



MY DISTRICT TODAY

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Youth serving with pride

Writer: Puleg Kekana - Cacadu District, Karoo

The Minister of Human Settlements, Mr Tokyo Sexwale, handed over 100 houses built in Kirkwood in the Eastern Cape, by youth who volunteered their time and resources in building houses for the needy. This was part of the programme by the Department of Human Settlements and the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) through the National Youth Service to commemorate the role young people played in the struggle for democracy.

The Deputy Minister for Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, Mr Obed Bapela, the MEC for Human Settlements, the MEC for Social Development and the mayors of the Sundays River Valley Municipality and Cacadu District accompanied Mr Sexwale.

"During Youth Month, we remember a painful 1976, but what we need to encourage in today's youth is that despite the challenges, they can still do things to better people's lives, things like what these youngsters here have done," said Minister Sexwale.

He called on young people to make positive changes in their communities by volunteering their services. The Minister said he hoped that the initiative would spread to other provinces to encourage more youngsters to be involved in the programme.

One of the beneficiaries was 75-year-old

"Gogo" Nongazelo Maqhabase, who had been sharing a small shack with her three grandchildren for many years.

"I do not have words to describe how I feel. I never thought I would one day own a decent house of my own. I am a happy person today. I express my gratitude to all those who were involved in the building of the house," she said.

According to Outcome 8, government should create sustainable human settlements and improved quality of household life through access to adequate accommodation that is suitable, relevant and appropriately located.

The NYDA CEO, Steven Ngobeni, said the agency was impressed by the interest it had attracted from young people, considering that construction was viewed as a sector for the unskilled. He said young people had a role to play in South Africa and that role should not be downplayed by anything including unemployment.

Minister Sexwale warned the beneficiaries not to sell the houses government has given them but to use it for themselves and their families.



Minister Tokyo Sexwale.



Deputy Minister Bapela delivering his address.



The group of youth listening to the address during the hand-over at the Sundays River Valley Local Municipality.



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Relief for siblings

After spending a year at home without an income, 27-year-old Michael Sibuya joined an Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) Project in Mpumalanga in 2010. The project was focused on trenching and food gardens.

Sibuya says it was difficult at home, especially as he comes from a family of seven and is one of the eldest. Together with his older brother, they battled to feed so many mouths. Sibuya joined the project after his dreams of working in Johannesburg were shattered in 2008.

"I used to work for Woolworths in Johannesburg. My contract expired without being renewed, which was painful. I felt like my world came to a standstill at the time. I panicked and became depressed, because I knew the situation at home. My mother died in 2005, while I was still at school." He explains that he was relieved when he joined the EPWP Project, as the stress was starting to take its toll. "I was at a stage where I was desperate and I really needed the money, because my family was suffering."

He was paid R660 a month on the project, which was enough to make a difference. "I managed to help my brother take care of the family. It was a fulfilling experience, because I was able to look forward to the end of the month, knowing I was getting an income."

The project changed Sibuya's life in a positive way, and he says he cannot wait until another one begins. "It was great while it lasted, and most people here cannot wait to see a longer project coming to our community."

The EPWP Project, he says, taught him that not everything is based in Johannesburg, as many people believe. "I went to Johannesburg thinking my life would be better there, and it was for a while. But a project based back here in Mpumalanga eventually saved me, when my family needed me the most."

The Expanded Public Works Programme is one of government arrays of programmes aimed at providing poverty and income relief through temporary work for the unemployed to carry out socially useful activities.

