



### What next with these brick-making plants...

**Date:** Thursday, September 29, 2022

The most disturbing challenge to arise from the one-on-one consultation between the Head of Department, Moses Kgantsi, Community Based Programme- alias Expanded Public Works Programme- is: To date, there are 750 EPWP beneficiaries, each one of them receiving a monthly stipend (payment) of R2 200 for doing nothing!

This translates into a wage bill of R1 650 000 that is R1.7million a month. What is even more astonishing is, the department is more likely to keep on paying the above amount until August 2023, which is said to be the end date, of the 36-months contract the 750 EPWP beneficiaries signed in August 2021.

But how did this come about? Asked, Kgantsi, and what were you doing all along about this matter? None of those present was committal, or had clear answers, but background as given was: What began as a grand initiative to maximize job creation opportunities through labour intensive system in rural areas has now clearly turned into a king-size challenge for the department to deal with. Operations at 17 brick-making plants in four districts collapsed about a year ago, with stock piles of paving bricks left at various sites. In total 750 EPWP beneficiaries worked at these plants daily using the said machines to make paving bricks and apparently some, bricks for construction of houses.

The projects have collapsed and beneficiaries have abandoned sites, but not forfeited the monthly stipends. Sadly, reports are now trickling in of some sites and equipment being vandalised, electrical and water fittings stolen and machines stripped of metal for cash.

Kgantsi said “a serious intervention and decision” has to be made regarding the future of the brickmaking plants. “It does not make sense also for the department to continue paying for people (750 EPWPs) for sitting at home ...”. He said he is committed to explore option on how best to utilize the manufactures bricks piled on all sites while he plans a visit to some of them soon.

Newsworth team visited at least two brick-making sites in Ngaka Modiri Molema to check and verify the status of the operations in Montshioa and Ramatlabama (pictures). Both sites resembled ghost areas characterised by neglect, overgrown vegetation, piles of bricks onsite and clear signs of vandalism of the equipment, water and electrical supply fittings missing.

\*Meanwhile in a separate development, the department wound-up its consultative sessions with stakeholders on EPWP Policy Public Consultations held in the four districts of the province during the month of September.

The policy was approved by Cabinet in August 2022 as part of the public consultation process and gazetted in September 2022.

The department as a Provincial Coordinating Department working with Social Development and national Department of Public Works and Infrastructure were expected conduct all the consultations. The policy



provide strategic direction for all stakeholders involved in the planning, implementation and management of EPWP to ensure among others, unemployed and vulnerable individual in communities are prioritised

**Ends**

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