

Pretoria, 6 May 2011 — The National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSC), a body targeting youth, will not only create jobs but also help prepare youngsters to become better persons and foot soldiers for their respective communities.

Designed to complement the government's job creation model, the project is aimed mainly at creating employment but also at uplifting the countryside with services and infrastructure.

The aim is to also ensure that the rural youth "fish for themselves" by being absorbed into the mainstream of the country's economy through acquiring skills, says President Jacob Zuma. The programme was first introduced by the Department of Rural Development last year when it targeted at least 10 000 youths from poor rural areas.

Speaking in Dysselsdorp, in Western Cape, Zuma muted voices that questioned today's official launch linking it to the upcoming local government elections, saying the municipality was a Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP) site because of the high rate of unemployment and poverty.

"It is no coincidence that the youth in rural areas have been invited to participate in building the foundation for sustainable socio-economic development in rural areas.

"Socio-economic development in rural communities - with the youth being at the centre of such developments - underpins the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform's strategy to develop rural areas," said Zuma.

Usually plagued with joblessness, illiteracy, lack of skills, poverty and lack of access to basic services, this is good news for rural youth. The programme targets youth aged between 18 and 35 years who hold Grade 10 or Standard 8 school reports, who will be trained in technical, artisan and social-work skills over two years.

Skills to be learnt are dictated by needs in rural areas, determined through household and community profiles.

Zuma said 500 participants graduated recently from a seven-week non-military training course at the De Brug Military Base in Bloemfontein, as part of the programme, where they were taught self-discipline, courage, leadership and patriotism.

In December last year, another 600 participants underwent a 10-day skills development programme at Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges in the Western Cape, where they were taught subjects such as decision-making, citizenship and life skills orientation.

"All these programmes are designed to prepare the youth to become better persons and foot soldiers for their respective communities," said Zuma.

He said the programme bears testimony to the fact that government is steadfast on its drive to eradicate poverty, fight crime and other social ills affecting youth in rural areas.

Government is racing towards upgrading well-located informal settlements and providing proper service and land tenure to at least 500 000 households by 2014.

Source: allAfrica.com