

Centre to improve services for former mineworkers

PRETORIA: Historically, there has been a fragmented approach to the provision of social services for current and former mineworkers, says Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe.



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"Of particular concern for a very long time has been the issue of the inhumane conditions under which mine workers live and work, the challenges emanating from the migrant labour system and the treatment meted out to ex-mineworkers once they are too ill to work or are retired due to other social and health related complications.

"These are issues we have been grappling with since the dawn of our democracy and we continue to do so today," said the deputy president on Monday, 7 April 2014.

"[But] instead of allowing this reality to dampen our efforts, we should be encouraged that by continuing to confront these challenges we will be able to find solutions as evidenced here today."

He was speaking at the opening of the one stop service centre for former mineworkers and the community of Mthatha at the Nelson Mandela Academic Hospital.

Also at the event was Mandla Mandela, the eldest grandson of the late former President Nelson Mandela and Mvezo Chief, and Deputy Health Minister Gwen Ramokgopa.

The mining sector is an integral component of the Southern Africa economy and has about 500,000 employed miners and two million former mineworkers from many parts of the world and in particular the Eastern Cape.

"Government acknowledges the importance of the mining sector for the economy, job creation and contribution to social and economic development," he said.

Deputy President Motlanthe said the centre will provide health and rehabilitation services, social services, and compensation and benefit management services for the mine-workers and their beneficiaries.

The centre is located within the Nelson Mandela Academic Hospital Complex, and the resources, expertise and equipment will be used for members of the community thus improving efficiencies and extending benefits to all who need them.

"I am confident that the community and health providers will ensure that these facilities are utilised efficiently towards the realisation of a long and healthy life for all."

He said the launch of the centre was important as it paid tribute to the legacy of two leaders of the struggle for emancipation - Mandela and OR Tambo.

Government has established one stop service delivery framework which is aimed setting up a comprehensive database for current and ex-mineworkers and provides for access to comprehensive health services, including screening and rehabilitation, access to compensation benefits and access to social protection benefits such as unemployment insurance, pension and provident fund benefits.

Deputy President Motlanthe said the initiative had received the support of employer organisations, the private sector, various development partners, civil society and associations of ex-mineworkers.

Governments of other labour sending countries such as Mozambique, Lesotho, Swaziland and others in the region also backed the initiative.

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