

**SPEECH BY MEC FOR PUBLIC WORKS, MR. H. D. YAWA, MPL
AT THE EPWP BENEFICIARIES CERTIFICATION AWARD
FUNCTION, HELD AT THE BOPHIRIMA PUBLIC WORKS
REGIONAL OFFICES IN VRYBURG ON WEDNESDAY 07 MARCH
2007**

Programme Director

Mayor of Naledi Local Municipality- Dr Ruth Mompoti

Mayors and Councillors

Batlotlegi Dikgosi tsa rona

The Chief Technical Officer for the Department - Mr. Ken Jacobs

The Regional Director- Mr. Mafoko

Members of the Regional Management Team

Government officials

Distinguished Guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

On the 26 June 1955 the masses of our oppressed people met in Kliptown under the “Congress of the People” and produced the historic document, which outlined how they wanted to be governed and how they saw the future South Africa.

Fifty-two years since the adoption of the Freedom Charter, the document is still relevant even today. The Charter was more than a mere list of demands for democratic reforms. The Freedom Charter represented not just a checklist of things to be done, but also a vision

that drives the democratic government in its work for fundamental transformation of our society.

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. Therefore Ladies and gentlemen, the Freedom Charter was and is intended to put things right. One demand in the Freedom Charter document stated that:

“The People Shall Share in the Country's Wealth”

As you all know that prior 1994, the national wealth of our country was geared to benefit the white-minority to the exclusion of the African majority. The ANC government inherited an economy that was biased towards this section of our populace. Job reservation and apartheid policies ensured that the majority of our people were marginalised in the economy and that unemployment and abject poverty was their way of life.

Through various interventions, the ANC government has consistently waged war against the legacy of deprivation, marginalization and exclusion that characterised the apartheid regime.

Although we have made great strides to stabilise our economy, unemployment and unemployability remain our greatest challenges facing us as a country. Even before 1994, economy had begun to show signs of strain. Job losses were rife. Since 1994, the ANC

government has instituted various programmes and other initiatives to alleviate poverty, create jobs and improve the quality of life of all South Africans and correct the imbalances of the past.

As government we are aware that to correct the imbalances of the past will not happen overnight. As the ancient Chinese proverb says, “a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step”. We are convinced that we have not only taken a step in the right direction but that we have taken a giant step and are on the right track.

The Expanded Public Works Programme is a critical intervention to bridge the gap between the First and the Second Economy. In announcing the programme during his State of the Nation Address in 2003, President Thabo Mbeki said, “To address this investment in social infrastructure, the government has decided that we should launch an expanded public works programme. This will ensure that we draw significant numbers of the unemployed into productive work, and that these workers gain skills while they work, and thus take an important step to get out of the pool of those who are marginalized”

The programme is aimed at creating employment and providing training by encouraging labour intensive practices in the construction, repair and maintenance of public infrastructure such as roads, bridges and buildings. The core objectives of the programme are:

- Job Creation
- Skills Development
- Improved Social Services.

Since its inception, the programme has provided 40 000 unemployed people with job opportunities. 14 000 people that include youth, women and the disabled have also acquired skills through the programme. Learner contractors, learner farmers and beneficiaries have equally benefitted through exit opportunities that were identified.

Today we are gathered here at Vryburg to celebrate a people's contract to create jobs and fight poverty. The 128 beneficiaries, who are graduating today, are part of the 469 who received training from the department throughout the province in the past year. As part of our skill revolution, they received training in bricklaying, plastering, carpentry, electrical Construction, plumbing, welding, tiling, paving and landscaping. They were also empowered with lifeskills such as HIV and AIDS Awareness, Managing Personal Finances, Career Guidance and Occupational Health and Safety.

We are confident that the beneficiaries have acquired skills that have empowered them to enter the construction sector as entrepreneurs and skilled labourers. We hope that the skills you have acquired would be put to good use for the benefit of the community, your cooperatives and in your future business ventures as entrepreneurs.

The beneficiaries executed the following projects as part of their training:

- ❖ Paving at Pinagare Flats in Taung

- ❖ Renovation of Mechanical Workshop and Offices the Department of Transport, Roads and Community Safety in Taung
- ❖ Brickmaking and Paving at the Offices of the Department of Social Services Taung
- ❖ Construction of Carport for 8 Vehicle and Paving at Moshaweng Area Project Office in Mothibistadt
- ❖ Renovation and Paving at the Ganyesa Agricultural Centre for the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Environment in Ganyesa
- ❖ Renovation and Paving at the Ganyesa Traffic Office
- ❖ Renovations of existing Ganyesa District Offices for the Department of Education
- ❖ Clearing of Site and Paving at the Armoedsvlakte Agricultural Farm for the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Environment in Vryburg

The quality of workmanship at these project sites bears testimony of the effectiveness of the training the beneficiaries have received and that the R872, 722,00 were spend on training was money well spend. We appreciate the commitment of the service providers we had

engaged to conduct training for the beneficiaries. Ours is truly a partnership for the skills revolution, a partnership to empowerment, growth and development.

Through your contribution, some of the beneficiaries have already demonstrated their determination to succeed as:

- 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.

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.

Last week my Department met with Municipal Managers of different local municipalities in the province to discuss the EPWP Technical

Support Strategy that my department will be offering to municipalities.
The support amongst others include the following:

- ❖ Identification of suitable projects implementation
- ❖ Setting targets for projects
- ❖ Assistance with Project designing and contract documentation
- ❖ Streamlining and adaptation of Municipal policies and procedures towards EPWP

The following municipalities were identified to benefit from the technical support strategy:

- ❖ Bophirima District Municipality
- ❖ Merafong Local Municipality
- ❖ Madibeng Local municipality
- ❖ Dr. Modiri Molema District Municipality, formerly known CDM
- ❖ Matlosana Local Council
- ❖ Moses Kotane local Municipality
- ❖ Rustenburg Local Council

We are of the view that this support will enhance the implementation of Expanded Public Works Programme to meet our provincial target for job creation.

If you recall ladies and gentlemen, 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.

In her State of the Province Address, Premier Mme Molewa also 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 with all relevant structures. My Department will be meeting the Youth Commission and other structures on the 14 March to concretise the implementation plan.

The President in his State of the Nation Address called upon us to promote partnership:

“We must today renew our pledge, to speak together of freedom, to act in partnership to realise the happiness for all that should come with liberty, to work together to build a South Africa defined by a common dream, to say, together, in action – enough of everything that made our country to contain within it and represent much that is ugly and repulsive in human society”

The Setswana proverb says,” Sedikwa ke ntswa pedi ga se thata”.

Join us in renewing our pledge for a national partnership to build a better life for all.

Ke a leboga.