

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FOR ORAL REPLY ON WEDNESDAY, 12 MARCH 2008

QUESTION NO 58

REPLY:

The question about what happens to people once they exit the Working for Water programme has been a challenge to the Department since it launched this very successful programme. Because we must remember that this programme is an Expanded Public Works Programme, and Working on Fire as well as Working for Wetlands are sub-programmes of Working for Water.

Working for Water is part of the Government's *Expanded Public Works Programme*, and is directed by the *Ministerial Determination on Special Public Works Programmes* and the associated *Code of Good Practice for employment and conditions of work for Special Public Works Programmes*, both published in the Government Gazette on 25th January 2002 in relation to the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997.

In terms of this Determination, beneficiaries must exit these programmes after 460 days of work in a five-year cycle.

The principles of the *Expanded Public Works Programme* can be summarised as:

1. Poverty relief, Job Creation and Economic Empowerment.
2. Skills Development and Capacity building
3. Temporary and short term Employment

Skills development and capacity building are critical and training is taken very seriously in all of the programmes so as to equip people once they have exited the programmes.

Over the years the department has been investigating mechanisms to support the people exiting the programme, as we had noted that these people faced challenges when they go back to the areas in which they lived and they find that there are no employment opportunities. In addition the low skill levels of many of the beneficiaries means that the training provided may not always be sufficient.

An exit strategy has since been developed, whose key components are the following:

1. A database of existing and exited workers and contractors has been compiled.
2. A partnership has been established with the Media Advertising Packaging and Printing (MAPP) Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA), Energy SETA and Forestry Industry Education and Training Authority (FIETA) to co-ordinate and manage the accredited skills development and training interventions that will be offered to both individuals and the Small Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) to equip them with the necessary expertise (technical and business skills) and qualifications for potential absorption in the labour market and business sector. The training will commence in April 2008 as a pilot, targeting Western Cape, Northern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, and North West with an intake of 1 500 beneficiaries.

3. A further partnership has been established with Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) and the Department of Trade and Industry to assist the beneficiaries with registration of companies, business funding and business opportunities in the respective provinces. This initiative will create an enabling environment for the beneficiaries to graduate from second to first economy. Also, a development framework is currently being developed with the Expanded Public Works Programme for emerging contractors from the Working for Water Programme and its projects to access Government and private sector contracts.
4. The development and proper management of the tracking system of the exited workers and contractors with a view to assist them has been done. We are currently awaiting the finalisation of the findings so that we can start implementing the support process.
5. An open tender contracting system is being implemented and the Working for Water contractors would have a good track record, which would be to their advantage when they compete for tenders.
6. The creation of value added industries, such as manufacturing crafts, furniture, coffins, etc.
7. Subsidies are being provided to private land owners to take responsibility for continued clearance of alien vegetation.
8. Options are being considered on how to align with key national initiatives like the Joint Initiative for Priority Skills

Acquisition (JIPSA), co-operatives establishment, etc., that could be taken advantage of to assist with the development, empowerment and integration of the beneficiaries in the mainstream economy.

9. Measures are also in place to align the programmes with other programmes of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry that may require temporary contractors, such as the implementation of access to sanitation and our Water Conservation and Water Demand Management initiatives. This alignment will require that people are exposed and trained in a number of skills that are water related.
10. The development of a Business Plan that focuses on promoting value added industry initiatives. This initiative will ensure creation of more sustainable jobs on a longer term basis.

There have over the years been beneficiaries of these programmes who have exited and successfully started their own businesses and gone into formal sector employment.