



public works

Department:
Public Works
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

Expanded Public Works Programme

SUMMIT

27-28 November 2014, St George Hotel, Irene

Closing Address

Mr TW Nxesi MP, Minister of Public Works

Protocol:

- Programme Director
- Deputy Minister, Hon Jeremy Cronin
- Representatives of provinces and municipalities
- Representatives of the non-state sector and NPOs
- Representatives of DPW entities
- Director-General, Mr Mziwonke Dlabantu
- Officials in all spheres of government
- Invited guests
- Ladies and gentlemen
- And most important, all those involved in the implementation of EPWP programmes

It is an honour to participate in this closing session of the EPWP Summit – to be a part of this magnificent enterprise – EPWP - which helps mitigate poverty and unemployment, brings hope and increasingly makes a meaningful contribution to improving the quality of life in poor communities.

I want to start with a short story. Let us remind ourselves that public works programmes are not new - most famously the American ‘New Deal’ policy adopted, in the wake of the Great Depression of the 1930s, to combat recession and mass unemployment.

One of the great characters of the New Deal was Mayor La Guardia of New York - after whom the airport is named - and who is credited with

restoring the economic life of New York after the Great Depression through massive public works programmes.

Although La Guardia was a Republican, he supported the Democrats' 'New Deal' public works programme (*I suppose, in much the same way as the DA mayor of Cape Town supports and implements the Expanded Public Works Programme.*)

La Guardia, the son of Italian immigrants lobbied for improved labour laws, and unlike present-day Republicans, he fought for the rights of immigrants.

Mayor La Guardia was a champion of the philosophy and practice of public works programmes. On a lighter note, it is also a matter of historical record that he was a short man - measuring about 1.5 meters/or 5 foot in height. I hesitate to draw any parallels with EPWP.

This would be an appropriate time to thank the DDG: EPWP - and his team - for their sterling work in facilitating, coordinating, monitoring and constantly seeking to improve this vast EPWP programme. I have no doubt that as we move decisively into Phase 3, the performance of EPWP will rise to even greater heights.

For those of us who were privileged enough to be present at the launch of Phase 3, in October, at Keiskammahoek in the Eastern Cape, I think you will have sensed just how ambitious the EPWP project is – not only in terms of numbers (6 million work opportunities

2014/19), but also in terms of the scope and variety of programmes affecting many areas of public life and contributing to the economic well-being of families, communities and the country.

Let me quote from President Zuma, speaking at the launch of Phase 3:

“The EPWP Phase 3 will continue to benefit poor, unemployed and vulnerable sectors of the community which includes youth, women and people with disabilities. This programme will be taken to all corners of our country. We are determined to reach as many people as possible, and to achieve the goal of six million work opportunities.”

President Zuma said that the third phase of EPWP would focus on the quality of the services that are provided and the new assets that would be built through the programme in the next five years. These assets include schools, clinics and multi-purpose centres. Let me quote the President:

“We also want to place greater emphasis on the training received by the participants in the course of their involvement so that they are empowered to go on to formal employment, or to set up their own Small Medium Macro Enterprises (SMMEs) or cooperatives,”

Referring to some of the successes of the EPWP, the President said the EPWP Environment and Culture Sector - through the Working for Water Programme -has saved an estimated 71 percent of South

Africa's grazing land from degradation by removing alien invasive plants.

Colleagues, these are massive achievements during Phase 2. There are many more we can list:

- 480 student chefs – trained and successfully employed in the hospitality industry
- The creation of long-term work opportunities on provincial road maintenance programmes (eg KZN – 47,000; E Cape – 45,000; North West – 20,000). As a result more than 220,770 kilometres of road were maintained during Phase 2);
- The creation of 755,989 work opportunities on municipal infrastructure projects during Phase 2. All 278 municipalities were provided with technical support to implement labour-intensive methods.
- As part of the NYS (National Youth Scheme) some 27,000 youths were trained in artisan built environment trades.
- There were over 1 million beneficiaries that received Home Community Based Care services – classified into preventative, therapeutic, rehabilitative, long-term maintenance and palliative care.

- 566,364 learners enrolled in the Kha Ri Gude literacy programme in 2013/14.
- 252,102 children received ECD (Early Childhood Development) services in 2013/14 alone. As a former teacher I have to flag just how important this programme is. ECD is a primary programme for the care, protection and development of children. The early years have been recognized as the ideal phase for passing on values that are important for the building of a peaceful, prosperous and democratic society. International research also indicates the importance of quality ECD in ensuring subsequent educational success.
- Let us not forget that millions of children around South Africa receive meals from food grown in EPWP food gardens.

Colleagues, we recognise and celebrate your achievements. In doing so, you have also established a strong baseline for the launch of Phase 3.

One of the main purposes of this Summit was to consolidate the work already done and to build on previous summits. In analysing the varying degrees of success in implementing the resolutions of the 2012 Summit, we can focus attention on the areas that require renewed effort. Whilst we have succeeded in signing protocols with all 278 municipalities, challenges remain in a number of areas. Examples include:

- Establishing human resource capacity within the municipality to implement, coordinate, monitor and report the progress in line with EPWP requirements for reporting. (This appears to be the area of least progress since 2012 – and obviously this is key to improved and efficient delivery.)
- Mobilising departments within the municipalities to ensure that municipalities meet their targets;
- Developing and implementing EPWP policy that ensures that all the four sectors and their programmes are implemented. (Only 53% of municipalities developed such policies during Phase 2);
- Promoting job creation through labour intensive implementation across all municipal projects;
- Developing proper record keeping and reporting in terms of the protocol and policy;
- Ensuring that the Municipality's EPWP targets are incorporated in the performance agreements and scorecards of senior officials responsible for implementing the EPWP within Municipalities.

So as we celebrate the very real achievements of EPWP across the last ten years, we also strive for continuous improvement by flagging those areas which require further focused attention. This was clearly reflected in the themes of the commissions that met:

- Institutional arrangements
- Implementing sustainable livelihoods
- Practical measures for implementing convergence between sectors, and
- EPWP management information needs.

I was also glad to see that, yesterday, the Summit addressed the issue of the labour rights of EPWP participants – including transparent selection, employment of local people, health and safety standards, UIF and COIDA compliance – as well as the right to join unions. By coincidence, yesterday also saw the release of a statement from an NUM Region raising exactly these kinds of concerns. It is therefore vital that as Public Works and EPWP we continue to engage with organised labour on these matters and to debate our vision for EPWP.

The Launch of Phase 3 last month (October 3rd) served as a platform to strengthen relations with implementing departments and to ensure that non-participating departments are brought into the Programme.

The launch presented an opportunity to:

- communicate new EPWP Phase 3 targets;
- mobilize stakeholders to take ownership of the Programme;
- increase the understanding of the EPWP Phase 3;
- establish and maintain sound working relationships with key stakeholders, i.e. other departments, communities, business, civil society organizations, Non-Governmental Organization and media.

This Summit has continued in the same inclusive spirit – promoting the participation of all stakeholders; mobilising all relevant government departments and agencies across all the spheres of government – and involving non-profit, community and faith based organisations.

The model was further strengthened with the establishment of the Presidential Public Employment Inter-Ministerial Committee (PPE-IMC) exactly to strengthen planning and coordination of programmes and resources.

This approach is showing positive results. Already EPWP is over-achieving on its 2014/15 targets – with the creation of 423,387 work opportunities in the first quarter of this financial year – we are on track to reach the EPWP Phase 3 target of 6 million work opportunities by 2019.

Let me close by reiterating, that whilst it is important to achieve targets, Phase 3 is about much more than just the numbers. It is about working in a different way:

- more coordination, convergence and integration of programmes to achieve synergies and efficiencies. There is huge potential here – for example, with infrastructure maintenance projects – to create employment, develop skills and conserve public infrastructure;
- a greater voice and empowerment of participants and communities to ensure their buy-in, and to make sure that we – the officials –

respond to the real needs and wishes of poor communities. This also speaks to a larger agenda of promoting social cohesion, solidarity and development;

- a greater emphasis on the quality of programmes and the quality of outputs and services to communities. Indeed, inputs from the DM and the Premier Gauteng point to the EPWP's role in the development of a social economy – as part of a transformative strategy to revitalise the economies of both rural small towns and urban townships.

Truly, in the case of EPWP, we can confidently assert that working together we can achieve so much more.

I thank you.