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EPWP eases effects of poverty, unemployment

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Public Works Minister Thulas Nxesi says the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) is designed to help mitigate some of the effects of poverty, unemployment and contribute to plugging a major gap in the social security net.

In a recorded message delivered at the 6th Expanded Public Works Summit underway at Saint Georges Hotel in Pretoria on Tuesday, Nxesi said the mandate of the EPWP is to provide work opportunities and income support to poor and unemployed people, through labour-intensive delivery of public and community assets and services, thereby contributing to development.

Since 2010, the Department of Public Works has hosted five EPWP Summits.

The summit is being held under the theme “PEPs – the past, current and future”.

“Consequently the programme provides poverty and income relief through temporary work for the unemployed in socially useful activities across four sectors namely infrastructure, environment and culture, non-State and social,” Nxesi said.

The 6th Summit is said to provide an opportunity to reflect on the EPWP, which is currently in its 15th year of implementation.

The programme was conceived at the 2003 Growth and Development Summit, in which government agreed to grow public employment programmes (PEPs).

Nxesi explained that the EPWP is positioned to contribute to government’s goals of alleviating poverty, developing local communities, providing work opportunities and enhancing social protection, as emphasised in the National Development Plan’s Vision 2030.

“This 2018 EPWP Summit comes at an opportune time, as we position the programme to respond appropriately to the unemployment challenges through its 4th Phase, starting from 1 April 2019,” he said.

Nxesi said they will share and engage on the draft proposal for EPWP Phase 4, which will be tabled in Cabinet.

“The EPWP Summits are not meant to be talk shops. Each summit concludes with resolutions relating to performance, protocols and policies, which include targets that have to be achieved by public bodies,” he said.

Gauteng MEC for Infrastructure Development, Jacob Mamabolo, said EPWP is important for the country to create job opportunities.

“The programme gives the poor and the unemployed the necessary skills to survive the harshness of our economy,” he said.

Mamabolo said EPWP is the best way to transform the lives of the poor.

“The best way to transform the lives of our people is to reskill them,” he said.

In 2004, government launched the first five-year phase of EPWP, with a target of one million work opportunities.

Director of Economic Policy Research at Public Works, Dr Michael Samson, commended South Africa for being the only country in the world to implement EPWP.

“South Africa has achieved remarkable results implementing the programme,” he said.

Samson said the EPWP does not only create jobs, but it creates decent work.

EPWP participant Jerry Nkuna told **SAnews** that the programme was a life saver.

“After completing matric in 2008, I could not secure employment and life was tough. EPWP gave me hope. Now I am able to put food on the table.”

Nkuna not only supports his family but he is now able to do paving, a skill he learnt while taking part in EPWP.

“I am looking forward to having my own company and employing young people who are unemployed,” he said.

The EPWP is a nationwide programme covering all spheres of government and State-owned enterprises.

It aims to draw significant numbers of unemployed and unskilled people into productive work so that they increase their capacity to earn an income.

The participants are employed under the Ministerial Determination: Expanded Public Works Programme and Code of Good Practice. – **SAnews.gov.za**

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