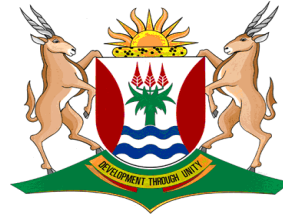




**EXPANDED PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME
CONTRIBUTING TO A NATION AT WORK**



**THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS, MR
NTOPILE KGANYAGO**

Speech at Media Briefing, Eastern Cape Province

**Venue: TELEMEDIA CENTRE
Premier's Office, ECDC Building, Independence
Avenue, Bhisho, Eastern Cape**

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Time: Media Briefing: 12:00 – 12:50

Thank you for that introduction. Honourable Premier of Eastern Cape, Nosimo Balindlela, Honourable MEC of Roads and Public Works, Mr Christian Martin, and Acting HOD of Public Works, N.C. Maneli, I want to extend our sincere thanks to you and your colleagues for welcoming us in your province.

This visit to the Eastern Cape comes almost a year after the launch of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in the province, and our delegation has just had the opportunity to attend an EPWP

“Mini-Conference”, at which we heard updates on the progress made on EPWP implementation. Over the next two days, we look forward to visiting a project in the Buffalo City Municipality, as well as projects in the Chris Hani district municipality near Queenstown, where we will also be present at a special provincial initiative to honour women in construction. This is opportune, as I consider it a matter of priority to encourage, motivate, and empower the women of our country, and even more so in industries that have, traditionally, been considered a male preserve. One of the goals of the EPWP is to create additional work opportunities for a minimum of one million people by the year 2009, and of this number, at least 60% should be women, 30% youth, and 2% disabled. This makes clear the commitment of the EPWP to the development and upliftment of women, and I am looking forward to meeting tomorrow some of the women who have already made inroads into the construction sector in the Eastern Cape.

The national EPWP team began a series of visits to provinces in May 2005, kicking off in Mpumalanga, as a way of touching base with municipalities, project implementers, but primarily beneficiaries of projects within the four sectors of the EPWP, if possible. What has been particularly valuable is the opportunity this provides to see first-hand how projects are implemented on the ground, as well as how individuals, and ultimately their communities, are impacted by the

EPWP. The added benefit is that we have the chance to engage with our provincial counterparts, to take stock of how successfully the EPWP is being implemented around the country, and to review critically what is working well, and the areas for improvement in the design and structure of the programme. Yours is the sixth province that we have visited as part of this initiative, and I believe that at the end of our visits to all provinces, we will have a very clear indication of the strengths and weaknesses of the EPWP on a national basis.

I have said this before in other forums, but the most powerful aspect of these visits is coming face to face with EPWP project beneficiaries, and hearing their often-difficult accounts of long periods of unemployment and exclusion from the formal economy. Also valuable is the experience of traveling to the communities where projects are being implemented, and seeing firsthand the impact of the EPWP on these areas that have been badly in need of services or enhancement.

As most of you present here are no doubt aware, the EPWP is designed as a programme that targets the low-skilled and marginalised, tries to create work opportunities through government expenditure on public goods and services, and aims to provide a combination of work experience and training. It comes as no surprise that reports cite unemployment as highest among the low-

skilled, and in an HSRC report from 2004, it was estimated that 59% of the unemployed have never had a formal job. The Eastern Cape is a province all too familiar with the crisis of poverty and unemployment, and I believe that the implications of a programme like the EPWP has even more resonance in your region, where the delivery of services, the creation of jobs, however short-term, and the provision of training take on heightened significance in the lives of people living here.

It is now over a month since we released the fourth quarter results for the EPWP, just prior to our celebration of the EPWP's first anniversary in KZN. As we have some time yet until the updated figures are available in October 2005, I will refer you again to those figures, which indicated that the EPWP is running as planned, and on target. Up until the end of June 2005, 223 400 gross work opportunities (at least 174 800 net work opportunities) were created from 3400 EPWP projects nationwide. A total of R3.2 billion was spent during the last financial year on implementing EPWP projects. As these figures indicate, we are quite confident that we will reach our target of creating one million jobs after 5 years, that is by 2009.

Recent discussions at Cabinet level, specifically the July Lekgotla, reflected the growing and expressed recognition that the EPWP needs to be expanded beyond its current implementation framework.

This makes necessary a new and broadened approach to what will ostensibly be the next phase of the EPWP, which looks for ways to intensify and expand not only the impact of the project in terms of number of jobs, but also its ability to address asset poverty, and increase the scope and nature of economic infrastructure provision.

Your own report to that same Cabinet Lekgotla gave a positive overview of the launch and growth of the EPWP in the Eastern Cape. The EPWP unit is almost fully staffed in the province, and will be effective in the coordination of and providing support to other sector departments in implementing the EPWP. As in most provinces, the infrastructure leads the way in terms of the creation of work opportunities and training, but you also reported on progress in the environmental sector, where agricultural projects are being realigned and reoriented to EPWP principles. One of your flagship projects, Vukuzakhe, which I will talk about in a minute, is also being reviewed for expansion into the agricultural sector, to be piloted in the Mbashe District.

The EPWP team in the Eastern Cape has lined up an interesting programme for us, that combines some reflection on the actual progress and implementation of the EPWP in the province, along with on site project visits that provide the opportunity to talk to and

see beneficiaries currently working on projects. Our morning began today with a stopover at the EPWP mini conference, organised by the Portfolio committee on Public Works, to allow the relevant departments to reflect on and account to members of the Provincial Legislature regarding their contributions to the EPWP. It is encouraging to see initiatives like this that are designed to find ways to strengthen the implementation and coordination of the programme.

This afternoon we will be visiting an environmental sector project which also has possibilities in the economic sector, namely the Mdantsane Greening project, which is funded by the National Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism with an overall budget of R6.8 million. The project is focused on creating work opportunities coupled with training, largely through the rehabilitation of the environment, with the aim of benefiting the community environmentally and economically through the work opportunities, but also the possibility of engaging SMMEs. The project employs 220 people, some of whom are undergoing technical training, and forms part of both the urban renewal programme and the EPWP.

Thursday's programme starts with an event in Queenstown, coordinated by the province, to honour women in construction, and

as I mentioned earlier in this speech, the EPWP is committed to enhancing the prospects of women in the labour market, and so I look forward to being part of the process of highlighting the achievements of women.

We will take time tomorrow afternoon to visit some learners engaged in training under what is one of the cornerstones of this programme, the EPWP Contractor Development Learnership programme. This is a two-year training programme that gives contractors the opportunity to learn how to implement labour intensive construction infrastructure projects. We are grateful to the Construction Education and Training Authority (CETA), which is the principle partner in managing this programme.

Our final visit in your province is to a Vukuzakhe project site in the Chris Hani district municipality, which is one of your championed projects with the potential to be expanded into other sectors, as I've also mentioned previously. Vukuzakhe refers to a provincial road and infrastructure maintenance system that is aimed at alleviating poverty and reducing unemployment by creating productive work opportunities in what are often the most impoverished areas of the province. Not unlike Zibambele in KwaZulu Natal, Vukuzakhe focuses on household rather than individual contracts, as a way of addressing the need to break the poverty cycle on a larger scale.

I think this programme of activities that we have lined up for us will give us a good sense of the impact of the EPWP in your province, and while the huge distances prevent us from traveling to more remote and far-flung areas, we feel sure that many such examples exist in other regions, and that there is plenty of scope for expansion of the EPWP in the Eastern Cape.

I want to thank our honourable hosts from the province for hosting us over these two days, and for giving us access to EPWP projects during this time. I must also congratulate you for your commitment to the implementation of the EPWP in the province, and your very real attempts to improve and scale up on what has proved to be an effective government initiative in reducing the crushing effects of poverty and unemployment in our country.

Thank you for your time.

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