

# Youth are playing their part in protecting tourists

**A TOURISM SAFETY** initiative gives training and employment to unemployed youngsters while also improving the tourist experience in South Africa.

**Dale Hes**

**T**he Northern Cape Department of Economic Development and Tourism has given jobs to 51 previously unemployed young people, who have been trained as tourism monitors and placed at tourism hotspots around the province.

The initiative is the province's leg of the National Tourism Monitors Programme. Launched in 2017, the programme seeks to create a safer, better experience for tourists, by training youth and placing them in paid positions for a 12-month period. This is in recognition of the fact that crime is a major threat to tourism in South Africa. The programme falls under the broader Expanded Public Works Programme.



■ Young people from the Northern Cape received job opportunities in the tourism sector.

Each participant of the Tourism Monitors Programme receives a stipend and a uniform. Their duties include providing information to visitors at tourist sites; patrolling within identified areas and reporting crime incidents to the SAPS and other relevant enforcement agencies. The youth took part in an

intensive three-week training programme, which included customer service, security and safety training.

Maruping Lekwene, Northern Cape MEC for Economic Development and Tourism, said the tourism industry has been identified as an excellent channel for addressing poverty

and unemployment, especially amongst the youth.

"What is key for the province and for me as MEC is the upskilling and reskilling of our young people."

The 51 youth have been placed at 15 popular tourist attractions in all five districts of the province. One of the

tourism monitors, Bontleeng Choche from Kuruman, said it is exciting for her to have an opportunity to be employed in the tourism industry.

"I am very happy about this opportunity to have a job and be able to earn an income," said Choche.

Minister of Tourism Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane said that tourism safety is an important priority for national government.

"Incidents of crime directed at tourists and tourism products create a negative perception and reputation about a destination and, in turn, impact both the visitor experience and visitor numbers. Tourism has been working with various stakeholders to compile a safety plan, of which the Tourism Monitors Programme forms part of." **V**