



public works

Department:
Public Works
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Expanded Public Works Programme

Graduation of the Artisan Development Programme Learners

Kimberley, 31 July 2014

Keynote Address:

Honourable TW Nxezi MP
Minister of Public Works

PROTOCOL:

- Programme Director
- MEC(s)
- Representatives of Municipalities
- Representatives of the Nuclear Energy Corporation of South Africa (NECSA)
- Representatives of the NYDA and Services SETA;
- Officials of the Department of Public Works – national and provincial – as well as all other departments represented here;
- Most importantly, the successful graduants and their family members;
- Ladies and gentlemen.

Welcome all. It gives me great pleasure to be a part of this important event. Clearly it is an important occasion for the Learners who are graduating today as qualified artisans.

But I also need to make the point that this initiative is part of a much bigger picture – our Seven Year Plan to rebuild the Department of Public Works – which includes the following objectives:

- To rebuild the technical and professional capacity of Public Works and the state;
- To promote training and skills development in the Built Environment – in line with the needs of the National Infrastructure Plan and the NDP; and
- To transform the Built Environment – including the construction sector – and in particular to facilitate access for learners from disadvantaged communities.

When I worked in the education sector – as General-Secretary of the teachers union, SADTU – I always made the point - around Budget time - that money spent on the education of our children is not simply ‘yet another expenditure’ and therefore a drain on the fiscus. Rather, it must be seen as an investment in the lives of the learners, in the economy, and in the future well-being of the society as a whole.

Let us never forget the words of our own Tata Madiba:

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

As Public Works, we have a clear and strategic long-term interest and commitment to technical and professional training in the Built Environment – both to rebuild the professional capacity of the Department – and to contribute to scarce skills required in the Built Environment generally.

This task is all the more urgent as the country embarks on a massive National Infrastructure Plan as part of the National Development Plan.

This is why - as part of the initiative to build capacity in the Built Environment sector, the Department has adopted 15 schools in its Schools Programme to support the teaching of maths and science. The Programme targets less resourced schools situated in rural, farm and townships areas.

That is also why, as Public Works – together with the Construction Education and Training Authority, we are currently providing bursaries to 132 tertiary students who are studying in the Built Environment disciplines.

Together with the CETA, we also fund the Candidacy Programme /Young Professionals Programme providing the bursary holders an opportunity to be mentored towards professional registration as part of

the programme run by the Human Capital Investment Unit of the Department of Public Works.

The Artisan Development Programme

This graduation ceremony marks an important delivery milestone for our government and further re-affirms our commitment to the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS). This day is also proof that indeed our government is serious about addressing the skills gap and drawing significant numbers of the unemployed into productive work.

The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) Artisan Development Programme was piloted in 2011 as part of the National Youth Service (NYS) initiative. The aim was to train one hundred (100) learners from the Northern Cape Province in five (5) artisan trades – namely: electrical, welding, fitting, turning and boiler-making . This was to take place at the Nuclear Energy Corporation of South Africa (NECSA).

The services of NECSA were secured in November 2010. The learners completed thirty two (32) weeks of the theoretical component of this programme with NECSA in September 2011, and the workplace training component of eighty (80) weeks commenced on the 3rd October 2011 and has continued to date.

The learners were then placed within reputable mining companies with qualified artisans as supervisors in fulfilment of the artisan training requirements of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998.

To the Learners I say: the road you have travelled was long; you faced a myriad of challenges; but still you persevered to reach this momentous moment. For this you can pat yourselves on the back for the sacrifices you endured to reach your goal - in the process, making this programme a success.

The Department of Public Works invested a total of R32 million in this programme: to train the learners. Learners were provided with accommodation, meals and transport until they completed their training. Upon completion and graduation learners will be provided with artisan toolboxes.

All these are a further reminder that our government prioritizes issues affecting the youth. Nor can the experiential value you draw from this programme be quantified simply in monetary terms.

I would like to thank all those companies that are assisting the Department with the workplace training component. This reminds us that when we work together with all stakeholders – from the Public and Private sectors - we can deliver skills and jobs, and in so doing we can improve the lives of our people.

As we celebrate this achievement, we also pause to remember the four learners who lost their lives due to a

car accident in 2012 (Louis G van Wyk, Duncan Saul, Delano Saul and Fabian Jobson), together with Ms Welhemina Senokwane who passed away recently after qualifying to graduate. We dedicate this ceremony today to the memory of those learners.

The number of learners remaining in the programme is eighty three (83), of which forty (40) have qualified as artisans through the Services Seta. This is indeed a great achievement – for the learners – and for government in its policy of nurturing careers and shaping the workforce of the future. This is a watershed moment: to make something meaningful out of a life – when so many young people lose their way due to the vile effects of alcohol, drugs and crime.

With this qualification – as artisans - you are on the right path to meaningful employment, contributing to economic development – with increased future potential earnings as your reward for all the hard work.

Due to this programme, 16 participants have already gained employment. The Department is assisting with placements for learners as far as possible, including assistance with transportation arrangements to get to interviews etc. The department is also considering placing the learners at various workshops as part of the broader initiative to resuscitate the DPW workshops.

As government, we want to see a positive return on investment. So far, your efforts justify our investment in your training.

This also gives us the confidence and courage to replicate the programme throughout the nine provinces - thus contributing to the overall job creation targets of the National Development Plan (NDP).

This programme has proved that partnership is the key to achieving our goals as government. The programme

was established after extensive consultation with various stakeholders namely the Services SETA; the Department of Higher Education and Training, and NECSA.

To the graduates today I say: we congratulate you all for your hard work over the past years.

I am also pleased to be able to say that a further four learners will be taking their trade tests in the very near future.

To those who still need to complete their trade test, I encourage you to dig deep into your energy reserves – to recommit to work hard and to emerge triumphant.

I wish you well for the future. Indeed, you are the future of the Built Environment in South Africa.

I thank you.