

Matatiele Clean-up and Solid Waste EPWP Launch: Operation Rea Hloekisa

Key Note Address: the Honourable Thulas Nxesi MP, Minister of Public Works

Friday 27 January 2012

[CHECK PROTOCOL]

- ❖ Programme Director
- ❖ MEC of Public Works in the province
- ❖ Executive Mayors
- ❖ Councillors
- ❖ Heads of Departments
- ❖ Acting Director-General of the Department of Public Works, Ms Mandisa Fatyela
- ❖ Municipal Managers
- ❖ CEOs and representatives from supporting entities
- ❖ Senior staff in all spheres of government
- ❖ Members of the media
- ❖ Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning.

Thank you for inviting me to take part in this important occasion: the Clean-up Campaign and launch of the Waste Collection Management Programme here in Matatiele under the auspices of the EPWP – the Extended Public Works Programme which falls under the Department of

Public Works. Naturally I am particularly happy to be doing this here in my home town of Matatiele – but let me assure you that similar projects are being rolled out in hundreds of municipalities throughout the country.

The Expanded Public Works Programme is a lead flagship programme of the Department of Public Works – and of government. It seeks to address the single greatest challenge facing this country today: that of unemployment and poverty. Remember that the state president declared combatting unemployment and job creation to be a national priority. To the degree that we succeed in the tasks and targets we have set for ourselves, then we bring hope and opportunities to those who are desperate to improve their conditions of life.

As the Department of Public Works we lead the Expanded Public Works Programme. But of course we can only implement through and alongside our colleagues in the provinces and municipalities. So let me add a special word of welcome to the representatives from provinces and municipalities – without you there would be no Expanded Public Works Programme. I am confident that our municipalities can play a critical role in drawing significant numbers of the unemployed into productive work, particularly because of your strategic positioning at the coalface of service delivery.

Let us just pause briefly to reflect on the importance of the work we do as part of the EPWP. We provide work opportunities to the unemployed – our target is 4.5 million work opportunities by 2014. We seek to transfer income directly into poor households. In so doing we bring hope to families. That additional income – small as it may be – has to go a long way to support family members. Additionally we are helping to revitalize poor communities – those additional family incomes are spent on goods and services helping to grow and sustain local small businesses.

Moreover, in our choice of projects we seek to enhance the social wage and improve the quality of life of our poorest communities. Just some examples:

- Large scale infrastructure projects which provide skills training to young people.
- Social sector programmes such as community based care and Early Childhood Development. So not only do we provide work opportunities, we also directly impact on the quality of education provision in the country. In every sense – a win-win situation.
- In this connection we need to mention also our contribution to the national literacy campaign, the school nutrition programme and in relation to school sports and club development.
- Let me also mention the Environment and Culture Programme which includes projects concerned with management of water, fire, waste and coastal regions. As well as non-state sector community programmes.

You can see then that the Expanded Public Works Programme is an exciting place to be. We must all feel privileged to be able to contribute in such a concrete way to the empowerment and betterment of our poorest communities. By the same token, it is a heavy responsibility. We dare not fail.

Today, the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) and the Matatiele Local Municipality (MLM) have proved that indeed together we can do so much more to lift service standards and to improve the conditions of our people. Let me remind you that this is the government of the people by the people. Therefore it is of the utmost importance that as

public servants, politicians and all other strategic partners we engage with each other and form a solid partnership to address the challenges of poverty and unemployment that our communities experience on a daily basis.

The Matatiele Waste Collection Management Programme seeks to keep our environment as clean and green as possible, and in a small way we are contributing to the wider goal of saving the planet, as one of the initiatives in the Environment and Culture Sector of the EPWP. I like the slogan on your programme:

Going green - Keeping Matatiele clean.

Let me take this opportunity to extend my gratitude to the community of Matatiele for embracing and being a part of the Waste Collection Programme, **OPERATION REA HLOEKISA** launch today. The Programme seeks to employ local people to clean their surroundings - which includes cleaning of community halls and schools, grass-cutting around all the community halls and any other areas identified by the municipality.

I hope that we all agree that bread and butter issues cannot be ignored, and that the EPWP is succeeding in adhering to its mandate of alleviating poverty through the provision of work opportunities to the unemployed. Hence the Programme we are launching today has already employed 194 beneficiaries who work 3 days per week for a period of one year with an income of R900 per month.

Allow me to share with you the background and the objectives of the EPWP as a key Government programme. The EPWP is a government initiative which was launched in 2004 and aims to reduce unemployment and poverty through the provision of short to medium term work opportunities within South African communities. In its first phase in 2008, the EPWP, through its four sectors, Environment & Culture, Social, Economic and Infrastructure surpassed the Cabinet mandated target of creating 1 million work opportunities a year ahead of schedule. [At a time when media coverage of Public Works has been very negative, it is good to be able to share with you some of the positive work which is being done by the Department.]

In total, the Programme achieved 1.6 million work opportunities by the end of the 2008/09 financial year. This achievement proved that through labour-intensive service delivery models, all spheres of Government have a crucial role to play in contributing to this work creation.

The Second Phase of the EPWP, which was launched in 2009 and covers the period 2009/10 – 2014/15 aims to create 4,5 million work opportunities, thereby contributing significantly to halving unemployment by 2014.

The EPWP aims to achieve its objectives and targets through the delivery of public and community services. Public bodies from the national, provincial and local government spheres of Government are expected to collaboratively work with the National Department of Public Works, as the lead and coordinating department of the Programme to accomplish these targets.

Let me take this time to reflect on the resolutions taken at the three-day EPWP Municipal Summit that was hosted in November 2011 at Gallagher Estate in Gauteng. We, as partners against poverty, re-committed ourselves to uplift the socio-economic conditions of our communities through the acceleration of the provision of work opportunities, and have agreed that municipalities should adhere to implementing the following resolutions:

- All outstanding protocols should be signed by 31 March 2012.
- Develop and endorse policy on EPWP by June 2012.
- Ensure that municipal Integrated Development Plans (IDP) prioritise the EPWP approach and methodology in their projects in order to optimise the creation of work opportunities.
- Optimize budgets to deliver on the EPWP across all sectors.
- Utilize labour intensive methods in the delivery of projects in order to promote the creation of work opportunities.
- Encourage provinces to establish District Forums.
- Emphasise the implementation of EPWP in municipalities.
- Strengthen relationships between NPOs and municipalities to enhance implementation of the Non-State Sector projects and programmes.
- Intensify reporting on work opportunities created on projects implemented.

The National Department of Public Works through the EPWP Summit has also acknowledged and noted the progress made by municipalities in terms of signing the protocols, and the development of municipal EPWP

policy endorsed by Councils at local, district and metro level. I am confident that the Matatiele Local Municipality is making progress with regard to all that I have just mentioned and will improve delivery on the EPWP as a living testimony towards poverty alleviation.

I am pleased to be observing the Matatiele Local Municipality taking ownership of the EPWP and adding value to the lives of the communities around Matatiele. The National Department of Public Works (NDPW) commits itself to provide the municipalities with continued support by developing and making available implementation manuals on the EPWP.

The Department of Public Works will support the municipality by rolling out the Food For Waste programme in the 2012/13 financial year. One hundred (100) beneficiaries will be employed for a period of 3 years. The community members will be able to keep the environment clean and also green the area. The Technical Team from Head Office will soon meet with the municipality to kick-start the planning process.

The National Department of Public Works has seen it relevant to introduce an EPWP Incentive Grant with the clear intention of rewarding deserving municipalities, provinces and implementers of the EPWP in a monetary way to assist in creating more work opportunities in the communities they serve.

Let me indicate that there are certain conditions agreed to with National Treasury in terms of reporting work opportunities created that must be adhered to in order to access the incentive grants. The introduction of the incentive grants are anticipated to contribute towards the following:

- Increasing the contribution to the objective of halving poverty and unemployment by 2014
- Increasing the number of people employed and receiving income through the EPWP
- Ensuring that the average duration of the work opportunities created is increased.

Unemployment in our country is a great concern to all of us, and the EPWP is one of Governments' strategies to address unemployment and poverty. The President on the occasion of the State of the Nation Address on the 10th February 2011, declared 2011 "a year of job creation through meaningful economic transformation and inclusive growth".

We must take this very seriously and I strongly advise municipalities to develop EPWP policies and projects which will will contribute positively to the creation of work opportunities – which also benefit the communities in the many ways we have talked about.

In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, I am again obliged to thank you for your participation and urge you to ensure the successful implementation of the EPWP by taking control and ownership of the Programme and closely monitoring delivery.

Let us all commit ourselves to serve our country with dignity and fervour. Let us leave a legacy behind for the upcoming generation which we can be proud of. I believe that through our commitment, hard work and selflessness we will be able to take this country forward and leave a remarkable legacy behind. Let us all strive to make a reality of the slogan: ***South Africa works because of Public Works.***

I thank you.