**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS APPRECIATES THE ROLE OF IDT IN MITIGATING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19**

**Parliament, Wednesday, 26 August 2020 –**The Portfolio Committee on Public Works and Infrastructure, today received an update from the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure on the role of the Independent Development Trust (IDT) during the lockdown period in the social sector of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP).

Briefing the committee, the Deputy Minister of the department, Ms Noxolo Kiviet, reminded the committee that EPWP is a means to mitigate the challenges that the country is facing. She said EPWP is aimed at providing people from indigent households with skills so that they can be able to enter the formal employment sector.

Ms Kievit told the committee that the programme is not a mere job creation scheme, but a poverty alleviation measure that acts as an initial stepping stone for the poor households to improve their lives.

She explained to the committee that Covid-19 caught everyone by surprise. “It truly made us to think on our feet, and as the department we had to support the Department of Health in ensuring that we contribute to any form of mitigation against the attack of the Corona virus,” she said.

The department agreed to assist the Department of Health by providing some EPWP workers across the country. Ms Kiviet added: “We had targeted about 25 000, looking at the magnitude of the challenge (Covid-19) at the time.”

Health Department, through IDT, on 12 April 2020, contracted the qualifying Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) on the Central Supplier Database to appoint 25 000 people, predominantly youth between the ages of 16 and 35 years, to participate in the department’s EPWP Covid-19 response measure. IDT is the prime social infrastructure agency, responsible for providing project management and social facilitation service across the country.

The committee was informed that the agency has contracted about 189 NPOs in all the nine provinces and district municipalities, to participate in the EPWP Covid-19 response, and of the 189 NPOs, 149 have commenced with the work. A total of 19 794 participants have been contracted by 31 July 2020, and are currently deployed to various sites under the supervision of the Environmental Health Practitioners and provincial departments of health’s facility managers. The department provided technical training on Covid-19 to all the participants.

The department said the participants are paid a daily wage rate of R101.00 per person, guided the by the EPWP Determination of the Minister of Labour. The IDT as per its functions is to ensure payments to the NPOs. To date, a total of R31 million has been paid. The committee heard that that the project is being audited by the Office of the Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA).

Furthermore, the department told the committee that, among the challenges that are being encountered, is the delay in payments due to late submission of requisite documents (i.e. attendance registers, contracts, copy of IDs) by NPOs and the risk of Covid-19 infections. However, the department has ensured that the EPWP participants are covered through the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act (COIDA) as a measure of mitigation for Covid-19 infections.

The committee appreciated the value of the IDT in upskilling young people in the country. However, it said the EPWP Reporting Systems (RS) and the other ICT systems of the department must be updated speedily.

This would enable the department’s EPWP branch to properly capture, verify, monitor and evaluate all the information on its supplier database. The committee requested to be furnished with the list of all the NPOs with a breakdown of beneficiaries per province, region, and municipality.

The list will enable members of the committee to exercise oversight over the projects in their respective regions.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE, MS NOLITHA NTOBONGWANA**