

EPWP targets to change peoples' lives for the better in Richmond

Report by Vusi Shabalala and Images by Sphiwe Maphumulo

The Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP) versus community development has been for the past years or so an everyday positive talk within the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The programme targets communities across with an aim at alleviating poverty through job creation. This time the focus was on Richmond community when the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government led by the Premier, Mr Senzo Edward Mchunu during an official launch and handover of the Extended Public Works Programme Phase 3. The EPWP was a project previously managed by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport and had since to be transferred to the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Public Works as is the case in all other provinces. The launch at Richmond is subsequent to the launch hosted by the President the 3rd of October 2014 in the Eastern Cape Province. PWP is a government programme which is seen today as a contributor in the creation of jobs through infrastructure development thus increasing the labour intensity of government infrastructure investments. Under the theme ***“Consolidating progress we have made, and stepping up the pace to achieve radical socio-economic transformation to end Poverty in our Lifetime”*** the programme will ensure the provisioning of work opportunities to unskilled people of the Province by increasing economic growth by means of improving skills levels through education and training and also improving an enabling environment for the industry to flourish.



Taking the lead during the EPWP launch above is the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal Mr Senzo Mchunu followed by MEC for Human Settlements and Public Works Mr Ravi Pillay and the Richmond Mayor, Mr Andrew Ragavaloo

Through EPWP, the department developed a Richmond Community Development Project that would seek to solely absorb Richmond community members into work opportunities. The programme will be widely spread to all seven (7) wards of Richmond Municipality and will utilise the following sub-programmes as a support base, namely, the National Youth Service (NYS); Sanitation Programme; Maintenance Programme and the KZN Integrated Greening Programme (KZN IGP).

The Provincial goals around community development projects is to create employment and to alleviate poverty; to promote social cohesion; to inculcate a culture of providing service (s) to communities; to equip programme beneficiaries with skills, knowledge and attitudes that contribute to sustainable livelihoods; to build a strong community asset base and to create sustainable livelihoods and to impart skills that will allow them to be more employable in order to increase their competitiveness in the job market.

The project was allocated an approximate budget of R45million of which to date and according to the report by Ms Belinda Scott, the MEC for Finance, government has since the inception of EPWP created 1, 5 million jobs out of the budget spent of R7, 42m. This then translate into the following progress being registered as follows:

The Sanitation Programme: As at March 2015 the Department of Public Works in partnership with the UMgungundlovu District Municipality and the Mvula Trust focussed on delivering of the EPWP Sanitation Programme which has absorbed 453 community members from 5 wards (1, 2, 5, 6 & 7). In overall, 294 males, 159 females, 227 youth and one person with disability inclusively with 2117 units completed from a target of 2250 at a budget allocation of R20m.

The National Youth Service (NYS) Programme: The programme targets mostly youth with limited access to opportunities and productive resources. Candidates participating in this programme were selected on the basis of their poverty index. A total of 100 learners were recruited and trained on the full qualification titled National Certificate: Building and Civil Construction - NQF level 3 with a strong focus on Bricklaying and Plastering. A stipend of R1800.00 per learner per month was allocated per each beneficiary in order to proffer individual financial as well as their households while undertaking training. Unfortunately, five (5) learners dropped out of the programme. All Wards were equally represented by the total number of 15 beneficiaries with the exception of the drop-out figure of five (5) beneficiaries from other Wards. The construction of an Operation Sukuma Sakhe (OSS) War Room built by the learners at the Silahlala Stadium in Richmond as part of the programme's added value is underway and completion of the project is targeted at the end of March 2015. The presence of the War Room will serve as a facility where communities, stakeholders and government and municipality representatives will converge to deliberate on emerging challenges and ascertain solutions in an amicable manner.



Above is Sanelisiwe Dlamini, one of the EPWP-NYS beneficiary during an on-site action while building the War Room for based at the Silahlala Stadium in Richmond

The involvement of private partnerships through business sector, the Zama Training and Development, also contributed immensely. The service provider has undertaken the training of NYS learners and a further provided an accredited training in tiling to all learners at no cost. In addition, the institution has offered to provide Artisan training and development to 3 beneficiaries per group totalling to at least 21 beneficiaries in the entire Richmond Municipality. Training will take a period of two years to complete and recruited learners will undergo further training and development in Construction Masonry in preparation for the trade test.

The Maintenance Programme: This is a programme that deals with the manual clearance and maintenance of 56 (47 primary and 9 high) schools through utilizing the unskilled and the neediest people as labour for the programme in Richmond. The benefit of this programme is twofold in that it affords the community to take pride of a clean environment and that schools remain at all times free from any health hazardous material or items. This programme affords beneficiaries to receive a stipend of R1500.00 where they are subject to provide the service four days in a week. To date the programme has absorbed a total of 146 beneficiaries who have been allocated to various schools that have been identified to be befitting the services of the programme. It should also be mentioned that the distribution of resources such as tools and protective clothing to all participants. In addition, participants were placed at schools that are located closer to their homes so as to curb unnecessary transportation costs for travelling. In summing up, the programme also had its demanding requirements such as the identification of schools; the identification and allocation of beneficiaries residing closest to the schools; the arrangement and conducting of information and or briefing sessions that respond to Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) and the provisioning of protective wear gear and tools.

The KZN Integrated Greening Programme which was the brainchild of the Office of the Premier but then Public Works had a mandate to manage and coordinate its functioning. The greening projects that are to date of significant highlights for the Richmond community are 207 vegetable plots that have been established; the provisioning of formal accredited training on farming and plant production by AgriSETA with 40 credits

at NQF level 4 including practical training. In addition, a non-accredited training was also offered in 'pest control, gardening and alien plants'. As part of the empowerment strategy, 195 "Jojo tanks" have been distributed across Richmond to selected areas where gardening activities are more dominant; 45 illegal dumping sites that beneficiaries have cleared; the propagation of vegetable types and constant visiting and monitoring of progress at the vegetable sites. The EPWP has conclusively injected 833 work opportunities for the community and this is a signal to progress.

As the South African democracy turns 21 years in 2015, which is associated with the coming of age, the KwaZulu-Natal Government will remain committed to the course in the contribution to the 'youth and infrastructure' development through the promotion of increased community participation to facilitate more visibility and ownership in poor communities. The Provincial Government of KwaZulu-Natal will continue to inspiring and making a call to all infrastructure development sector within the province and the country in making a positive employment and economic shift for the betterment of the lives of the South African people.



Above: The man behind the EPWP steering is Mr Xolani Xulu, Senior Manager: EPWP: KZN Public Works as he presented on some crucial issues of the EPWP Programme