

R500m skills development project for Eastern Cape

About 2,000 ex-mineworkers, the youth and Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) beneficiaries in the Eastern Cape are set to benefit from a new skills development training.



Communications Minister Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams speaking at the launch of the skills development programme.

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At a value of R500 million, the programme is a joint venture between the Department of Labour's entity - the UIF, Walter Sisulu University (WSU) and Ntinga O.R. Tambo Development Agency.

The training, which will be conducted in two phases over a three-year period, will see the development of skills in the areas of hospitality, new venture creation to develop small business, nut farming, carpentry, plumbing, computer repairs, software development, textile and related areas.

The target is people between 18 and 50 years old, of which 70% will be ex-mineworkers and the other 30% will be community members, especially youth. They will start formal training in May.

Speaking at the Mqanduli Multi-Purpose Centre on Monday, Labour Deputy Minister iNkosi Phathekile Holomisa said the programme is part of government interventions aimed at redressing the injustices of the past and alleviating poverty.

“The rationale for this intervention is to fund and equip dependants of ex-mineworkers in order for them to create job opportunities for others and in the process, work towards a more inclusive economy,” said Holomisa.

Also speaking at the event was Communications Minister Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams, who said she was inspired by the training initiative.

Ndabeni-Abrahams committed her department to providing online connectivity assistance when the need arises.

The first phase of the programme, valued at R429 million, will see WSU take on the role of grant manager, which will benefit 100 learners through training, mentorship and coaching.

Valued at R70 million, the second phase - led by the UIF and Ntinga O.R. Tambo Development Agency - seeks to develop co-operatives, new venture creation, manufacturing, boiler-making, tourism and agriculture.

Ntinga O.R. Tambo Development Agency is a State-owned company established by the O.R. Tambo District Municipality as a special purpose vehicle responsible for spearheading local economic development in the O.R. Tambo District.

The training provided by the agency will be conducted in Ingquza Hill, Port St John’s, Nyandebu, Nhlontlo and King Sabata Dalindyebo District Municipalities.

UIF Commissioner Teboho Maruping said the programme is born out of last year’s Jobs and Investment Summits, which called for dealing with the scourge of unemployment in the country.

Maruping said the funding would focus on developing new skills to create new jobs, help in the development of community-owned business and help drive public employment services.

Department of Labour Director-General Thobile Lamati said the type of training to be provided would need to respond to the needs of the ever-changing labour market and respond to threats posed by the fourth industrial revolution.

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