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Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Dean Macpherson launches the EPWP Listening Tour in Qgeberha, Eastern Cape

Article by: Lesego Moretlwe

Pictures by: Maanea Maselesele



In a bid to reform the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Hon. Dean Macpherson is conducting nationwide community and EPWP participants' engagement sessions through the Ministerial EPWP Listening Tour. The Minister launched the EPWP Listening Tour on 28 October 2024 at Bethelsdorp in Gqeberha, Eastern Cape. The purpose of the tour was to engage with community members as well as EPWP participants as they share their experience about the EPWP.

Stating the purpose of the EPWP Listening Tour, Minister Macpherson said "Today marks an important milestone for the Department of Public Works & Infrastructure as we launch our Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) here in Bethelsdorp, Gqeberha, Eastern Cape. It is the first time since the EPWP programme was launched in 2003 that we will embark on a nationwide listening tour to hear from communities themselves about their experiences with the Programme as we begin to rethink its contribution to better serve communities" Minister elaborated.

About 500 Gqeberha community members gathered at Bethelsdorp Community Hall to share their experiences about the EPWP and to listen to the Minister. Among the others, the community and EPWP participants pleaded for fair and transparent recruitment process, increased term of employment, increased wages, increased provision of Personal Protective Equipment, working tools, etc. The Minister welcomed the

Community members and participants' shared experiences.

In his response, the Minister said, "this is why we are here today: to understand the challenges that you face with EPWP so that we can be inspired about how to improve on it. I firmly believe that the solutions to some of our biggest problems are often found in the communities that face them. The Minister further said "We need to reform the Programme to ensure that recipients are better-paid through permanent jobs that EPWP can be either a gateway to or in partnership with the private sector".

Some participants acknowledged that the EPWP is providing skills and work opportunities through which they earn an income and therefore reduce poverty and unemployment within their households. In conclusion, Minister Macpherson said "the EPWP remains an important tool to instil hope, provide work, and bring dignity and skills development to communities in need. It also plays a crucial role in addressing service delivery challenges, from road maintenance to grass-cutting and, in some places, even library services, he added. The Minister was joined by the Mayor of Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality, Gary Van Niekerk, Ward Councillor Jonny Arendse.

The Programme is currently in the first year of the implementation of the EPWP Phase 5 which is aimed at creating 5 million work opportunities by 2029 through public bodies across all spheres of government, Non Profit Organisations and Community Based Organisations.

Minister Dean Macpherson hosts second session of the EPWP Listening Tour in KwaZulu-Natal

Article and Pictures by: Roslyn Mahlaole



Subsequent to the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) Listening tour in the Eastern Cape Province, Minister Dean Macpherson took a tour to KwaZulu-Natal where he hosted the second leg of the tour at uMngeni Local Municipality in Pietermaritzburg. Among others, the Minister was accompanied by the Mayor of uMngeni Local Municipality, Cllr Christopher Pappas, and the Municipal Manager, Mr Mzi Hloba.

The Minister and other dignitaries were greeted with clapping of hands and praises by community members, EPWP and Community Work Programme participants who came in large numbers. The tour's objective was to converse with EPWP participants to share their experiences with the Programme.

Among the issues highlighted were allegations of jobs for pals, political patronage, and a request to boost stipends. However,

participants appreciated the Programme and the training they received.

In his closing remarks the Minister said he will use the experiences, ideas and opinions shared, to reform of the Programme. He further stated that he will also ensure that EPWP become a vehicle for skill transfer and a stepping stone towards getting employment or start small businesses.

Through the listening tour, which will be rolled out nationwide in the coming months, the Minister aims to hear from communities about their experiences with the EPWP to bring attention to issues encountered within the programme. The tour and engagement with communities will also shape the Minister's vision to reimagine the EPWP.



Deputy Minister Zikalala joined the Free State Provincial Government to launch the Phase V of the Expanded Public Works Programme

Article and Pictures by: By Lebogang Oagile and Tumelo Sekwele



Deputy of Public Works and Infrastructure, Hon. Sihle Zikalala, together with Free State Premier Hon. Maqueen Letsoha-Mathae and the MEC for Public Works and Infrastructure, Hon. Dibolelo Mance launched Phase five of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) at Mangaung indoor Sports Centre in Bloemfontein on Friday, 11 October 2024.

The launch formed part of the ongoing effort of the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) to strengthen collaborative ties with the different spheres of government to revitalise public Infrastructure coupled with the provision of work opportunities for the unemployed South Africans.

This collaboration also entrenches young people to gain critical skills and expertise and thus preparing them for the rapidly changing and demanding job market, particularly in construction and the built environment.

Addressing attendees who illuminated the Mangaung indoor Sports centre with their EPWP regalia, Deputy Minister Zikalala lauded the EPWP for the role it plays in mitigating some of the dire social challenges which face many communities across the country.

He stated that the EPWP essentially lays a fertile ground which results in the creation and increase in the number of SMME's in the construction and built environment sector. This fertile EPWP ground is critical in the overall creation of work opportunities and helps put food on the table for disadvantaged households.

"In Phase five, the core focus should gravitate towards crafting pathways of continuous growth, learning, employment and defined exit strategies".

The Deputy Minister went on further to assert that EPWP must aim to foster a culture of continuous learning and hands

on experience, ensuring youth are not just employable, but are drivers of innovation and change.

While the Deputy Minister acknowledged the need to look into prolonging the tenure of employment under EPWP - a sentiment shared and reverberated by MEC Dibolelo Mance, he nonetheless remained confident in the progress that has been made through EPWP since its inception 20 years ago and expressed the commitment to rolling out Phase 5 of the Programme.

In her Remarks, MEC Dibolelo Mance told EPWP Participants about her journey in EPWP, she said that she was once a Participant of this programme and now she is the MEC of the same Programme. She further encouraged participants not to be deterred by any naysayers who cast a negative perception about the EPWP.

She said her journey resembles the dreams and aspirations of many people who were undermined by society at a time in history where an African child was told she could not reach the top as most lacked the financial muscle to pursue their dreams.

She reaffirmed that her journey resonates with the department's slogan that "South Africa works because of Public Works". She said the province's 46% unemployment rate was worrisome and that the EPWP is a launch pad with which people can learn critical skills, kick start their career paths and fend off their families from poverty even from the poorest communities.

Some of the dignitaries in attendance included Free State Letsoha Mathae, Executive Mayor of Mangaung Municipality Gregory Nthatsi and several MECs.

The EPWP project prioritise the recruitment of People with Disabilities

Article and Pictures by: Tumelo Sekwele and Maanea Maselesele



As part of celebrating the South Africa's National Disability Rights Awareness Month (DRAM) which started from 03 November-03 December 2024, EPWP Non-State Sector unit visited Young Adults Against HIV/AIDS Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) in Ga-Rankuwa, North of Pretoria in Gauteng.

The NPO hired 17 persons living with disabilities on a 7 months contract ending 31 March 2025. During the duration of their contracts, Participants gain skills such as baking, gardening, arts and crafts.

Mr Dingaan Mahlangu the bakery supervisor, expressed gratitude to be part of the programme. "As person living with disability, I feel honoured and valued to be recognised and given the chance to advance my abilities, the programme has been really helpful in keeping us active, which keeps us safe from dangerous streets." said, Mr. Mahlangu.

The NPO sells their products to local community members to raise funds and to be sustainable.

"As an NPO, we believe it is appropriate that we contribute to the empowerment of people with disabilities since we firmly believe that they are equally talented and should be given the same opportunities to shine as abled persons." said the Centre Manager Mr. David Tshimane Marakalla.

The NPO was established in 1998 by 5 resolute and visionary members from Ga-Rankuwa township. To date, the NPO is survived by two founders who continue to carry the organisation's flag very high.

The EPWP Phase V which was launch in April 2024 aims to create 5 million work opportunities of which 2% will be allocated to people with disabilities.



EPWP Participants trained in Safety and Security in Mpumalanga

Article and pictures by: Khanyisa Moagi and Roslyn Mahlaole



The Nkangala District Municipality in Partnership with Bidvest Protea Coin and the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (EPWP Branch) have embarked on an initiative to train EPWP Participants in Safety and Security. This training initiative which is accredited by Safety and Security Sector Education and Training Authority (SASSETA) comprised of both theory and practical components.

Upon completion of the theoretical training, the participants have recently taken part in the pass out parade which was held in Nkangala district. The learners will be placed at workplaces to complete their practical work, and thereafter they will be awarded Safety and Security Certificates at NQF level 3.

"The SASSETA Learnership programme has in the past years had a successful exit strategy as the learners exited into the formal labour environment by being absorbed by Bidvest, working as security guards and others venturing into other opportunities in the safety and security industry," said Mr Isaac Mothapo, EPWP Programme Manager in Mpumalanga Province.

Mr Mothapo congratulated the learners for showing dedication, discipline, and perseverance. He said that this training programme started in 2021/2022 financial year and more than 150 EPWP Participants have been trained, and some were absorbed by Bidvest Protea Coin while other ventured into business opportunities.



Former Expanded Public works Programme participant ventures into a charcoal manufacturing business

Article and pictures by: Tumelo Sekwele



Mr. Kopano Judicious Mpya, a 29-year-old from Arrie Village in Polokwane, Limpopo, started his own firm, Bakgethwa Enterprise Pty Ltd, which produces and sells charcoal and wood. The business is situated in Ga-kibi (Arrie-Village) and produces charcoal and firewood. The business is registered with the Companies Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC).

Mpya participated in the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) from June 2017 until November 2018. His duties included data capturing on the Expanded Public works Programme Reporting System (EPWPRS), doing site visits, checking the sign boards, inspecting newly built tribal authority offices and conducting workshops.

His company seeks to provide sustainable energy while empowering disadvantaged individuals and contributing to the growth of the local economy by creating work opportunities for local communities particularly young people.

Mr Mpya stated that during his period in EPWP, he was exposed to training which taught him how to capture data and manage reports. "EPWP Training encouraged me to start my own business because I knew I wouldn't be there forever" said Mpya.

Mr. Mpya further participated in six months training that focused on charcoal production, bush thinning, business management skills, financial literacy, and Feasibility study. His company,

Bakgethwa Enterprise Pty Ltd employed twelve workers on a nine-month contract that ending 30 April 2025.

"EPWP has played a vital role in my life by introducing me to the work environment it also taught me how to work with people." Today, I manage my own business and am quite fulfilled stated Mpya.

The charcoal is sold to local businesses including Chisanyama's, filling stations and households, respectively.

He encouraged current EPWP participants to have determination and most importantly to work hard so that they can find their purpose at the end of the project. He also encouraged participants to ensure continuous learning which will increase their knowledge and better their lives.

According to Ms Victoria Mphahlele, EPWP Enterprise Development Manager at Polokwane Regional office, EPWP Enterprise Development directorate played a crucial role in supporting Bakgethwa Business Enterprise in Venturing into Charcoal production.

"The support started from assisting this emerging company in building up their Business profile and ensure that their statutory documents are compliant. We also trained them on various Business courses such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) as well as Improve Your Business courses."

Mphahlele also said that the directorate also assisted in facilitating application for Bakgethwa Business Enterprise to access to funding from the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), the funding assisted the company purchase Kiln equipment which is necessary to process the Charcoal. She said they also facilitated that this enterprise get protective clothing to ensure compliance to the Occupational Health and Safety.

"We even approach the Limpopo Economic Development Agency (LEDA) to assist with more funds, the application is still in process and we are hoping for positive feedback. The funds will assist with the Marketing and branding of the products. Mphahlele said.



Stakeholder Engagement and Career Expo Event in Bloemfontein in the Free State

Article and pictures by: Thembela Sehlapelo



The Minister of Employment and Labour, the honourable Nomakhosazana Meth, hosted a two-day Stakeholder Engagement and Career Expo Event from 24-25 October 2024 at Dr Molemela Indoor Arena Rocklands in Bloemfontein, Free State.

The objective of this event was to provide a platform for employers in both the private and public sector to converge and share information on current work opportunities available for work seekers in various industries in the Province.

The Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) Bloemfontein Regional Office EPWP officials were among the Stakeholders invited to highlight programmes offered through

EPWP Four sector such as Infrastructure Sector, Social Sector, Non-Sate Sector and Environment and Culture Sector.

Mr Kabelo Kuzangwe, a resident of Rocklands (Bloemfontein) was one of the attendees. He shared the hardships of being unemployed for 2 years. On day 1 of the event, he had an opportunity to gather information on programmes such as the National Youth Service (NYS), offered by the EPWP. He was also able to register his CV with CPI Recruitment Agency and the Department of Employment and Labour. Mr Kuzangwe was impressed on how effortless the experience was and praised the Departments of Employment and Labour and Public Works and Infrastructure for bringing these services to the people.



Community Safety and Safeguarding of Municipal Buildings prioritised

Article and pictures by: Thembela Sehlapelo



The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in conjunction with the Ngwathe Local Municipality in the Free State Province provide the Social Sector work opportunities for the communities of the Free State Province. The Project (name of the project?) has employed 90 young men and women who have been trained in Basic Access Control and are Safeguarding 21 Municipal Buildings, situated in Parys, Vredefort, Heilbron and Koppies.

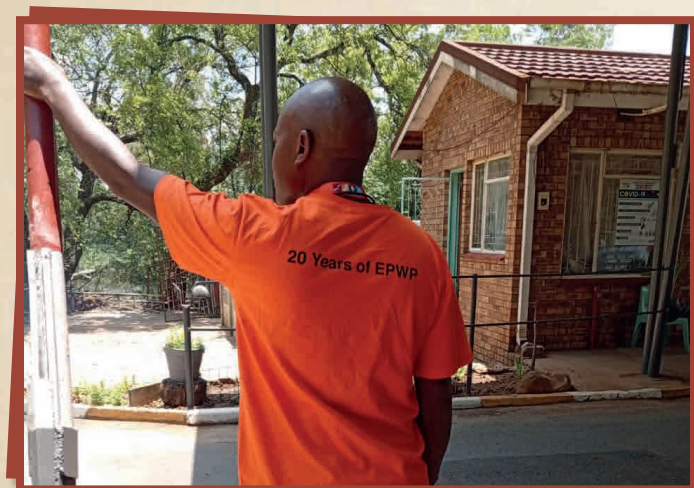
The participants are placed in the establishments, such as Mmimosa Gardens, The Water Treatment Plant and Sports Complexes throughout the Ngwathe Local Municipality. Since the commencement of the programme and placement of these



participants at these establishments, a reduction in vandalism of Municipal Properties has already been noted.

Through the work opportunities created, the participants receive monthly income and are therefore able to provide for the daily needs of their families.

One of the participants, Ms Patricia Mohajane, a mother of 3 children from Vredefort, recalled how she struggled to meet the needs of her children before she joined the EPWP Programme. She now earns a monthly income and her life has changed for the better.



Expanded Public Works Programme focuses on quality control in Naledi Local Municipality

Article and pictures by: Oageng Mathenje



The Department of Public Works and Infrastructure-Mmabatho Regional Office, EPWP unit in partnership with Naledi Local Municipality in Vryburg, North West have recruited 10 EPWP Participants to assist the municipality with water meter reading, household data collection, meter inspections to manage the accuracy of data of the residential households.

According to Ms Sanny Maluleka, EPWP Social Sector Manager, the aim of the project is to collect data and do meter inspections for residential households and submit the data collected to

the Municipality for accurate billing. Maluleka also said that participants in this project not only get monthly stipends but gain soft and technical skills which will improve their chances of becoming employable post EPWP. "This project is also ensuring ongoing assessment and quality control within the Municipality." Said Maluleka

This Incentive Grant Funded project is aimed at alleviating poverty by creation of work opportunities and assisting the municipality to provide the essential services to various communities.



Department of Public Works and Infrastructure Partners with Langeberg Municipality to train EPWP Participants

Article and pictures by: Maanea Maselesele



The Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) has partnered with Langeberg Municipality in Robertson, Western Cape, to capacitate 20 Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) participants in Basic Electrical Assistant Skills Programme and Plumbing Hand Skills Programmes. These skills programmes are designed to address skills gaps in the electrical and plumbing sectors and are accredited by Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA).

skills in electrical and plumbing maintenance under the supervision of a qualified plumber”, said Mr Visser.

Participants Testimonials

Justin Otto, Basic Electrical Assistant Trainee

Basic Electrical Assistant Trainee, Mr Justin Otto appreciated the training opportunity accorded to them by the EPWP. The training was highly informative and enlightening. I am now inspired to pursue further studies to achieve full qualification”, said Otto in his appreciation remarks.

Mr. Madoda Ndayi, Plumber Trainee

“The training programme has significantly enhanced my plumbing skills, enabling me to undertake routine maintenance tasks independently. This newfound expertise will yield cost savings and position me to explore additional opportunities in the area. I intend to continue developing my skills and collaborate with fellow trainees to establish cooperatives, fostering economic growth and job creation in our community.”

Skills Development Initiative

This collaborative effort aims to enhance the employability prospects of EPWP participants, fostering economic growth and development in the region. Upon completion of this training, the participants will amongst others achieve the following:

- Gain industry –recognised certificates
- Enhance job prospects in the electrical and plumbing sectors particularly within Cape Winelands District Municipality
- Contribute to economic development of the Western Cape Region.

Both training facilitators Mr Visser, Basic Electrical Assistant, and Mr Simpson, highlighted the significance of this training. “This comprehensive training will equip participants with necessary

It can be concluded that through empowerment of these EPWP participants in Langeberg Municipality, potential has been unlocked, creating hope for the future of this municipality.



EPWP Gallery

