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**Address by North West Public Works MEC Jerry Dimotana Thibedi,  
delivered at the graduation ceremony of EPWP and NYS beneficiaries  
based Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati District, held at the Banquet Hall.**

***Date:*** Thursday, August 07, 2008

- Programme Director: Rre Mothusi Loeto
- Executive Mayor of the Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati District Municipality: Cllr Kaone Lobelo
- Members of the Mayoral Council Present
- All councilors present
- Kgosi Tshepo Mankuroane
- Head of Department: Rre Obakeng Mongale
- Senior Managers of the Department of Public Works present
- Our Honoured Guests – the EPWP and NYS graduates
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me take this opportunity to greet and welcome you all.

This important occasion marks the culmination of a series of graduation ceremonies for our hard working Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) and the National Youth Service (NYS) beneficiaries.

Since July 24, I have been out and about, witnessing as our energetic men and women in the other three District Municipalities earned their stripes.

Today is your turn. The day you have impatiently waited for is finally here.

Not only are you the last group in the province to ascend the graduation stage, you also account for a lion's share of the total number of the beneficiaries in these poverty eradication programmes.

Therefore, there is truth the Setswana saying that:

``Moja morago ke kgosi''

Out of a total of 988 beneficiaries, of which four hundred and twentythree (423) were with to EPWP while the remaining 565 were attached to NYS, this District accounted for 405.

This figure is made up of 200 EPWP and 205 NYS beneficiaries.

Yes indeed, the organizers must have had the saying "Save the best for last" in mind when they planned these events.

Programme Director:

When EPWP was launched in May 2004, the aim was to attract the unemployed into labour-intensive work.

During the period of the programme, the beneficiaries get theoretical and practical on site training, with a monthly R1000 stipend.

NYS, on the other hand, was launched in April 2007.

It seeks to involve young people who have passed grade 10 and above in public infrastructure maintenance projects encompassed by the EPWP.

Our graduates have gone through these processes and they are therefore the best people to attest to the fact that, these programmes are indeed making the projected impact on the ground.

They (beneficiaries) are the best people to defend the significance of the EPWP and NYS against the doomsayers. The doomsayers who are forever complaining and are masters in rubbishing these noble programmes.

Among some of the arguments put forward by our critics is that, these programmes have failed to address unemployment as they do not provide for permanent employment.

It is you, the graduates of EPWP and NYS, who must stand up and defend your programmes by explaining to these pessimists that:

EPWP and NYS were never established to create permanent employment.

In fact, the programmes were formed to provide you with the ammunition that you can put to good use when you compete for economic opportunities in the labour market.

I am informed that there is a group of EPWP beneficiaries from somewhere in Taung who after completing their tenure formed a company to do paving. This was a group that came before you.

In other words, the government takes you off the unemployment queue, equips you with skills, exposes you to the actual work and releases you, armed with valuable knowledge and a legitimately-recognized certificate.

To that end, you are considered a highly competitive job seeker or a capable potential employer who can give many a run for their money.

But above all, like group in Taung, the sky could be the limit if you persevere.

Today, you boast skills that you never possessed before in various construction trades including bricklaying, painting, paving, carpentry, plumbing, tiling, plastering, welding and electrification.

And the cherry on top is that, over and above that knowledge you have gathered during the course of these programmes, you leave with a recognized certificate.

This certificate is accredited by the Construction Education and Training Authority (CETA). This means that it is genuine document that confirm your credentials as a professional.

I therefore call upon all of you not to sit with your knowledge and certificates. Go out there and make a difference in both yours and somebody else's lives.

Your country needs you to join forces with government and make your own little contribution to the growth of our economy.  
This will see the reduction of unemployment and the alleviation of poverty.

Programme Director:

Two hundred of the graduates -106 males and 94 females- who were attached to EPWP have worked in the following projects:

- Morokweng renovation, extension and paving of offices
- Renovation of Ganyesa Mechanical Workshop offices
- Building of rooms for the Ganyesa camp building
- Tlaakgameng Agricultural Science
- Renovation of stores at Public Works Regional Office in Vryburg
- Conversion of the storeroom to boardroom of the Social Development pay point
- Construction of an ablution block at the Taung camp building

The remaining 205 –made up of 95 males and 110 females- who were involved in NYS worked on the following projects:

- The Construction of Vryburg Hospital
- The construction of Mini Garona government office complex in Vryburg
- Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Environment office in Taung

While we hardly experienced problems with the implementation of the EPWP, there is a challenge regarding the execution of the NYS at Mini Garona here in Vryburg.

Because this is a new construction all together, which is not yet complete, such trades as painting and tiling for example, can not immediately commence.

Such activities depend on the completion of others like bricklaying and so on. Therefore they will only come in at a later stage and by that time you would have exited the programme.

It is the unfortunate part of this process.

As human beings and government we learn from these experiences so that we avoid similar occurrences for the future intake.

I'm informed that some of the beneficiaries from this project took their frustrations to the media and there were also threats of a sit-in and a protest march.

As government, my department included , we have an open door policy, where all dissatisfied parties can raise issues as and when the need arises.

But on the flip side, problems of whatever nature can be resolved earlier, if we can have the capacity to monitor on a constant basis the progress of beneficiaries from the day they have been recruited until the last day.

Physical monitoring of beneficiaries whether they are undergoing class room training or onsite training should be a norm.

This kind monitoring would ensure that whatever unhappiness, from which ever quarter, will be dealt with promptly.

Nonetheless, let me take this moment to congratulate our graduates and wish them well for their hopefully productive future endeavour.

**I thank you.**

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