541
Limpopo	110 036
Mpumalanga	78 270
North West	63 577
Northern Cape	45 157
Western Cape	111 298



Minister De Lille engages with young people who are being trained through the EPWP-AgriSETA Artisan Programme in the Free State

By Michael Mokoena

Pictures by Maanea Maselesele



The Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Ms. Patricia de Lille, has praised young people who are participating in the Artisan Development Programme which is facilitated and implemented by the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in partnership with the Agriculture Sector Education and Training Authority (AgriSETA). Speaking to the participants during a recent departmental event in Bloemfontein (Free State), Minister de Lille said that she was inspired by the positive stories that the learners were sharing with her.

“I am truly inspired by the positive attitudes of these young people. I am convinced that the future of our country is in good hands,” Minister de Lille said.

She encouraged the participants to learn as much as they can from the Programme so that they can contribute to the socio-economic upliftment of their communities.

During her interaction with the participants, Minister de Lille was joined by the Deputy Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Ms. Noxolo Kiviet, Deputy Director General of EPWP, Ms. Carmen-Joy Abrahams, DPWI Bloemfontein Regional Manager, Ms. Thobile Zulu, as well as other senior officials who are responsible for the implementation of the EPWP.

Speaking to officials who attended the event, Minister de Lille said that government must look at upscaling the EPWP so that more people - especially the youth, women, and people with disabilities- are given opportunities in the Programme. She stressed that the government had to be more ambitious in its drive to create work and training opportunities for unemployed South Africans.

Minister de Lille added that the Department was proud to be working with the AgriSETA and various private sector companies to implement the Programme.

The representative of AgriSETA – Mr. Medupi Shabangu – said that the entity remained committed to ensuring the success of the Programme.

Participants’ testimonies

During their engagements with the Minister, the participants shared positive experiences they had in the Programme. Mr. Martin Ngale who is studying Boiler making (through the EPWP-AgriSETA Artisan Development Programme) at Matu TVET College said that the skills that he was acquiring will assist him to one day open a small factory where he will create jobs for members of his community.

Ms. Sophie Kekane, who is studying plumbing through the Programme, thanked both the DPWI and AgriSETA for giving her an opportunity to participate in the Programme. Kekane is placed at a company called CC Chickens in Kroonstad where she is doing practical studies in plumbing.



KwaZulu Natal launches its first ever -EPWP-NSF- Learnership in Kokstad

By Sduduzo Simelane and Thabani Mazibuko
Pictures by Velile Jiyane



Kokstad is usually freezing in winter and it certainly was a very cold morning on Monday, 30 May 2020, when officials from the National Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI), the Greater Kokstad Municipality (GKM) as well as the recently appointed training provider (Nokusho M Consulting) gathered at the Eco Park complex on the outskirts of Kokstad to induct 25 EPWP participants for a National Certificate in Plant Production Learnership.

The initiative is a component of a five-year (2019-2023) partnership between the NDPWI and the National Skills Fund (NSF) covering training areas such as skills programmes, artisan development and learnership programmes. It is a learnership pitched at NQF Level 2 with 178 SAQA credits that will run for a year with specific focus on hydroponics and is accredited by the AgriSETA who are an important player in the DPWI-NSF relationship. Notably, this is the first ever learnership programme in KZN to be implemented through the funding from NSF - the province has only implemented Vuk'uphile and the National Youth Service in the past.

The make-up of the learners is almost entirely youth with 22 of the 25 participants aged between 18 and 35 years. Twelve women will benefit from this 12 month extensive programme whose classroom theory segment has been packaged from 30 May 2022 to 03 October 2022 with the workplace practical work running from 04 October 2022 to 17 May 2023.

The induction session had two segments, namely, (i) messages of support by the management of GKM and that of DPWI as well as (ii) planning for the training. In her message of support, the Greater Kokstad Municipality Manager for Local Economic Development (who is also an EPWP Champion), Ms. Antoinette

Whyte, said "when the Municipality first submitted its learnership application in 2019 the targeted participants were to be from the Franklin area. The project has since expanded to three other areas: Pakkies, Kraansdraai and Willowdale".

Greater Kokstad does not have traditional rural communities, the areas outside towns are farming communities. Perhaps it is this unique character of the territory, and the youthfulness of participants, that prompted Ms. Whyte to say in encouragement to the participants 'this is your opportunity, and remember the money used to pay for this learnership comes from your parents'.

The DPWI Programme Manager, Sduduzo Simelane, expressed regret that the learnership had taken such a long time to reach commencement due to the outbreak of COVID-19 which had an negative impact on the procurement process. He, however, expressed excitement in that its start represented a step towards what his office had decided to consciously focus on in the 2022/2023 financial year, namely, seeking partnerships with municipalities around sustainable livelihoods initiatives.

Flanked by Training Deputy Director, Thabani Mazibuko (who was the programme director on the day) and the Training Assistant Director, Veli Jiyane (who is the DPWI project manager for this learnership), Simelane intimated that they have identified a group of municipalities, including GKM, that they would soon be engaging on Vuk'uphile Learnership, National Youth Service, Enterprise Development and accredited training.

The planning segment was ably directed by Veli Jiyane who led the training facilitators, municipal officials and the learners through the logistics of the learnership programme. His magnificent work culminated in an implementation plan for the programme.

National Youth Service graduates gain formal employment

By Pelokazi Baliso

Pictures by EPWP Communications



Some of the National Youth Service (NYS) learners who assisted in the refurbishment of the Polokwane Magistrate Court have been appointed by Musan Trading Enterprise. This was announced by the company's Joyce Nengothela, who stated that the company plans to appoint more learners as work becomes available at some of their construction sites in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal.

Speaking at the NYS graduation ceremony that was recently held at the Polokwane Local Municipality in Limpopo, Nengothela said that the four (4) participants that the company has appointed were trained in electrical work.

"We are proud of the hard work that you put in when you were all on-site at the magistrate court. As you graduate from this programme today, we want you to know that you are our children and we love you. As and when work becomes available at some of our sites, we will look at ways to employ some of you," Nengothela said.

Musan Trading Enterprise is a construction company that was responsible for the refurbishment of the court.

The four learners who have been appointed are part of the 23 learners who participated in the refurbishment of the magistrate court. The learners were placed on-site for 9 months and received training in various artisan trades such as plumbing, paving, painting, and bricklaying.

The graduation ceremony was officiated by the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI), Polokwane Local Municipality, and the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA).

The Director for NYS in DPWI, Ms. Lefentse Ratsela wished the learners well for the future.

The Deputy Director: NYS in DPWI, Ms. Lungile Zulu advised learners to use the skills they have attained from the programme to find employment or venture into business.

"We want you to take advantage of opportunities that are available in both the public and private sector. With the skills that you have acquired from this programme, we believe that you can achieve that," she said.

"To access some of these economic opportunities, you must familiarise yourselves with platforms such as SAYouthMobi, Department of Public Service and Administration, and the National Treasury website and other such platforms," Zulu added.

The Assistant Manager for Public Participation at Polokwane Local Municipality, Mr. Mabilu Mokwalakwala thanked the learners for "staying and completing the programme".

Learners' Testimonials

"We know that at times this programme was tough, but you remained committed...we thank you for that. We wish you well as you exit the programme," he stated.

Mokwalakwala also called on the learners to use the skills they have acquired to establish businesses to assist in the fight against poverty, unemployment, and inequality in their communities.

The DPWI Manager for EPWP Enterprise Development Unit in Limpopo, Ms. Victoria Mphahlele shared with the learners some of the business assistance offered by DPWI.

NYDA's Mr. Victor Maleka also engaged the learners in a range of opportunities offered by the agency.

Ms. Matsoalo Maluleke thanked all stakeholders for providing them with the opportunity to participate in the NYS. Speaking on behalf of the learners, Maluleke said that the Programme had given them hope. "The NYS has given us an opportunity to pursue our dreams. We will use the skills we have acquired to contribute to the upliftment of our communities," she said.

At the end of the event, the EPWP senior managers handed over the certificates to the learners and also presented them with tool boxes they can use to start their own small businesses.



Limpopo Regional Office of DPWI commends EPWP-AgriSETA Artisan Development Programme for empowering young people in the province

Article and pictures by Maanea Maselesele and Lerato Mpiwa



As the country commemorates Youth Month, the Limpopo Regional Office of the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) has commended the role played by the EPWP-AgriSETA Artisan Development Programme in the empowerment of the province's youth. The EPWP Manager for Training in the province, Ms. Phuti Ngoasheng, indicated young people were being trained through this programme in Limpopo.

She pointed out that 19 of these young people were placed at the two Eskom power stations in the province where they were receiving training in trades such as Boilermaking, Mechanical Fitting, Electrician, and Rigging.



"Eight (8) of these young people are placed at Matimba Power Station while eleven (11) of them are placed at Medupi Power Station," she said.

The EPWP-AgriSETA Artisan Development Programme is a nationwide training initiative that is aimed at providing 400 young people with artisan skills. The objective of this Programme is to provide these young people with skills they can use to enter the formal job market or start their own companies.

Ngoasheng explained that the young people who are placed at the Eskom power stations joined the programme in 2021. "They were then taken through theoretical and practical training at Thlatlong Training Centre in Lephalale. Upon the completion of both the theoretical and practical training, the college together with DPWI and AgriSETA went into a partnership with Eskom to provide these learners with workplace training," she pointed out.

"At these power plants, the participants are placed under qualified artisans for mentorship. The learners will gain valuable work experience as they are exposed to well-equipped workshops. Once they finish the workplace learning they will be prepared for trade testing for 3 months. Upon completion of their trade test, the learners will receive Red Seal certificates at NQF Level 5," she said.

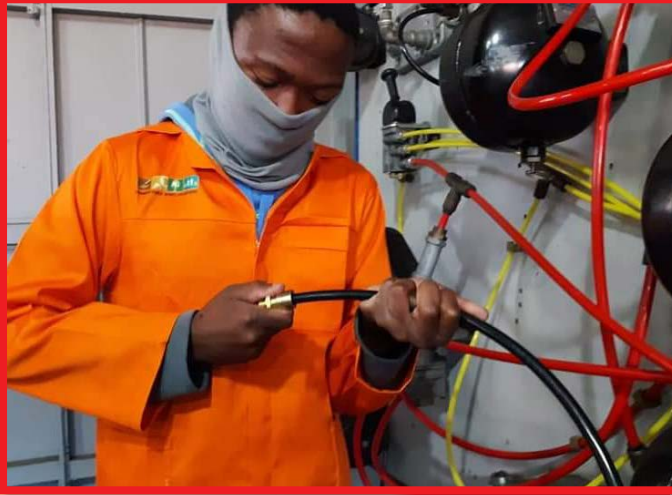
Ngoasheng added that learners will continue to receive the monthly stipend of R3000 to cover food and transport expenses until their workplace training ends in February 2023.

The 2022 Youth Month is commemorated under the theme: "Promoting sustainable livelihood and resilience of young people for a better tomorrow".



DPWI Mpumalanga Regional Office visits EPWP-AgriSETA artisan learners in Middleburg

Article and pictures by Michael Mokoena



The training facilitator at the VTA Training Centre, Mr. Henning Kruger said they were pleased with the progress of the Programme.

“The 10 learners that are placed with us are being trained in Diesel Mechanic. Since they have completed both the theoretical and parts of practical training at the centre, we will be deploying them to various workplaces where they will be required to do further practical work,” he said.

Kruger said that once the learners have completed the programme they will have to do a trade test before qualifying as Diesel Mechanics.

Learners' Testimonials

The Nelspruit Regional Office of the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) has recently visited Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) learners who are receiving artisan training at VTA Training Centre in Middleburg. These learners are part of the 40 participants in the province who are being trained through the EPWP-AgriSETA Artisan Development Programme.

Mr. Edwin Mashalane said the programme has given him the skills to create a better life for himself.

“I plan to use the skills that I am acquiring from this Programme to establish my own mechanic workshop. This will also allow me to contribute to the creation of work for unemployed young people in my community,” he said.

The visit was led by the EPWP Training Manager in Mpumalanga, Ms. Fela Mashaba who commended the work done by all role-players to make the programme a success in the province.

Ms. Mapule Mocwaledi explained that by fixing cars in her community, she was already using the skills she had acquired to generate money for herself.



EPWP in partnership with AgriSeta host induction for Apprenticeship Training Programme in Limpopo

Article and picture by Maanea Maselesele and Pelokazi Baliso



The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in partnership with Agricultural Sector Education and Training Authority (AgriSETA) conducted a successful induction programme for 10 learners who were recruited for a multi-year Apprenticeship Training Programme.

The four-day induction programme took place at Thorn Castle Training Center in Polokwane, Limpopo.

The participants were selected from EPWP projects in Limpopo and were placed at Thorn Castle Training Centre for both theoretical and practical training. The learners will be trained in Electrical engineering and will receive a stipend of R3000 per month.

The objective of the EPWP Artisan Development Programme is to provide training to EPWP participants across the country to enhance their skills, improve their employability, and the ability to start their own businesses. The Programme is funded through the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) - National Skills Fund.

EPWP Training Manager in Limpopo, Ms. Phuthi Ngoasheng, encouraged learners to “grab this opportunity with both hands and use it to gain valuable skills”. She further advised them to adhere to EPWP training standard operating procedures, terms and conditions of the apprenticeship, EPWP principles and prescripts as well as the code of conduct.

Upon completion of the training, participants will be awarded Red Seal certificates at NQF level 5.

Participant's testimony

“I joined the programme in January 2022 and enrolled in the trade of electrical engineering. The Programme plays a huge role in helping us -participants - to pursue our careers and goals,” said Ms. Athalia Ramanna. She thanked EPWP for granting them an opportunity to be part of this training opportunity.

EPWP Social Sector in Gauteng contributes to the fight against Covid-19

Article by Masego Maselwanyane

In an effort to strengthen service delivery in its facilities, the Department of Health in Gauteng has appointed 94 Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) participants to provide support in the Soshanguve North clinic in Pretoria. These participants were recruited in line with the EPWP Recruitment Guidelines.

The participants were deployed in various health facilities in the clinic to provide administration/clerical work which included securing client information, filing, data capturing, etc. They have also provided client liaison services to reduce patients' waiting times in queues and cleaning services to reduce infections acquired at facilities

While the project's main aim was to provide support to health facilities, it also contributed to addressing unemployment among poor members of the community by providing them with training

and work opportunities which would enable them to earn an income and acquire the necessary skills to access the labour market upon exiting the Programme.

The objective of the project was to support the Department of Health in the delivery of services to the community by providing support interventions to the identified health facilities. The project started on the 1st of April 2021 and ended on the 31st of March 2022. It was funded through the EPWP Social Sector Incentive Grant for Provinces in 2021/2022 financial year and the participants were remunerated at R175 (daily wage). The value add of the project is that participants were able to provide relief to full-time permanent personnel and reduction in longer queues at facilities. Cleanliness has improved and thus reducing the risk of infections, patients' files are well-organised and the tracking rate is faster.

EPWP NPO Programme supports vulnerable people of Mahushu Trust in Mpumalanga

Article and pictures by Mosima Ndlanzi



Masoyi Home Base Care [MHBC] is a registered Non-Profit Organisation with the Department of Social Development in terms of the NPO Act of 71 of 1997. This organisation was registered in 1997. MHBC is located in a township called Mahushu Trust found within the boundaries of Ehlanzeni District Municipality in Mpumalanga. Mahushu Trust like many other townships in South Africa is characterised by a high rate of unemployment, poverty, hunger, low level of literacy, crime, and gender-based violence. These unfortunate circumstances had left behind a lot of dilemmas in the area.



To aid the communities of Mahushu Trust and surrounding areas, the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) through the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) and the Independent Development Trust (IDT) has provided income support to a total of 104 participants who were involved in the implementation of the EPWP Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) Programme. The participants provided the much-needed social services such as HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness programmes, orphans and vulnerable children [OVC] support programme, and Early Childhood Development programmes to the communities of Mahushu Trust and surrounding areas. Masoyi HBC is one of the 44 NPOs supported by the EPWP across the three district municipalities in Mpumalanga for the 2021/22 financial year. The EPWP NPO programme is headed by EPWP Non-State Sector (NSS).

DPWI hosts induction for EPWP participants in Thohoyandou, Limpopo

Article and pictures by Brian Dlamini



The Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) recently hosted an induction workshop for 65 newly recruited Expanded Public Programme (EPWP) participants in Thohoyandou under Thulamela Municipality in Limpopo.

been recruited into the EPWP within the five districts in Limpopo during the 2022/23 financial year. The five districts where the participants will be placed include Vhembe, Waterberg, Mopani, Capricorn, and Sekhukhune.

The purpose of the workshop was to educate the participants about EPWP, its requirements, their job descriptions, and the content of their contracts.

The participants have been placed on a 12-month contract in the following fields: Cleaners, Groundsmen, Cooks, Laundry Aids, Ancillary Health Care workers, Child and Youth Care Workers, Data Captures, and Admin Support



Expanded Public Works Programme participants exit into business

Article and pictures by Maaanea Maselesele



My dream to become a chicken broiler has come true, said Mr. Michael Thabang Monjane during the EPWP site visit held recently.

A 30-year-old Monjane from Mahwelereng was one of the 25 participants who were recruited in 2020 under the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) National Youth Service (NYS) for the repairs and maintenance of Mokopane Home Affairs in Limpopo for a period of 12 months. Upon the end of his contract, the EPWP Enterprise Development unit in Limpopo offered a Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) which is aimed at encouraging the participants to start their businesses.

Monjane grabbed that opportunity with both hands and registered Agro Chicks Company (PTY LTD) which is a chicken broiler business. The EPWP further assisted him to realise his dream of becoming an entrepreneur and linked him with the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) where he received the Basic Financial management and Start Your Own Business Training.

The business was started and operated from the backyard of his home. Monjane received the grant funding from the NYDA to grow his business and create employment for the youth of Mahwelereng. "I am happy for the support I received from both EPWP and NYDA. I now see a light and my business is growing and I will be able to hire youth within my community" said Monjane in his appreciation remarks. "

His target market is the local community." My dream is to sell bulk chicken meat to local supermarkets, local chicken stokvels, and dust chicken Markets". Added Monjane. The EPWP Enterprise Development provides support to participants in their quest to start and operate businesses, thereby promoting sustainable livelihoods, as well as contributing to the creation of work opportunities and income support to poor and unemployed people.

The NYDA is a South African-based agency established primarily to address challenges faced by the nation's youth. Its objectives are:

- * Economic development through youth entrepreneurship
- * Decent employment through jobs program
- * Social cohesion and pathway for economic emancipation through National Youth Service
- * Monitoring and evaluation of the integrated youth development strategy

The EPWP brought change into my life. I completed my Grade 12 in 2011 and I was unemployed since then and discouraged until I got an opportunity to be a participant in EPWP-NYS. I am so happy that I am now financially independent and can assist my mother who is a single parent to support my siblings. I encourage fellow youth to also start their businesses and assist in job creation" said Monjane.



Mthatha Regional Office of DPWI hosts EPWP-NYS exit workshops

Article and pictures by Pelokazi Baliso



The Mthatha Regional Office of the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) recently hosted graduation ceremonies for young people who participated in the National Youth Service (NYS) programme. The graduation ceremonies were hosted in Maclear and in Engcobo on 08 June 2022 and on 09 June 2022 respectively.

The Engcobo graduation was officiated by the Mayor of Engcobo Local Municipality, Councillor Siyabulela Zangqa and Eastern Cape EPWP Regional Manager, Mr. Mziwabantu Ntese.

In his keynote address, Mayor Zangqa urged the exiting learners to work together to form cooperatives and apply for small construction projects so they can contribute to the creation of work opportunities in their communities. "With unemployment continuing to rise in the country, it is important for NYS learners to use the skills they have attained to create businesses for themselves. You should look at yourselves as job creators rather than job seekers," he said.

Mr Ntese encouraged the NYS graduates to use their certificates to look for employment opportunities. "The certificates that you have acquired must not hang on the walls at your homes...you must use them to look for employment opportunities in your communities," he said.

At the end of the ceremony, the learners were given tool boxes with tools to assist them as they look for economic opportunities in the communities.

The Engcobo learners participated in a Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) project to refurbish the Engcobo Magistrates Court. They received training in painting and carpentry.

The Maclear Graduation

The Maclear graduation ceremony was officiated by the Councillor for Ward 3 in Nqanqarhu Local Municipality, Ms. Nomalungisa Ngcuka.

Councillor Ngcuka urged exiting learners to look for other youth empowerment opportunities that are offered by government entities such as the Employment and Labour Department as well as the National Youth Development Agency. "I also appeal to you to register your names in the municipality's employment database so that you can stand a chance to get jobs as and when work becomes available in our community," she added.

The event was also attended by the training provider – Phandani Construction – whose representative, Mr. Sandiso Ntoyi, said they had decided to offer formal employment to some of the exiting learners.

The Maclear learners were part of a team that assisted in the refurbishment of the local magistrate court.

Participants' testimonies

The two participants who have been given formal jobs by Phandani Construction thanked the government for giving them an opportunity to participate in the EPWP.

Ms. Banele Saki thanked the government for the opportunity to participate in the Programme. "Most of us were unemployed before joining the EPWP. Today we have skills that we can use to provide for our families," she said.

