

MUNICIPALITIES COMMITTED TO CREATING MORE JOBS

BY: Lesego Moretlwe

The Minister of Public Works, Honourable Thulas Nxesi, MP, hosted a successful three-day 2nd Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) Municipal Summit with all 278 Municipalities at Gallagher Estate in Midrand from the 2nd to the 4th of November 2011. The Summit was held under the theme: ***accelerating towards the delivery of 4.5 million work opportunities for the poor***. This was in line with President Jacob Zuma's central theme of making 2011, a year of job creation as he pronounced this in his state of the Nation Address in February.

The objective of the Summit was to engage key stakeholders in the municipalities on the implementation of the Programme, with an emphasis on working together to achieve the EPWP targets for Phase 2 which covers the period 2009/10 – 2014/15, and aims to create 4.5 million work opportunities for the poor and unemployed South Africans. The programme will also contribute significantly to the Millennium Development Goal of halving unemployment by 2014. Through the Summit, the public bodies, provincial and local government spheres of Government are expected to collaboratively work with the National Department of Public Works, as the lead and coordinating department of the Programme, to accomplish these targets through their existing budgets and mandates.

The key stakeholders who attended the Summit were the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) and the different municipalities.

In his address Honourable Thulas Nxesi indicated that the EPWP should live up to its mandate of using labour intensive methods with the aim of absorbing more people in the work opportunities created. "As the Department of Public Works we lead the Expanded Public Works Programme. But of course we can only implement through and alongside our colleagues in the provinces and municipalities," he emphasised.

According to the EPWP quarter 1 report, the EPWP has created 308 384 work opportunities of the set target of creating 868 000 work opportunities by the end of the 2011/12 financial year. The municipalities have contributed 70,579 of the total work opportunities, which equate to 26% of quarter 1 figures and most of the work opportunities that have been created are within the infrastructure sector.

During the summit, there was an opportunity for all the stakeholders to sit on commissions across all the four sectors of the EPWP, Social, Non State, Environment & Culture and Infrastructure sector with the aim of seeking a way-forward in terms of resolving the challenges experienced by the respective implementing bodies of the EPWP.

Some of the main outcomes of the 2011 EPWP Municipal Summit included that all outstanding protocols should be signed by 31 March 2012. Also that municipalities must ensure that their Integrated Development Plans (IDP) prioritises the EPWP approach and methodology in their projects in order to optimise the creation of work opportunities. Municipalities were also urged to optimize their budgets to deliver on EPWP projects across all sectors.