

## Minister Bathabile Dlamini addresses the EPWP Social Sector Conference

Social Development Minister, Ms Bathabile Dlamini, MP, has urged the Expanded Public Works Programme's (EPWP) Social Sector to aim high and work even harder during the Phase 3 of the programme in order to increase the current work opportunities' targets. Acknowledging the notable achievements of the EPWP Social sector, the Minister said in addition to more than four million work opportunities created during EPWP Phase 2, the emphasis should be more on the impact of the EPWP within the communities where these projects are being implemented.

Speaking at the three-day EPWP Conference held in Worcester, Minister Dlamini said despite the challenges of the EPWP Social Sector, it was imperative to note that the sector has in the past received positive testimonies from EPWP volunteers who were very satisfied with the level of training and work experience they gained through the programme. Conference delegates were also reminded that EPWP employees must not be driven by salaries, but by the passion of ensuring that the EPWP services reach the communities.

"Such stories must not be seen as isolated cases, but as part of the dominant stories of the sector. Initiatives such as those in North West where a big number of volunteers were trained to become Auxiliary Social Workers must be replicated throughout the country and showcased as success stories. We must identify similar initiatives in other programmes and this can be achieved through alignment with relevant partners such as professional bodies, training institutions and relevant departments such as the Department of Higher Education and Training and other training institutions," said Minister Dlamini.

"The decision of continuing training in the social sector remains a very correct one. It is through accredited training that we are able to achieve such goals as part of the career-pathing and the mainstreaming of disability in some instances. We therefore need to continue to engage training providers and Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) to assist in this regard. The gradual increase on the participation and reporting of municipalities is a positive move which needs a rapid scale-up," added the Minister.

The key government priorities which can be linked to the EPWP Social Sector include the creation of work opportunities in Education, Health, Rural Development and Social Development. The Social Sector is expected to create over one million work opportunities of the overall six million EPWP targeted work opportunities by 2019. These employment targets would be met through EPWP Social Sector programmes such as the Early Childhood Development (ECD), School Nutrition Programme, Home Community Based Programme and Pharmacist Assistant Programme.

The EPWP Social Sector conference, which ended on 26 February, looked at strategic policy initiatives, Government priorities for the EPWP Social Sector, the spreading of EPWP in communities, as well as the repositioning of Phase 3 of the Social Sector. The conference also engaged extensively on the challenges facing the Orphaned, Vulnerable Children and Youth (OVCY) in South Africa and the role of the EPWP in addressing these challenges.