

uMlalazi Local Municipality gets a ‘facelift’.

Images and Reports Angel “Mkhethie” Sibisi

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Public Works continues to stamp authority on its mandate as a custodian of infrastructure development in the province. At this stage, the Department is on par in the delivery of development projects that are aimed at changing lives of people of KwaZulu-Natal. Our recent visit to the North Coast Region has seen Public Works culminating in a number of projects, including the Eshowe Taxi Rank. Eshowe is one but amongst those areas whose residents are plagued by hunger, poverty and inequalities of life, as a result the Provincial Administration is taking the problem hands-on in order to alleviate the problem. Residents in and around Eshowe have ultimately resorted to informal trading.



As seen in the above picture the trading cubicles which are decent and safer will provide a better business outcome for the Informal Traders around the Eshowe area.

The informal traders are those businesses that are not registered in any way. They are generally small in nature, and are seldom run from business premises. Instead, they are run from homes, street pavements or other informal arrangements. The street vendors and micro businesses, by their very nature are critical components of the South African informal business economy, and in turn an integral part of the SA

economy. The 'facelift' by Public Works is entire focusing on rooting this problem in entity. The final cost of the project is approximately R 8 579 719.80 and it is expected to be handed over in January 2015.



As seen in the above image (on the left) is the current informal traders' location. (On the right) is the new informal traders' location.

In the absence of formal job opportunities or access to credit/ economic freedom, skills and infrastructure to start formal business enterprises, people make use of public space and passers-by to sell goods and services in order to earn a living and support themselves and their families. Traders provide residents and workers with everything from loose cigarettes to live chickens, hand-made shoes to steaming-hot pap and stew. They sell almost anything imaginable to those willing customers who traverse their turf. However its future is uncertain in a town keenly focused on inner town re-development and so-called cleaning up of crime and grime.



As seen in the above picture; the few fortunate traders who have shelter against harsh weather conditions

Other than the provision of decent trading spaces for the Informal traders this project has created approximately 75 job opportunities for local residents of Eshowe, which 36 of them are women and youth. Under the uMlalazi Municipality the population is approximately 213 601 people. The unemployment rate is 35, 20% and the youth (15-34years of age) unemployment rate is approximately 45, 10% these statistics are



As seen above: This is the current state of the Informal traders who cannot afford to rent a trading space in the Containers at the Eshowe Taxi Rank

One of the street vendors at Eshowe Taxi Rank Mrs Khoza said that she has been trading in the Rank for the past twelve years and this has not been an easy journey because of the environment she was and is continuing working under. She also added that crime levels are high and the regular “Operation Street Clean-up” by the police is not good for business. Mrs Khoza further expressed how street vendors are perceived as public nuisance, sites or mini-hub of illegal and criminal activity, obstructions to pedestrians and vehicles and contributing to so-called crime and grime. She said they are very excited and they cannot wait for the completion of this project as it will bring back safety and the dignity of their business.