

## **Minister awards bursaries to 40 top performing students**

The National Department of Public Works (NDPW) through its Human Capital Investment (HCI) programme has made strides in paving a way for future engineers within the built environment by awarding bursaries to 40 learners who performed well in their studies particularly in Maths and Science subjects. The Department's investment and commitment in young people through the Schools programme is just under R 5million.

This Department's Schools Programme targets learners who will pursue built environment careers of their choice at different tertiary institutions. This auspicious event was held at Velmore Hotel Estate, Erasmia on 13 January 2015.

The built careers consist of the following: quantity surveying, civil engineering, chemical engineering, property valuation, architecture, landscape architecture and town planning.

Public Works Minister T W Nxesi who delivered the keynote address during the event was accompanied by the Acting Director General Ms Mandisa Fatyela-Lindie, the Director Human Capital Investment (HCI) Ms Vangile Manzini, the Construction Education and Training Authority (CETA) CEO Ms Sonja Pilusa, representatives from the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA) and several EXCO members.

In his keynote address, Minister Nxesi stressed the need to grow the number of black professionals in the building industry, as only 25 % of all professionals in the industry were black. He also took it upon himself to ensure that all bursary holders sign a contract to join the candidacy programme upon graduation from university, which requires of them to work for the Department for a period of time equivalent to the number of years for which they received the bursary.

He further urged the learners to "stay away from bad influences" related to new tertiary surroundings where they are often away from their parents for the first time in lives.

Top performing learners for 2014 selected from four Provinces namely Limpopo, Gauteng, Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape are from 15 schools adopted by the Department. This forms part of an extensive pool of previous learners who benefitted from the programme across South Africa. This programme comprises of 31 learners from different schools who benefitted from the Department's Winter Schools Programme which is aimed at contributing towards the skills development through introducing high school learners to the built environment sector and encouraging them to select careers in the built environment. This contributes and helps support learners to grasp Maths and Science concepts through additional tutoring and targeted teaching from grades 10 till their final year.

Nkosana Benjamin Ngobeni, a 19 year old from EPP Mhinga Secondary School from Limpopo, who also obtained six distinctions, spoke about his experiences during his final year. He said that 2014 was a significant year that came along with challenges and pleasures, which he believes are similar to those his peers experienced during their final year. Amongst the challenges he mentioned was that "everyone expects great results from you, which often puts a lot of pressure on you". "Mathematics and Physical Science have been on my list of personal interests and through the school's programme, I realised that I can pursue my interests and career at the same time." He added that he is grateful that the Department has allowed him to fulfil his dream.

On behalf of the awardees, he said the bursaries they received were valuable to them and they were determined to work hard until they succeed, adding that failure was not an option.

One of the twelve female beneficiaries was Khanyisile Mabentsela —a 19 year old from St James Secondary School in the Eastern Cape who obtained five distinctions in seven subjects.

She stated that she **was** grateful to have been granted the bursary and was ready to yet again work harder towards her dream of being an engineer and was hoping to work in the National Department of Public Works once she becomes a qualified engineer.

Part of the guests during the ceremony was Prof Tinus Maritz Head of Department, Construction, and Economics from the University of Pretoria who advised the learners about the careers they have chosen.

He added that success was dependent on the learners themselves, adding that as they pursue their studies; they should not forget where they come from.

Speaking on behalf of the Construction Education and Training Authority (CETA), CEO Ms Sonja Pilusa congratulated the learners and encouraged them to keep in touch with their friends who have not acquired the university entrance by informing them about opportunities that are available to them such as learnerships and other CETA programmes that can help them fulfil their dreams.

CETA, which partners with the Department in the bursary scheme, contributes 50% (R60 000) towards the bursary which is worth R120 000 for each student, which covers tuition, residential fees including three meals, textbooks, academic projects and resources including a monthly allowance.