

■ SKILLS

New centre aims to empower community

MPUMI KIVA

A RECENTLY opened skills centre in Khayelitsha hopes to make a dent in the high unemployment rate in the area.

The centre will help empower disabled people and the youth on various vocational artistry skills to prepare them for jobs.

The skills training centre for the deaf, people with disabilities and able unemployed youth in site B in Khayelitsha by non-profit organisation Mfesane was opened last week.

The Mfesane project was established in 1974 by white liberals from the Dutch Reformed Church working to eradicate poverty, provide support, to develop skills that are sustainable and to empower young people.

The project also aims to develop unemployed youth living in the surrounding communities of Khayelitsha through much-needed skills such as bricklaying, welding and carpentry.

Yesterday, residents in the area said that the centre was crucial for the future of their children.

"We are very much relieved that such a project has been established in Khayelitsha," said Noluntu Songoma, a resident.

"This area is troubled by unemployment, poverty, drug abuse and crime, especially by the youth. We hope this project will bring an end to unemployment and poverty. We want to see young people flocking to the centre to empower themselves.

"We also hope that the government's Public Works Department will know where to start when employing people," she said.

The chairperson of the Mfesane board, Otto Ntshanyana, promised that the project would be utilised by residents: "I have no hesitation in saying that the project is going to improve the lives of young women and men in the area," he said.

"It has always been in the pipeline that we need development in this area. We are helping young people to help themselves so that they can start their own businesses after the training. This project will help bring down unemployment, poverty and reduce crime .

"The aim is to restore the dignity of the young and old, disabled people and able youth in our communities," said Ntshanyana.

According to the Khayelitsha Development Forum's Ndithini Thyido, Khayelitsha an area with an extremely high rate of unemployment, especially among the youth.

"The focus will be on the youth. We are hoping to link with other industries so that the trained youth can be provided with jobs.

"The centre provides a variety of vocational skills that are much needed in our communities.

"This will help reduce the high levels of poverty, crime and abuse of alcohol and drugs in our communities. We encourage the youth to make sure that they utilise the centre for their own benefit," said Thyido.