

Public Works invests R32 million in skills development

In upholding its mandate of poverty alleviation through the provision of work and training opportunities, the Department of Public of Public Works and its stakeholders from other spheres of government hosted the Minister of Public Works, TW Nxesi (MP) who officiated at the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) Artisan Development Programme graduations ceremony held in Kimberley, Northern Cape on 31 July 2014.

Forty (40) learners who completed their three year Artisan Development Programme under the umbrella of the EPWP-National Youth Service (NYS) were awarded their certificates in the presence of the MEC for Public Works, Roads and Transport in province, Mr Dawid Rooi and the Mayors from Umsobomvu and Gamaraga Local Municipalities in the Northern Cape.

This programme was piloted in 2011 and recruited one hundred (100) learners from the Northern Cape. The Department of Public Works invested an amount of R32 million in the programme for learners to acquire built environment skills and qualifications in five (5) artisan trades, namely: **Turning, Fitting, Boiler Making, Electrical and Welding.**

These learners were placed at the Nuclear Energy Corporation of South Africa (NECSA) for their theoretical learning, and further placed within reputable mining companies for workplace training mentored by qualified artisans as supervisors in fulfilment of artisan training requirements of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998.

In their address during the ceremony, Minister Nxesi and the MEC Rooi congratulated the graduates on their achievements and highlighted the importance of addressing the skills gap in the country which helps to build the capacity of the state.

To this end, the Department had recruited learners to study different built environment trades. "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 pursuing studies in the built environment disciplines, with three of them being from the Northern Cape”, said the Minister.

Ms Ntomboxolo Mbegezi, one of the sixteen (16) graduates who are already employed, had this to say about the programme: “Before I joined the EPWP Artisan Development Programme, I was not working and now I am a qualified artisan working for Eskom in Mpumalanga because of Public Works and EPWP, and I would like to thank government for that,” she noted.

Another learner who also graduated, Mr Tebogo Chweu said: “A journey of thousand miles begins with one step. I appreciate the opportunity that we got, we are what we are because of Public Works. It was not an easy journey, but it’s worth it.”

There was also a moment of silence for 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), and Ms Welhemina Senokwane who passed away recently after qualifying to graduate.