



Expanded Public Works Program South Africa

A broad umbrella of employment, infrastructure, and environmental impact programs that have employed more than eight million South Africans since 2004

Summary

The Expanded Public Works Program is a long-term direct employment program offering employment in public works to South Africans living in poverty. This program generates employment across the public and private sectors with the goal of providing meaningful opportunities for participants and results for their communities. The program grew during COVID to absorb all of the newly unemployed and provides work across all areas of the economy.

Rationale

The program aims to provide poverty and income relief through temporary work.

Defining Principles

Promote labour standards and fundamental rights at work, provide adequate social safety nets for vulnerable workers, eliminate inequality and discrimination in the workplace, and enhance occupational health and safety awareness and compliance in the workplace (1).

Dates of Operation

Program started in 2004. Authorized in five year phases, currently funded through 2024.

Number of Program Participants

803,000 (April 1 2022 - December 31 2022) (2). More than 8 million jobs total as of 2018 (3).

Person-days of Employment

395,000 person-years of work including training; 2,942 person-years of training April 2022 through March 2023 (4).

Criteria for Participation

Open to all poor households. Targeted groups include poor head of household with less than a primary education, less than one full time income, and where subsistence farming is the source of income. Targets of 60% women, 20% youth, 2% disabled (5).

Pay and Benefits

R165 average manual worker daily wage rate (April 1 2022 - December 31 2022) (6). 12 sick days accumulated per year, and 3 days paid family leave per year for those working 4 days or more per week (7).



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Financing

R163.9 billion project budget; (0.35% of GDP) (8).

Implementation

Department of Public Works, Minister of Public Works. “At the provincial government level, Members of the Executive Council (MECs) for Public Works provide provincial leadership and direction on the Programme. Each province has a dedicated EPWP Unit established within the Provincial DPW that are instrumental in mobilizing other provincial departments as well as municipalities within the province to perform in accordance with the objectives of the EPWP,” (9).

Types of Work

Infrastructure (labor-intensive construction, provincial roads, water affairs, mineral resources projects); Non-State Sector (support for non-profits and the community work program (CWP)); Environmental and Cultural (sustainable land management, waste management, park beautification, sustainable energy); Social Sector (early childhood development, home community-based care, school nutrition, community crime prevention, after school care, literacy campaigns).

Notable Features

803,000 work opportunities, 37% youth; 71% women; 1% people with disabilities; R7.5 billion wages paid out to employees on EPWP projects in 2022 (10).

Challenges

This Public Service Employment program alone is not enough to eliminate structural unemployment; the ILO recommended “longer-term measures such as educational reforms and economic development policies,” (11).

Program Website

<http://www.epwp.gov.za/>



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Citations

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- (10) South Africa Department of Public Workers and Infrastructure. (2023). EPWP Q4 2022/23 Quarterly Report (April 1 2022 - December 31 2022).
- (11) ILO. (February 2018). South Africa - Expanded Public Works Programme.



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