

Issue Date: 09 September 2014

MEDIA STATEMENT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS BRIEFS THE PUBLIC WORKS PARLIAMENTARY PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON EPWP PHASE 3

The Department of Public Works has released a far-reaching plan to create 6 million work opportunities for the vulnerable, poor and unemployed people over the next five years.

Public Works Deputy Minister Jeremy Cronin gave the in-depth details of the implementation of the Phase 3 of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) at a briefing before the Public Works Portfolio Committee in Parliament on Tuesday, 09 September 2014.

The EPWP, first launched 10 years ago as one of Government's major Public Employment Programmes under the auspices of Anti-Poverty Strategy, has so far created a total of 5.5 million work opportunities. It covers all spheres of government and State-Owned Enterprises.

Deputy Minister Cronin said the EPWP Phase 3 would strive to achieve its objectives by creating work opportunities through labour intensive delivery of public and community assets as well as services in order to contribute to development.

'South Africa has been a global pioneer in Public Employment Programmes (PEPs) on a large scale such as in the environmental services through sub-programmes like Working for Water, Working on Fire, and Working for Wetlands, with major positive impact on communities , people and Parks and saving the GDP billions of Rands over the years', said the Deputy Minister.

The Programme would be governed by four principles – adherence to minimum and employment conditions under the Ministerial Determination; clearly defined worker selection criteria and minimum labour intensity to appropriate sector and contributions to the public good in communities.

The EPWP Phase 3 will be officially launched in October, though its implementation has already started in April.

Deputy Minister Cronin said the Phase 3 would create opportunities in four different sectors, namely Infrastructure, Environment and Culture, Social, and Non-state sector.

In the first three financial years starting 2014/15, the EPWP plans to create 3.5 million work opportunities and the rest during the last two financial years.

Infrastructure has been earmarked to be the biggest employment creator with more than 2 million work opportunities out of the total 6 million targeted by 2018/19.

Of the 6 million work opportunities to be created during phase 3, about 55% of those will be women, 55% youth and 2% for people with disabilities.

Significantly the EPWP will promote increased community participation to facilitate more visibility and ownership in poor communities. It will also increase the scope of infrastructure maintenance and quality implementation and developmental impact.

The EPWP will target the poor and unemployed through a combination of geographical and community-based targeting or wage rate. For all the EPWP sectors, project based training aimed at capacitating EPWP participants remains an important part of EPWP.

The Deputy Minister said strong collaboration with the National Skills Fund and Skills Education and Training Agencies will continue to source funding for the training of participants. He said sectors will also be encouraged to dedicate a portion of their implementation budgets for training of the participants.

As part of the exit strategies, Deputy Minister Cronin said the graduation of EPWP participants into formal employment would be promoted through various initiatives including cooperatives and small enterprise development.

Deputy Minister Cronin said the EPWP provided a unique policy instrument for Government to create work opportunities and alleviate unemployment.

‘Despite numerous efforts undertaken by Government, unemployment in South Africa has stubbornly remained high. The on-going global economic downturn has made this even worse and has increased the number of unemployed in South Africa even further’, said the Deputy Minister.

The EPWP will be one of the Public Employment Programmes that would be monitored by the newly created Presidential Public Employment Inter-Ministerial Committee.

The mandate of the PPE-IMC is, among other things, to ensure greater harmony and compliance of the PEPs.

Ends

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