



FIRST 35 SMME'S SELECTED TO BENEFIT FROM ISIMANGALISO RURAL ENTERPRISE PROGRAMME



iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority has started training small businesses and entrepreneurs from communities neighboring the Park under the Rural Enterprise Programme which offers a package of support that will assist aspiring and existing entrepreneurs from uMkhanyakude District with business skills, incubation, and grant support. Environmental compatible enterprises were welcomed to apply for a place in this programme. iSimangaliso has completed the process of selecting the first 35 participants for 2022/23 financial year. The majority of participants are residing in uMkhanyakude District municipality.

The Rural Enterprise Programme was initiated in 2008 to empower local businesses and entrepreneurs within the tourism conservation space. To date the programme has evolved and has assisted 430 enterprises with business skills development, capacity building, and grant funding. In March 2023 all the 35 participants were inducted to the programme, outlining the benefits of the programme. Training sessions were held both at Sodwana area and St Lucia to accommodate all participants.

iSimangaliso has seen a need to expand this programme given the challenges facing communities within uMkhanyakude, namely high unemployment of 42%, poverty, joblessness, and inequality. In the next financial year (2023/24) the programme aims to select 100 SMME's that will benefit from this programme. The number of participating SMME's are selected based on the availability of funding.



The aim of the programme is to support small businesses with skills and finance so that they can contribute to job creation. Skills development and entrepreneurship is key for the local communities. As much as iSimangaliso wishes to assist every community member with employment, or give every business an opportunity to work within the park, this is impossible. A programme of this nature assist in capacitating businesses to grow and be enabled to seek opportunities elsewhere.

The ongoing contributions by iSimangaliso towards job creation and poverty alleviation has made this Entity to be regarded as one of the critical role players in this poverty stricken district. iSimangaliso's mission is to protect, preserve and present its World Heritage values for current and future generations while benefiting communities living in and adjacent to the Park by facilitating optimal tourism and related development.

-End-

Statement issued by iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority

Media enquires

MLO: Mr Bheki Manzini

Call/Whatsap:060 533 2082

Email: bhekimanzini@isimangaliso.com