

1.4 million more public works jobs on offer

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THE government aims to create more than 1.4 million expanded public works programme (EPWP) work opportunities for poor South Africans during the 2017-18 financial year, the Minister of Public Works, Nathi Nhleko, said.

Delivering the department's 2017-18 budget vote in Parliament, Nhleko said the government will disburse the EPWP integrated grants worth R1bn to eligible public bodies and incentivise non-profit organisations among other implementers.

"This will also allow the poorest members of society to generate income by providing services to their communities," Nhleko said.

He said the government was – through the EPWP – implementing a special programme aimed at providing socio-economic infrastructure to rural communities.

"This effort includes the implementation of a rural bridges programme in partnership with the Department of Defence and Military Veterans. The project is intended to provide Bailey-type bridges to needy communities. We piloted the project in the Eastern Cape and delivered four bridges bringing to 11 bridges that were undertaken during the 2016-17 financial year.

"These bridges are cost effective and highly useful in rural areas as they connect villages and create access to amenities for socio-economic development. Bridge sites have been identified in Limpopo, Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape for prioritisation," Nhleko said.

He said last week the department officially unveiled the Cerhu river memorial stone in Bawa village in Mquma municipality in the Eastern Cape in honour of 10 women who died when the vehicle they were travelling in was washed away trying to cross the flooded Cerhu River in 1993.

"One of the survivors of the tragedy, who also assisted the police in the recovery of bodies, Mhlangabezi Qutu, was our special guest at the event. We applaud his bravery in the service of



OPPORTUNITIES: The Expanded Public Works Programme aims to boost the socio-economic structure of communities.

humankind. These bridges will also contribute to safer rural communities and ensure the tragedies such as the one at Bawa never happens again," Nhleko said.

Delivering the department's achievements for the 2016-17 financial years, Nhleko said the government had created 660 000 EPWP job opportunities for the financial year under review.

"Since the launch of EPWP phase 3 in March 2014, the government has created a total of 2.3 million EPWP work opportunities. These work and training opportunities have been created in the EPWP's four sectors, infrastructure, social, environment, culture and the non-state," Nhleko said.

He said government would also use programmes such as the EPWP to drive the radical economic transformation policy position.

"We will continue to work harder with all sectors of our society and bring in more poor, unemployed and unskilled South Africans into the EPWP pro-

gramme with the objective of not only providing financial support to our people, but also to provide them with skill and work experience they need to enter into the formal job market," he said.

The EPWP is one of the key government programmes aimed at alleviating poverty and unemployment in the country.

As a poverty relief initiative, the EPWP, in partnership with local municipalities, creates short to medium term work and training opportunities for the poor, unemployed and unskilled South Africans. In some areas, the EPWP enters into partnership with the private sector.

Launched in 2004, the programme has created more than seven million opportunities since its inception. The achievement proves yet again that the programme is making a significant impact in contributing towards government's concerted efforts of reducing poverty and unemployment.

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