

Triumph through adversity

Losing his job at the age of 44 after suffering a stroke, Abel Malebela was faced with the daunting reality of not knowing how he would provide for his family. He realised that feeling sorry for himself wouldn't put food on the table, and joined an Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) project in Barolong Boo Ratlou ba ga Seitshiro in the North West.

"I have two daughters, aged 14 and 17, so sitting at home was not an option. I had to support them," Malebela says. He knows the importance of having an education and matriculated in 1991, but with only his Matric Certificate, the only job he could find was as a security guard.

Today, he is part of an EPWP project that comprises internal road cleaning, the eradication of alien plants, and cleaning public buildings such as clinics and schools around the community. "The project has helped me a lot. We get paid R660 a month, which I use to pay my electricity bill and give my kids pocket money."

Although Malebela says the money has helped, he does wish it was more so that he could save for his children's tertiary education.

He says his life was a mess when he lost his job; that he remembers a day when getting something to eat was a challenge. "I've seen worst days, I know what poverty is and I must say my life has changed for the better through the EPWP project."

Malebela says the EPWP project has taught him that hard work pays, and adds that the project has changed the fortunes of many community members. "I hope that the EPWP project can be extended by 24 months and further help us with a monthly stipend to survive, as well as with tools. I'm grateful for the opportunity to be able to feed my daughters and I hope my wish of the extension of the project will be fulfilled."