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Public works and infrastructure minister Sihle Zikalala has called for the restructuring of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) to make it more responsive to the country's development needs.

The minister said this when addressing the two-day EPWP phase five indaba in Pretoria on Tuesday.

"The department of public works and infrastructure cannot afford to relegate its mandate to reporting on targets rather than creating job opportunities," Zikalala said.

"Our goal goes beyond employment generation. It is about

nurturing a skilled, self-reliant populace that contributes to our nation's socioeconomic fabric.

"By integrating NYS [national youth service] graduates into these workshops, we aim to foster a culture of continuous learning and hands-on experience, ensuring our youth are not just employable, but are drivers of innovation and change," he said.

"The unemployment rate remains stubbornly high at 32.6% in SA."

The department said the indaba was aimed at reconceptualising and redesigning the EPWP. All spheres of government and state-owned entities are expected to implement the programme. — *SAnews.gov.za*