



**Ministry of Human Settlements
and Public Works**

PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

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To : The News Editor

The Daily News

RESPONSE TO ARTICLE BY BHEKI MBANJWA – DAILY NEWS, 17 AUGUST 2010

The article in today's edition of the Daily News is jaundiced. Conjecture is paraded as fact the very basic tenures of good journalism are being sacrificed at the altar of deadlines and sensationalism. It is reported that neither the MEC for Human Settlements and Public Works nor the MEC for Social Development and Welfare could be reached for comment. This is not true in respect of the latter MEC as there has been no effort to contact either MEC Govender nor her Acting Media Liaison Officer, Ms Sureshinee Govender. Had any of these people been contacted, the article would have lost much of its sensational appeal.

The policy of a developmental state recognizes that we need to achieve our goals in stages and where the state plays an active and interventionist role in close partnership with the citizenry. A key sector is the youth and the important role that our youth play in the forefront of the Department's policies. It is entirely untrue that the Department of Human Settlements and Public Works is neglectful of the youth.

The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) promotes the application of labour intensive methods in the building of public infrastructure projects. There has been a steady increase of youth into this programme since 2004 with the first intake of 2,894 youth. The 2009/2010 year, saw an intake of 11,487 youth which translates into a 400% increase in intake. This is no ordinary feat when we have also had a budget cut of 7.5% for these departments.

The National Youth Service is a sub-programme of the EPWP and aims to increase capacity in technical skills, promotes patriotism amongst young people as they contribute to community infrastructure development and reduces the rate of youth unemployment. The Department of Public Works, working together with the Department of Labour, the Youth Commission and the Premier's Office, offers the youth learners accredited classroom and practical skills as well as receiving payments during the learning period. Since the start of the NYS in 2007, young learners

have received classroom and onsite practical training in bricklaying, carpentry, plastering and contractor learnerships.

A total of 184 learners received their certificates at the Youth Summit on 4 June 2010. More importantly 30 learners have secured permanent employment with established construction companies. The Department has also seen the establishment of youth owned construction companies and efforts are being made to absorb some learners into various municipalities.

In 2009, at the Women in Construction and Property Summit, the Property Incubator Program, commonly called Ungasali was launched by MEC Govender. The program seeks to transform the property sector by attracting qualifying people in the BBBEE target groups, including youth.

There are 53 youth out of 65 in this program. With the Property Charter in place, this program will develop property developers and facility managers.

The Izandla Ziyagezana Programme is an EPWP diversification programme into the Property sector. It employs poor communities as contractors to clear vacant government sites. This program was launched in 2008 with a clear target of recruiting the youth and women headed households. In 2008, twenty youth contractors out of fifty one were recruited. There has been a significant increase from 37% to 69% of youth contractors in the last two years. Currently there are 41 youth contractors on the program.

In addressing the skills shortage in the country, the Department's Internship Programme seeks to provide practical work experience to graduates with qualifications in the scarce skills areas of Mechanical, Electrical and Civil Engineering, Quantity Surveying and Architecture. The department targets recruiting 10 interns annually. For the 2009/2010 financial year all recruits were youth defined.

The Department makes deliberate approaches to offer employment to successful interns whenever possible. In 2009/10 year the department offered external bursary holders an internship and or / employment in the department on completion of their training. The Department is proud to announce that 7 interns from the bursary programme were absorbed at the end of the 2009/10 financial year. Again they were the youth. In an attempt to develop local talent and skills a Bursary Programme that seeks to create a pool of skilled future employees by offering qualifying students bursaries to study in areas identified as critical to the department's skill requirements. Bursaries are offered annually to internal and external candidates. Currently we have 37 youth bursary holders out of the intake of 67.

With regard to the economic empowerment of the youth the Department has since 2007 set targets for the proportion of contracts to be awarded to the preferential priority groups out of its procurement budget. The annual target for youth contract awards is 20% of the total value of contracts.

In a recent study it was found that around 80% of developers used emerging contractors as sub-contractors.

The Department through the Masakhe Emerging Contractor Development Program (ECDP) seeks to develop emerging contractors by offering training in construction and management skills, business opportunities and facilitating access to finance. The program targets 20% of youth. Currently there are 108 youth contractors in this programme.

Since 2008 the Department hosts the annual Youth in Construction and Property Summit to provide a platform for dialogue with the youth stakeholders in the industry. The Summit has grown increasingly with attendance this year reaching 600 participants. The Summit features various exhibitors from the regulators in the industry, financial institutions, health and wellness companies with specific focus on HIV/Aids and voluntary testing and counselling. This is an attempt to bring services closer to the youth in an enabling environment that empowers the youth to become business men and women. More importantly successful presenters are sourced to present and inspire the youth by revealing to them how they have overcome the challenges in the industry. These summits are advertised in the media to reach the youth all over the province.

All of the information pertaining to the opportunities for youth development have been reported on and are included in the MEC's budget vote, departmental website and strategy plans - all publicly accessible and available.

Thank you.

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