

KOPANONG EMPOWERS ITS YOUTH

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The Kopanong Local Municipality has come up with a plan to empower young people with a sustainable three-year apprenticeship programme that will equip matriculants with various skills.

The municipality's director of cooperative services, Cecilia Pitso, said the programme was established in 2011. According to Pitso, the purpose of the programme is to create jobs and sharpen the engineering skills of the young people in the area.

The apprenticeship is for electrical and civil engineering. Young people who are selected to the programme receive a stipend which will also help them support themselves as well as their families.

The first 16 candidates were selected in 2011. Their apprenticeship was delayed because they had to undergo medical tests and registration with the department of labour.

More interviews were held last week Friday, where other hopeful youngsters were selected to this programme. They, too, are expected to begin their training upon registration and completion of the medicals.

Pitso said the municipality wants to use the programme to stop the migration of the youth in the area to other towns to look for employment opportunities. She told The Weekly that the municipality has partnered with the local government's sector education and training seta, which provides the funding.

Pitso said the initial plan was to launch a learnership programme, but they opted for the apprenticeship, which is more sustainable.

"More good news is that, we know that they will get jobs at the end of the programme because this is a scarce and critical skill which is also recognised internationally", said Pitso.

The programme also helps the beneficiaries to get drivers' licences. Pitso believes that the programme will benefit many young people in the Kopanong area, and also reduce the high rate of unemployment.

Pitso indicated that the Kopanong Local Municipality lacked skilled engineers and that this initiative would benefit the municipality, as most of the engineers will return with the necessary skills from countries such as Cuba.

"We wanted to give our youth opportunities. At least we should have our own engineers," said Pitso.

Young people aged between 18 and 35 who passed matric with science and maths were given an opportunity to enrol on the programme. Pitso revealed that two candidates from Kopanong were chosen for civil and electrical engineering programmes, following the successful interviews.

"From each department, nine of the candidates were from the unemployed while the other nine were taken from the general workers."

[Source: www.theweekly.co.za]