

# 'OSS Cabinet Day' brings hope to the Belgrade community

*Story and images by Vusi Shabalala*

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Wednesday the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2015 marked another milestone for the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, Honourable Mr Senzo Edward Mnchunu and the entire Members of the Executive Council as they visited all Wards within the Pongola District Municipality. Members of the Provincial Cabinet continued to exhaust all their energies towards the acceleration of service delivery for the fulfilment of their constitutional mandate and betterment of peoples' lives within the Province. As you entre Belgrade, one would notice a new road construction underway, this is a significance of change.

The winter school break afforded the Belgrade community, especially the elderly, women and youth in Ward 5, an opportunity to fully engage with MEC Ravigasen Ranganathan Pillay MPL and his entourage as they targeted Ward 5 of Belgrade Area. We acknowledge that Mr Ravi Pillay currently holds two portfolios, that of Human Settlements and Public Works. A very huge task on his shoulders.



**MEC Ravi Pillay MPL in an attentive mood as he was briefed during the OSS Cabinet Day at Belgrade**

MEC Pillay began the Zululand Operation Sukuma Sakhe (OSS) Cabinet Day at approximately 8:45 with the first War Room visit and briefing held at the Thusong Centre in Belgrade Area. The purpose of the briefing session was to update Mr Pillay and the entire entourage about the current developments (service delivery progress and challenges) of Ward 5 in Belgrade area. Amongst the team members who joined Mr Pillay were Mr Siphwe F Mkhize, the Head of Department for KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture & Rural Development; Mr Mavundla, the Mayor of Nongoma Local Municipality; Mr MJ Dlamini, the Councillor for Ward 5; Induna and Chairperson of the Ward Committee, Ms Philisiwe Mabuza; Mr Scelo Ntshangase, the Community Development Worker (CDW) and Convener for Ward 5; Mr Sikhumbuzo Gumede, the Head of Ministry in the office of MEC Pillay; Mr Siboniso Majola, the Regional Manager for KZN Public Works North Coast Region, Mr Zamo Zwane, Senior Manager for Monitoring & Evaluation for Public Works; Sister Thembalihle Khumalo, a Professional Nurse with Itshelejuba Hospital for Pongola District Municipality; Mr MJ Mfusi, the Acting Senior General Manager with the KZN Department of Agriculture; Captain Buthelezi from the SAPS within the Pongola District Municipality and Mr TT Madonsela,

Manager within the Agriculture Sector from eDumbe Municipality as well representatives from government and communities .

Scelo Ntshangase, led the Ward representatives as he presented a comprehensive OSS Ward 5 Report which amongst other issues of interest comprised of the following: War Room Service Delivery and functionality; Status of Ward 5 with its participating stakeholders; Prevalent and diseases that remain a Ward community burden; Belgrade Clinic Status of operation; Phila Mntwana Centres; Projects and its beneficiaries; Local Economic Projects; Agricultural (Food Security & Diptank) Projects; Community Outreach Programmes and Infrastructure Development Projects.



**Mr Scelo Ntshangase the convener for Ward 5 as he delivered his Ward presentation to MEC Pillay & the OSS Team at the Thusong Centre in Belgrade**

The following highlights reflect a positive acceleration of service delivery for the upliftment of *'a better life for all people'* in Belgrade. This was observed or witnessed during a visit to one centre by MEC Pillay. On health Matters: To date, Ward 5 boasts two Phila Mntwana Centres, namely Msizini and Nqabeni, which have been established and are fully active and functional. These centres are mostly involved with the daily screening of children; provisioning of vitamin 'A' supplements and diagnosis of diarrhoea for referred children. These services are managed by 5 Community Care Givers (CCGs), namely Hlamukile Lukhele, Masesi Mkhwanazi, Sihle Dlamini, Silindile Mngomezulu and Zanele Nxumalo, who continuously receive training and mentoring through the support, mentorship and leadership of Sister Thembelihle Khumalo from Itshelejuba Hospital in Pongola. All statistical reports regarding the progress at the Centres are made available on request. In addition, the School Health Team actively provide nutrition programme, HIV & TB and STIs Awareness campaigns at 5 schools (Bambanani High, Sibiyangenkomo Primary, Langa High, Lalela Primary and Siyeza Primary).

On service delivery highlights; to date, the Zululand District and uPhongolo Local Municipality are leading and funding the Local Economic Projects (LED) where beneficiaries come from the local areas. The Zululand District projects include Sibumbene Garden Club, Siyazama Youth that deals with the cutting of grass to enable a clean environment, the Mpindamshaye Catering and Widows Group that specialises in farming. The projects have a total of 27 beneficiaries (with women and youth being at the receiving end). uPhongolo Local Municipality has 20 beneficiaries fully engaged with projects such as Buhle Buhle Salon, Zabalaza Craft work and Sibiyangenkomo Catering.

As at January to April 2015, Ward 5 has made significant progress on agricultural projects (food security). A total of 22 gardens (household/ homestead, community, clinic, school and tunnels) have been established and are regularly maintained. During the period mentioned, the Community Works Programme has also made tremendous achievements such provisioning of support towards the operation of all Early Childhood Developments (ECDs); the cleaning of illegal dumping sites, cemeteries and community halls as well as the constriction and maintenance of feeders roads; the building, fencing and repainting of houses for vulnerable households and the renovation to schools.



Above (left) is the Belgrade Ward 5 Councillor MJ Dlamini with Mr Siphwe F Mkhize Head of Department for KZN Agriculture & Rural Development who accompanied the OSS special delegates with MEC Pillay

The infrastructure development projects have been accelerated through the renovation of Bambanani and Langa Schools; upgrading of the Belgrade Sportsfield; building of Belgrade Clinic; completion on the building of 174 houses; Construction of two crèches (Rainbow and Sibiyangenkomo) by the Zululand District; repairs on 45 houses through *'disaster and OSS management'* which is work in progress. The National Department of Sport and Recreation initiated the revitalisation of a Club Development Programme which has previously been non-functional due to administrative capacity. This programme inculcates in the youth to involvement and participation into living healthy lifestyles and enjoying sport. Belgrade community, mainly the youth, have benefited through this programme as it boasts the access of funding for training kit and equipment and transport. The programme covers mainly sporting codes, namely athletics, aquatics, netball, rugby, cricket and football.



Above (left) is MEC Pillay (in white shirt) with the Health Care givers at the Phila Mntwana Health Care Centre from left are Hlamukile Lukhele Thembalihle Khumalo Masesi Mkhwanazi Sihle Dlamini and Concillor MJ Dlamini. On the right is Captain Buthelezi from the Pongola Municipality who also represented the SAPS during the session

We acknowledge that there are challenges that are faced by communities, and this does not exclude Belgrade's Ward 5 residents too. A report from Captain Buthelezi from the South African Police, uPhongolo District identified the following challenges which would require pertinent intervention from all sectors of government and beyond. High pregnancy rate; unemployment rate (especially the youth); alcohol, substance and stupefying drug abuse; escalating of rate of stock-theft, especially between the borders of Phongola and Swaziland.



Above left is Sister Thembalihle Khumalo (right) as she conducted an outside briefing to the MEC and his team at Phila Mntwana Health Care Centre with Mr MJ Mfusi (right) the Acting Senior General Manager for KZN Agriculture & Rural Development as he shared his inputs during the briefing session



Above: "We are in this together". All Belgrade OSS Ward 5 representatives with MEC Ravi Pillay (far right) as they confirm team effort and team work.

During the community engagement process, one must indicate that the discussions between the MEC, his team and the community were very 'intense but candid'. It was really a thought provoking debate with amicable resolutions to be undertaken and implemented under strict timelines. Amongst some resolutions agreed on are: the immediate repair of the water reticulation system at the Belgrade reservoir centre; the continued community awareness outreach programmes by all stakeholders in respect of health matters (HIV & AIDS, STIs, STDs, effects of early pregnancies, the use of

substance abuse and stupefying drugs, bunking school, etc.); provisioning of support mechanisms to emerging small businesses, the immediate action to tackling crime and the implementation of the Ward 5 Action Plan for 2015.

In taking stock, it is evident that 'Operation Sukuma Sakhe' does register a positive impact to changing peoples' lives. One can confidently attest that 'Zululand OSS Cabinet Day had a mission to bringing hope to the Belgrade community'. In a nut shell, Operation Sukuma Sakhe is there to stay.