

“National Youth Service” strengthens its grip on youth development in KwaZulu-Natal

Report by Vusi Shabalala and photos by Sane Khumalo

“Opportunities are never missed, once you miss it, the next fellow takes it.” This is a continued call made by Government of KwaZulu-Natal where the issue of youth employment is addressed robustly and in various forms. The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Public Works has already begun to keep the ball rolling on service delivery.

The KZN Public Works brings the National Youth Service (NYS) on board. This is a programme that brings hope and inspiration for the young people of KwaZulu-Natal. The NYS is today regarded as one of the driving forces behind the alleviation of poverty and employment, especially for the youth...with more emphasis to the youth that seeks to specialise in scarce skills career-paths.



Learners at KwaMaphumulo gathered as they were briefed on the National Youth Service (NYS) by representatives from various sectors



Mr Xolani Xulu delivering an address to the learners



Standing: Mr Gcina Hadebe, the Regional Manager for Midlands Region inspiring and encouraging the learners during his address.

The National Youth Service is a programme that is aimed at engaging the youth in a disciplined process of a valued and necessary service to the community in which they live, while increasing their own skills, education and opportunities to generate income.

In his State of the Nations Address on Thursday the 14th of February 2013 at approximately 19:00, President Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma said “Last May I asked constituencies at NEDLAC to discuss youth employment incentives. I am pleased that discussions have been concluded and that agreement has been reached on key principles. The parties

will sign the Accord later this month. The incentives will add to what Government is already doing to empower the youth. State owned companies provide apprenticeships and learnerships and we urge that these be increased. We appeal to the private sector to absorb 11 000 FET graduates who are awaiting placements.” He further eluded that “We will also use the Expanded Public Works Programme and the Community Work programme to absorb young people.”

The programme is coordinated by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Public Works but spearheaded by the Office of the Premier as the overall budget to run the NYS lies with the Premier’s office.

The National Youth Service is a sub – programme of the infrastructure sector within the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP). The project focuses on the maintenance of government facilities. The targeted groups - being the youth - are engaged in formal and accredited skills programme learning consisting of 4 months of theory and 8 months of practical active participation on a construction sites. At the end of their involvement on the construction site they will be capacitated on business entrepreneurial skills.

Scheduled NYS Training sites visits and briefings took place between the 15th of February and the 28th of February 2013 at areas across the province that included the Empangeni and Ngwelezane Hospitals in the North Coast Region; KwaMaphumulo Hospital and Ndwedwe Community Health Centre within the eThekweni Region; Newcastle and Emause Hospitals from the Midlands Region and Muschison as well as Umzimkhulu Hospitals in the Southern Region.

The targeted number of youth to participate in this programme is approximately 100. Each participant will receive a stipendiary remuneration of approximately R1500.00 per month. Mr Xolani Xulu; Manager EPWP extended words of encouragement to the learners and cautioned them to grab the opportunity given to them by both hands. “Do not use your 12 months and fail at the end of the year, the department is committed to this programme hence you must also be committed” he emphasised. He further explained that one of the challenges the Department is faced with is the learner behaviour. Learners have a continued tendency to lodge complaints after completion of their training and placement to different companies. They normally quarrel on various logistical issues against their respective contractor-employers. The most issue at hand that raises questions is their complaints towards their additional demand in remuneration, i.e. they would expect the contractor to remunerate them with extra funding and knowing that Government is in essence responsible for that function. However, the session held remain an opportune time and place to address all these unwarranted behaviours.



Above during the briefing: Government is doing all best it can. The onus is on these learners to ensure that the fruits of their labour do not diminish in thin air.



On the left is Mr Gcina Hadebe the Midlands Regional Manager and right is Mr Xolani Xulu: Senior Manager for EPWP listening attentively as other speakers made their presentations.

This programme is in partnership with the Office of the Premier, National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), Department of Labour and CETA. Mrs Lindi April for the Office of the Premier urged the chosen learners to behave themselves. She said they must distance themselves in things that will not make them to prosper and must not abuse the stipend they are getting from the government.



Mr Xolani Xulu as he displayed the protective gear during the briefing session. Looking on are the eagerly waiting learners.

Each Region has its target learners that will be employed and who will fully participate as per contractual agreement. The total learners are 100 which are broken down into the following per region: KwaMaphumulo is 12; Ngwelezane 12; Rietvlei is 13; Ndwedwe is 12; Emause is 14; Newcastle is 13; Mfolozi is 12 and Murchison is 12. It is expected that the

target figure of learners may increase during the next financial year. The onus will now lie with the learners to ensure they indeed produce expected results. There is no room for the programme fail as this will reflect non delivery by the Department and the Provincial Government.

Each region has a respective manager who will oversee that the project progresses with ease and that all logistical problems that may be experienced by the learners are also addressed without any constraints. It should be mentioned that this training is a nation building initiative and equally so the brainchild of the National Youth Development Agency and is on a voluntary basis where it mostly involves community service. At the end of the training learners will be assessed and credited accordingly.



Above here is Ms Jane Khuzwayo, Assistant Manager: EPWP Midlands Region who also had a share to make a mark during the briefing session.



