



## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

**ISSUED: 08 JULY 2015**

### **Hundreds of young people benefit from EPWP National Artisan Development Programme**

In a commitment to develop scarce skills in South Africa, the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) will be training a total of 330 young people across South Africa in various artisan trades.

The three to four-year multimillion rand EPWP Artisan Development Programme is an initiative of the National Department of Public Works (NDPW), National Department of Higher Education and Training (NDHET), the Mechanic, Engineering and Related Services Sector Education and Training Authority (merSETA) as well as 30 private sector companies.

The Artisan Development Programme is one of the key EPWP initiatives aimed at providing skills to the unskilled and unemployed youth, thereby affording g them better employment prospects.

The Minister of Public Works, Mr T.W. Nxesi launched this programme in June 2015 as part of the Government's Programme to work with the youth to move South Africa forward.

During the launch, Minister Nxesi explained that the youth of all Provinces will benefit from this programme.

"The success of our people, especially our youth, remains in the hands of public private partnerships such as this one. In fact private companies are very important in the growth of our economy and in our drive to deal with unemployment and skills development," the Minister said.

The Minister urged young people to seize opportunities that were offered by both the Government and the Private Sector.

"Every young person must take responsibility for their own development and for the path towards economic freedom. While Government and the business community can provide these opportunities, young people themselves must take the initiative to develop themselves and those around them. We urge you to play a role in building a better, stronger and united nation," he added.

Delving deeper into the EPWP Artisan Development Programme, Minister Nxesi explained that the programme was aimed at assisting the youth to obtain Artisan status.

"The programme started in 2014 and by 2019, a total of 330 young people will have received Artisan Development training. The programme is jointly funded by the National Department of Higher Education and Training through the National Skills Fund (NSF), and the merSETA"

He pointed out that the National Department of Public Works, through EPWP entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with the MerSETA to manage the training and placement of the learners in the MerSETA registered companies for apprenticeship training.

“The wages (stipend) of the learners are paid by the registered employers as per the relevant Bargaining Council rates,” Minister Nxesi said.

He indicated that EPWP Participants (artisan trainees) were recruited from the present and past EPWP projects such as the National Youth Service, Working on Fire, as well as from EPWP sectors including Social, Environment and Culture, and Non-state Sectors.

“Preference was given to fully qualified candidates who met the minimum entry requirements for the trades as laid out by MerSETA and its companies. Some of the requirements include Matric Certificate with Maths, English and Physical Science or N2 qualifications relevant to the trades,” the Minister said.

He elaborated that the EPWP Participants will spend 3 to 4 years in the apprentice programme and that they will be exposed to both theoretical and practical training.

“On-the-job training is altered with periods of training-centre-based learning. Apprentices also receive on-going mentoring with qualified mentors and tailored development plan to ensure their success in the industry. At the end, the apprentices will undertake a Trade Test to qualify with an Artisan Certificate issued by the Quality Council for Trade and Occupations (OQCTO),” Minister Nxesi added.

He said that the 330 EPWP Participants were being trained in various artisan trades such as Autotronic, Boilermaking, Diesel Mechanic, Automotive Electrician, Fitter & Turner, Motor Mechanic, Auto Electrician, Air-conditioning and Refrigeration.

“The EPWP Artisan Development Programme is based on a partnership between public funders and entities and private companies in which everyone wins. For the youth, - they have been afforded an opportunity for lifelong learning - whilst earning a wage (stipend) – which will dramatically improve their standards of living with a qualification which will empower them to earn an income and even start their own businesses and become employers” the Minister said.

For the private companies the Minister said “the programme has enabled the companies to upgrade their facilities so that they could meet their accreditation requirements with MerSETA”

“The programme also helps Government to meet its demand for qualified artisans which is essential to meet the objectives of the National Development Plan. The EPWP Artisan Development Programme demonstrates once again the effectiveness of our approach that - working together we can move South Africa forward!”

During the launch, Minister Nxesi led a high-powered delegation to a company called FLSmidth Buffalo in Emalahleni where some of the EPWP Participants (artisan trainees) are placed. He Nxesi congratulated all participants and all the private sector companies that are working with the Government and MerSETA to implement the R43 million EPWP Artisan Development Programme.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of MerSETA Dr Raymond Patel said that the training of artisans was vital for the development of South Africa.

“In 2014 merSETA trained 15 000 apprentices. In the same year South Africa qualified over 22 000 artisans. We are working.

FLSmidth Buffalo’s General Manager Operations Mr Johan Fourie expressed confidence in the EPWP Artisan Development Programme.

The Human Resource Manager at the company Mrs Singh said that the EPWP Participants were working with her a lot.

“The two EPWP Participants were have were appointed in September 2014 and were subjected to an entrance medical to get a red ticket first before they could be part of our company. Have also gone through induction process, issuing of basic PPE and introduction to the workforce. They’ve been exposed to electrical panels, wiring and building of the panels for our machines.

“They’ve also been exposed to operations and maintenance of the generators which are placed on site. The Participants go to Colliery Training College (CTC) here in Emalahleni. They have been through basic training from January till March where they were exposed to a range of activities such as wiring circuits, hand tools, testing circuits, switching and testing of cables motors and induction kits as basics,” Singh said.

### **EPWP Participants (artisan trainees) testimonies**

“Being part of the EPWP Artisan Development Programme has inspired hope in my family and in my community. I’m the first young woman in my community to receive EPWP training in diesel mechanic,” Bridget Khoza said.

Khoza, 26, from Nkowankowa in Tzaneen in the Limpopo Province was recruited into the Programme in September 2014 and she is currently placed at a company called PM Trading Connection in Mokopane in the Limpopo Province.

Other young people who have been empowered through this programme is the 32-year-old Lerato Khasoane from Sebokeng in the Vaal in Gauteng Province.

“Today I have dignity and confidence thanks to EPWP! I am part of a developmental programme that will open the doors of success for me once I’ve completed. Already I’m able to look after my children with the monthly stipend I’m receiving,” Khasoane said.

Khasoane, is currently placed at Genrec Engineering in Wadeville in Gauteng Province.

“We thank the Government, MerSETA and all participating companies for giving us an opportunity to live our dreams! You have all given us hope for a better future and we are grateful. We urge you to extend this hope to more young people in South Africa,” Portia Khoza said.

Khoza, 24, from Emalahleni (Witbank) in Mpumalanga Province, is currently placed at FLSmidth Buffalo (Pty) Ltd where she is receiving training in electrical studies. She is one of the two young women placed at the company in this programme.

“As young women, we have been afforded an opportunity to shine in a workplace that is dominated by men. In our journey in this programme, we have been exposed to more than electricity. We are receiving training in different areas such as assisting in building panels,

wiring of machines, manufacturing of feeder breakers and in regular maintenance in the workplace,” Khoza added.

ENDS

ISSUED BY THE NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Media inquiries may be directed to Ms Kgomotso Mathuloe on 082 957 3667 or Lesego Moretlwe on 082 957 3677.