

Public Works celebrates Mandela's 95th birthday by giving to the less fortunate



uMkhanyakude Sub District Manager Ms Philile Mbuyisa (standing left), (Far back) Senior manager: Strategic Partnership Mr Zamo Zwane and Ms Nosipho Sibiya (centre) from Public Works handover the groceries and vegetables to the Bhongo family

Millions around the world marked the United Nation's Mandela Day with a series of charity events, celebrating Nelson Mandela's 95th birthday. The United Nations (UN) declared Mandela Day in 2009, on his 91st birthday, urging the people of the world to do at least 67 minutes of good for the less fortunate, to mark the 67 years Mandela spent in service of all South Africans and humanity. This year's celebrations had more hype since the former Statesman has been admitted in hospital with a recurring lung infection; Mandela's deteriorating health has led to the great awareness of this day.



uMkhanyakude Sub District Manager Ms Philile Mbuyisa, Senior manager: Strategic Partnership Mr Zamo Zwane and Ms Nosipho Sibiya from Public Works clean up the yard at the Bhongo home

KwaZulu-Natal Premier Dr Zweli Mkhize called on every South African to become an ambassador for Mandela Day. KZN Public Works senior managers responded to the call and were deployed to various districts across the province in order to give back to the community especially the less fortunate. Senior manager: Strategic Partnership Mr Zamo Zwane was deployed at uMkhanyakude District working together with uMkhanyakude Sub District Manager Ms Philile Mbuyisa. They spent Mandela Day by visiting the Bhongo family at Khula village in Mtubatuba. The Bhongo home was buzzing with volunteers cleaning the yard, painting the house, delivering food parcels, clothes and money. The volunteers included the local councillor Mr Siyabonga Khumalo, Deputy Mayor of uMkhanyakude District Municipality Mr Sgoga Mkhwanazi, the local Chief Mr Philip Mkhwanazi, religious groups, EPWP beneficiaries, KZN Integrated Greening Programme beneficiaries and African Impact (international NGO).



Ms Bhongo and her daughter Nelisiwe



EPWP beneficiary installing new windows at the Bhongo home

The Bhongo household was identified by a local community caregiver through the local ward councillor, Mr Siyabonga Khumalo who noticed that the family was struggling to make ends meet. Mrs Bhongo, a 47 year old unemployed mother of two used to live in a one room shack with her children. Mrs Bhongo a former domestic worker had to stop working ever since she was diagnosed with diabetes which resulted in her losing her eyesight and has had her leg amputated. Since then she has been supporting her kids with a disability grant. Speaking to her daughter Nelisiwe, 19 years old and currently in grade 10, she tells us how hard life has been growing up in poverty but maintains that she and her older brother are grateful that their mother has always tried her best to support them as a result of that her brother is currently studying towards a bachelor's degree in Education at the University of Zululand. Mrs Bhongo could not hold back tears when she described how she and her family all lived in a one room shack which had a leaking roof until one day a NGO from Italy called Veza Volunteers built a three roomed house. Public Works staff painted the house on Mandela Day, donated groceries and vegetables from the garden at the District Office.



Mr Zwane and Ms Mbuyisa painting the house.



Integrated greening programme beneficiaries planted trees at the Bhongo home

It was a very jubilant day especially with the news of Madiba's improving health, the world rejoiced and gave their time to do good and give to the less fortunate. It was great to see his legacy live on not only amongst South Africans but also through the Global Community.