

SPEECH BY LIMPOPO PREMIER DR. PHOPHI RAMATHUBA DURING THE LAUNCH OF
THE LABOUR ACTIVATION PROGRAMME AT HA-MATSILA, VHEMBE DISTRICT

08 May 2025

Programme Director,
Minister of Employment and Labour, Ms Makhosazana Meth,
MEC for Provincial Treasury, Mr Kgabo Mahoi,
Executive Mayor of Vhembe District, Cllr Freda Nkondo,
Mayor of Collins Chabane Local Municipality, Cllr Shadrack Maluleke,
Business Sector,
Captain of Industries,
Distinguished Guests, Beneficiaries of the Labour Activation Programme,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ndi matsheloni, Avuxeni, Thobela, Good morning, Goeie more,

There is a rhythm to development, and its beat lies in the hands of a skilled generation. A nation that builds skills, builds industries. A province that trains its youth, trains its future. And a government that invests in education, invests in hope. Today, we gather not just to launch a programme but we are launching potential, igniting purpose, and declaring that the youth of Limpopo are not a burden to be carried, but a force to be empowered.

Skills development is not a side programme of economic growth, it is the foundation. It is the bridge between poverty and prosperity, between hopelessness and opportunity, between surviving and thriving. It is here in Ha-Matsila that we raise the banner of possibility and roll out a plan that promises not only to train, but to transform.

It is with great pride and a deep sense of responsibility that we officially launch the Labour Activation Programme, a bold and deliberate initiative to train and equip 13,609 young people across Limpopo. This programme is a lifeline in the face of unemployment and a strategic lever to stimulate our economy from the ground up.

The youth of our province have waited long for such meaningful intervention. Youth unemployment is not just a statistic but it is a ticking time bomb threatening the very fabric of our society. Many young people, particularly in our rural areas, have slipped into a state of despair not because they lack ambition but because they lack opportunity.

Through this programme, we are saying to our youth: we see you, we hear you, and we are acting decisively to change your reality. Whether it is agriculture in Makhado, construction in Musina, ICT in Polokwane, or hospitality in Tzaneen, you now have a path to walk, a skill to master, and a dream to chase.

Programme Director, According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey Q4 of 2024, South Africa's official unemployment rate stood at 31.9%, with the expanded unemployment

rate sitting stubbornly at 41.9%. Youth, aged 15–34, continue to bear the brunt with 4.7 million unemployed, with a youth unemployment rate of 44.6%.

Our province, unfortunately, mirrors this national crisis. The province recorded a net loss of approximately 16,000 jobs compared to the previous quarter, highlighting the fragile state of our labour market. It is therefore urgent and necessary that we implement focused, practical programmes that address this crisis.

Makhado, being an economic hub of Vhembe, is a strategic choice for this launch. It boasts relatively higher employment rates thanks to its proximity to key transport routes and diverse economic activities. Our province's labour market is largely concentrated in sectors such as community services, trade, and agriculture, areas where skills are both essential and scalable.

However, a fundamental challenge remains: the mismatch between what the education system produces and what the labour market demands. We must close this gap. We must balance supply and demand through responsive education, agile skills training, and inclusive economic planning. This programme, with its targeted training in agriculture, energy, ICT, civil construction, project management, hospitality, public administration, and more, is our direct response to that mismatch.

Programme Director, as we activate this programme, we are activating a generation. And with that comes responsibility from government, from private stakeholders, and most importantly, from you, the beneficiaries.

To our young people enrolled in this programme: grab this opportunity with both hands. Learn. Commit. Grow. Dream. We want to see you not only employable but also to becoming employers. The future belongs to those who are prepared, and this programme is your preparation.

To our national counterparts, we appreciate the continued collaboration with the Department of Employment and Labour. We further encourage deeper synergy with the Limpopo Provincial Government, the Office of the Premier, and the Limpopo Youth Commission so that our collective efforts yield sustainable, inclusive outcomes.

This is a new chapter in our province's journey, one in which skills will lead, innovation will follow, and prosperity will rise. Let us all as government, civil society, and the private sector support these 13,609 young people not only to complete this programme but to rise from it as builders of a better Limpopo.

As a government, we are committed. We are ready. And with you, we will succeed.

I thank you.