

Ntuli reflects on EPWP gains

ZANDISILE LUPHAHLA

BY THE end of the third quarter last year the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) had created a total of 150 856 job opportunities in the Northern Cape Deputy Minister of Social Development Bongi Ntuli said.

She was addressing the EPWP social sector conference at the Mittah Seperepere Convention Centre in Kimberley yesterday. The conference, which will end on Friday, is to evaluate progress made since the EPWP conference in 2012.

Attendants are expected to deliberate on strategic policy initiatives as pronounced by government, identify new areas of expansion for the sector to achieve set targets and plan for the coming financial year.

Ntuli said the purpose of the five-day conference, which is being attended by stakeholders from across the country, was to gauge the progress of the EPWP social sector and to identify areas that needed further improvements.

"This is important if we are to succeed in our task of enabling our people to participate meaningfully in the economy as envisioned in the National Development Plan Vision 2030," she said.

Ntuli said while the government had recorded notable progress in the first



REPORT: Deputy Minister of Social Development Bongi Ntuli. PICTURE: ZANDISILE LUPHAHLA

and second phase implementation of the programme she acknowledged that a large number of young people were unemployed and were faced with deteriorating chances of employment.

"Our government views the prevailing high rate of unemployment among our youth with great concern. The burden of addressing and reversing this trend cannot be the responsibility of government alone. For this reason we will continue to engage the private sector as a development partner in our endeavours to find lasting and sustainable solutions

to unemployment."

In his state of the nation address this year President Jacob Zuma emphasised the need for a large-scale infrastructure investment programme and in this year's budget speech, Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan created an ideal framework for introducing a labour-intensive approach to large capital projects, including the EPWP.

The EPWP provides poverty and income relief through temporary work for the unemployed.

zandisilel@thenewage.co.za