



## NKANDLA EPWP PARTICIPANTS BAG PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYMENT

Article and Pictures by Sduduzo Simelane and Mziwakhe Radebe

Eight EPWP participants have managed to exit onto permanent employment with the clothing retailer, **Mr Price**, at Nkandla in KwaZulu-Natal. This emerged during an interview with two of these participants, and their current manager, on the sidelines of the King Cetshwayo District EPWP Focus Week event held at Nkandla on 01 March 2023. This leaves little doubt that the KwaZulu Natal EPWP Coordination Team has identified the issue of exit strategies and permanent absorption of participants as a key focus area, coaxing municipalities and other public bodies to come up with innovations in that direction.

Having implemented the EPWP since 2012, the Nkandla Local Municipality began concerning itself with the question of how to ensure sustainable livelihoods for some of the participants of its programme especially the youth. The municipality then initiated an Unemployed Youth and Graduate Programme in order to facilitate opportunities for young people. It is a programme that has already achieved some notable success with participants getting permanently employed at the municipality as traffic officers and office workers as well as accessing opportunities from the private sector.

The interview with former participants, Ms. Nontuthuzelo Myeni and Mr. Lunga Nxumalo occurred within the context of the municipal EPWP Champion, Ms. Sipehele Mbokazi, having shared information about the Unemployed Youth and Graduate Programme.

Myeni comes from a location called Silunda at Nkandla. She was recruited as an EPWP participant on a six-month contract during 2021. She holds a diploma in Public Management which, presumably, enabled her to be assigned administrative duties supporting Municipal Committees with such tasks as booking meeting venues, preparing meeting agendas and recording proceedings.

In November 2021, 5 months into her EPWP contract, she was contacted by Jumpstart informing her that **Mr Price** was about to open an outlet at Nkandla and that there was an employment opportunity. Sboniso Sibiya, Nontuthuzelo's current manager at **Mr Price**, confirmed that Jumpstart is a recruitment agency his company used to liaise with the municipality to source prospective employees. He also confirmed that an agreement existed between **Mr Price** and the Nkandla Municipality for the former to recruit from the latter's Unemployed Youth and Graduate Programme. The idea was to recruit and train a group and then hire those who gave a good account of themselves within the limits of available vacancies.

There are obvious benefits that permanent employment brings. As Myeni says with a glint in the eye that she now has 'appliances and clothing'. She was part of an intake of 40 participants who were recruited for training with **Mr Price**. The group received two weeks of theory training and one week of practical demonstration covering areas such as retail and merchandising. Eight trainees, including Lunga Nxumalo, were selected and put on a month probation – they say they were 'casual workers' – before signing permanent contracts.

A bit quieter than his colleague, Nxumalo hails from Nkonesi, Nkandla. He holds a certificate in information technology. He started working as an EPWP participant in June 2020 performing administrative support in the assessment of performance of the business units within the municipality. He says that, although retail was not his original dream, his employment has taught him about the possibility of setting up his own business. He has started a poultry farming business which is managed by his mother. He is also able to save some money, he tells us, and he has been able to build himself a two-roomed house unit.

## MPUMALANGA REGIONAL OFFICE HOSTS EPWP NYS GRADUATION CEREMONY

Article and pictures by Maanea Maselesele and Lerato Mpiwa

"We would like to thank the EPWP NYS and BUREWA Trading 84 and Suppliers for the opportunity" said Ms. Siphesihle Mkhonza one of the participants who represented 19 participants at their NYS Exit Workshop Programme hosted recently at the Lekwa Local Municipality in Standerton, Mpumalanga. The workshop was officiated by EPWP NYS Deputy Director Ms. Kurhula Mkansi from the Nelspruit Regional Office of the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure.

The workshop was attended by the Director for NYS, Ms. Lefentse Ratsela who congratulated the learners and encouraged them to use the knowledge they have attained from the programme to create opportunities for themselves. "You all have managed to get to this point because you were patient, you had a mission and a vision, and I believe that this is not the end of the road for you," said Ratsela.

The workshop was attended by officials from DPWI, Gert Sibande TVET College, BUREWA Trading 84 and suppliers, the local municipality, and the NYS participants.

The local municipality representative Ms. Zandi Ngadi urged the exiting learners to use the skills they gained to look for employment opportunities and apply for businesses so they can contribute to the creation of work opportunities in their communities.

Ms. Lungile Zulu, the Deputy Director for NYS, presented the exit strategy where she encouraged participants to further their studies, start businesses and to look for employment. Mr. Alex Msibi presented career opportunities that can be considered by participants in furthering their studies, he advised learners to consider courses in the built environment and construction that are offered by TVET College such as Gert Sibande.

These learners were recruited in February 2022 and exited the programme in November same year. They received theoretical and practical training and they were placed at the project to renovate the Standerton Labour Centre. This is where they were trained and upskilled in different trades such as bricklaying, plastering, plumbing, painting and tiling.

At the end of the ceremony, the learners were given completion certificates and tool boxes to assist them in starting their own business and in looking for economic opportunities in their communities.

Some of the exiting participants have been appointed by BUREWA. "I have been recruited by BUREWA because of my hard work and dedication to my work – those are skills I learned from the NYS programme," Mr. Thokozani Masoeu said. ■



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