

**SPEECH BY MEC FOR PUBLIC WORKS, Mr. H. D. YAWA, MPL
AT THE EPWP BENEFICIARIES CERTIFICATION AWARD
FUNCTION, HELD AT THE BAROLONG BOO-RATSHIDI HALL IN
MAFIKENG ON TUESDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2007**

Programme Director

**Kgosi Kgolo Motlotlegi Jeff Montshiwa of Barolong Boo-Ratshidi
Traditional Council**

**Kgosi M.G Moiloa of Bahurutshe Ba Ga Moiloa Traditional
Council**

Executive Mayors, Mayors and councillors

Head of Department- Mr. O. Mongale

The Regional Director-Mrs TJ Mathibe

Members of the Regional Management Team

Government officials

Distinguished Guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

**The book titled Poverty in Transition and Transition in Poverty:
Recent Developments in Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Georgia,
Russia and Mongolia edited by Yogesh Atal and published in
association with UNESCO explains how these six countries
experienced poverty and also alludes to the different causes of
poverty in those countries.**

It concludes that, “Poverty is an issue facing countries around the globe, yet it is a multi-dimensional phenomenon caused by a variety of factors, differing from context to context with no linear chain of cause and effect. The occurrence and persistence of poverty is influenced by an interrelated web of economic, social, psychological, cultural, and political factors”.

Surely all of us here know that decades of apartheid misrule have left us with a legacy of infrastructure backlog, unemployment and underdevelopment and deep poverty particularly in our rural areas. Equally, I believe that all of us agree with President Thabo Mbeki’s assertion in the State of the Nation Address delivered on the 9 February 2007 that, the country has consolidated freedom and democracy in the 13 years since the end of apartheid and that the underlying solution to most of South Africa's problems is economic prosperity.

President Mbeki mentioned that "None of the great social problems we have to solve is capable of resolution outside the context of the creation of jobs and the alleviation and eradication of poverty," By this he was re-emphasizing government’s commitment to eradicate poverty and bridging the gap between the first and second economies. The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) is one of government's priority interventions to correct these discrepancies.

The EPWP was launched in 2004 with an aim to create employment and provide training by encouraging labour intensive practices in the construction, repair and maintenance of public infrastructure such as roads, bridges and buildings.

I'm delighted to announce that since the launch of the programme in the province we have managed to create over 40 000 job opportunities and created 14000 training opportunities for people who in the past lacked skill and were thus excluded from participation in the economy. The Age of Hope has through EPWP opened opportunities for women and young people.

I wish to congratulate the Central Region because two of our Expanded Public Works Projects implemented within the jurisdiction of the Mafikeng Local Municipality, i.e. the Integrated Modimola Project and the Semelela Brickmaking and Paving Project were awarded certificates in recognition of their exceptional contribution to poverty reduction and community development at the 2006/07 Impumelelo Innovation Awards held this past Saturday in Cape Town.

The commitment of all involved in the projects has defied the pessimism with which the projects were viewed in their initial pilot stages. We are humbled and challenged by this recognition to maintain the standard we have set ourselves to make a difference in service delivery.

I should stress however Programme Director that we still believe that the success of the Modimola EPWP Project is in our view underrated and that other provinces could benefit from the unique and integrated strategy we have adopted to maximize the impact and sustainability of our intervention in poverty stricken areas.

The invaluable lessons we have drawn from the Integrated Modimola Project and the exit strategy we have adopted for the sixteen learner contractors and thirty learner farmers are indeed ground breaking. Most of the learner contractors have progressed to a point that they have achieved a Grade 3 rating with the Construction Industry Development Board as a result of projects allocated to them to gain experience.

Working with our municipalities and other government departments, we are developing an exit strategy that would ensure participation of beneficiaries who have acquired skills through the EPWP beyond training and project implementation. We call on the private sector to tap into this skilled workforce as projects that they have delivered attest to their capacity to deliver quality infrastructure.

As the President said in the State of the Nation Address “Over the past three years, the economy has created some one-and-half million jobs. It is encouraging that in the year March 2005 to March 2006 alone, 300 000 of the jobs created were in the formal

sector outside of agriculture, representing a growth rate of about 4%”

No sensible person will dispute the fact that the ANC government is making strides pertaining to job-creation and poverty alleviation. Today we are gathered here at the Barolong Boo-Ratshidi Community Hall, to witness another achievement and commitment of government of investing in our people.

The 170 beneficiaries we are awarding certificates today, are part of the 469 who received training from the department throughout the province in the past year. Their training included soft and hard skills. Soft skills training included HIV/AIDS Awareness, Managing Personal Finances, Career Guidance and Occupational Health and Safety. Hard skill straining included: Bricklaying, Plastering, Carpentry, Electrical Construction, Plumbing, Welding, Tiling, Paving and Landscaping.

Included in this number are women, youth men and people living with disabilities. The department with the assistance of ward councillors in the various municipalities ensured that these training opportunities were evenly spread amongst community members. We are positive that the R872, 722 used for training beneficiaries will bear the desired fruits. R255, 000 was spent on soft skills training and R617, 788 on hard skills.

We are confident that the beneficiaries have acquired skills that have empowered them for participation in the construction

sector and that the knowledge gained will be put to good use for the benefit of their own private companies, cooperatives and or future employers.

The graduates received constructed the Lehurutshe Training Hall, Ditsobotla District Offices in Itsoseng, and Molopo Training Hall which buildings I am inviting all of you to visit to experience the quality of their workmanship.

We would not have achieved the success on our own as a department without the contribution of the Department of Labour and the involvement of the following service providers:

- Lifeline Community Development**
- Leps**
- Letsoma Business Enterprise**
- Hadifele Training and Development**

We appreciate your partnership and commitment to the skills revolution.

Some of the beneficiaries have also demonstrated their determination to succeed as follows:

- Three groups of beneficiaries from Molopo, Madikwe and Taung are in the process of registering their Close Cooperation in the construction sector.**

- **One beneficiary is employed on a part time basis by one of the service providers as an Instructor in the Free State province.**
- **Some of the beneficiaries were recruited and absorbed in our department's District Offices.**
- **Some of the beneficiaries are already employed by contractors.**

In short programme director, all these achievements point that EPWP is in line with government's intensified efforts to integrate youth development into the mainstream of government work, including a youth co-operatives programme.

Lastly, the President has committed government to increase the number of young people engaged in the National Youth Service by at least 20 000 through 18 government departments and to enroll 30 000 young volunteers in community development initiatives. The commitment includes the employment of 5 000 young people as part of the Expanded Public Works Programme in the maintenance of government buildings.

Provincially Premier Mme Molewa in her State of the Province Address last Friday announced our participation in the programme. We have as a department set in motion a process to recruit at least 500 youth for participation in the National Youth Service through the EPWP and would be working in partnership and in consultation with the Youth Commission, municipalities,

community based organizations, traditional leadership and non-government organisations to achieve this target.

As a department we are committed to the skills revolution and we will indisputably fulfill the Premier's announcement, as it is our contribution to the realisation of government's objective to eradicate poverty through job creation and halve unemployment by 2014.

We are determined to take the Peoples Contract to a level where our intergovernmental and public-private partnerships results in tangible deliverables for our people. The involvement of the municipalities and the private sector in the exit strategy for EPWP beneficiaries is very critical for the skills revolution.

I wish to congratulate the beneficiaries for their tireless commitment to the programme. With the skills gained you will be able to join the labour market as skilled workers and take advantage of various opportunities that government has made available to contribute to the country's economy.

As you begin to practice all the skills gained, I urge you to become EPWP activists. Show other community members the positive gains of being part of the programme. Encourage them to consult their councillors and find out how they can become part of the programme.

Ke a leboga.

