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SKILLS

KZN youth taught furniture making

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TWENTY young people have begun training to make tables, chairs and benches in the Furniture Manufacturing Programme launched in Durban yesterday.

The programme is an initiative by the Expanded Public Works (EPWP). One hundred more people were introduced to the programme.

The initiative aims to reduce unemployment, empower historically disadvantaged individuals, and function as an exit plan for EPWP participants who are anticipated to use their newly acquired skills to enter the furniture manufacturing industry.

It is also to ensure that EPWP recipients' livelihoods are sustained after their stint on EPWP projects.

KwaZulu-Natal Public Works and Human Settlements has also partnered with the Department of Education to refurbish old and broken desks for

schools around the eThekweni metro.

Learners on the furniture manufacturing programme will now produce furniture for other departments, especially for the Department of Education.

This will also reduce procurement costs for these departments. The learners will also fix broken furniture which will also be recycled.

The department said this was a groundbreaking initiative.

eThekweni deputy mayor Zandile Myeni said the programme was born as one of the government's poverty fighting tools. The aim was to empower young people to be economic drivers, and for them to also provide others with employment opportunities.

"Government aims to use this skilled labour to manufacture furniture for different governmental departments. These are also opportunities for young people to enter the space that was reserved for a particular group," Myeni said.

EPWP chief director Bongani



PROGRAMME facilitator Lindani Mthethwa shows eThekweni deputy mayor Zandile Mthethwa and Public Works and Human Settlements MEC Siphso 'KK' Nkosi how the furniture manufacturing machines work. | Supplied

Dlamini said the programme was a pilot project. It was first launched in eThekweni and will likely be spread across KZN. He said these opportunities should be spread to rural areas as well, to help uplift and develop those with fewer opportunities.

"This is another tool for the government to fight unemployment among the youth," Dlamini added.

Learner Mankosi Mathandela said that when she heard of an opportunity to learn to make furniture, she did not think twice about enlisting.

Mathandela said her newly-found skill had armed her with a means to lift herself out of poverty. She advised other young people to grab such opportunities.

Another learner, Bhekokwakhe Mtweza, said he wanted to establish his own business in the future, which will also help to address youth unemployment.

KwaZulu-Natal Public Works and Human Settlements MEC Siphso "KK" Nkosi interacted with learners yesterday in Mayville.

Nkosi said his department aimed to partner with other government departments so that they could source their office furniture from these newly-skilled new furniture manufacturers. He added that learners would be taught how to form co-ops, "and work together to form support structures for the government in terms of its furniture needs".

He said the programme would run for 12 months.

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