

KZN Public Works, Sakhumnotho Development Services & Msunduzi Municipality - A strong force towards poverty alleviation

Story and pictures by Vusi Shabalala

In today's living daylight and night darkness 'poverty' strikes every citizen around the country and it strikes where it matters most. In contrast, poverty alleviation or poverty reduction is regarded as any process which seeks to reduce the level of poverty in a community or amongst a group of people or countries. In this case our story to tell zooms direct to the communities in and around the Msunduzi Municipality in Pietermaritzburg, where a group of committed residents of Msunduzi Municipality never accepted poverty to make them 'rest on their laurels'. It is evident that through "*Operation Sukuma Sakhe*" the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government has made tremendous strides to ensure that poverty and joblessness is at the most dealt with accordingly in order to improve the lives of people of the Province.



Equally so, there are various causes of poverty and while some of the causes can be reduced or removed by acceptable measures, the elimination of most complicated underlying causes remains a challenge for developed and developing countries and or nations. Notwithstanding the fact that it is hard to separate the causes of poverty from the effects, there is no doubt that poverty is associated with various economic and social ills. Furthermore, another difficulty also arises when a distinction is made between the proximate cause, intermediate cause, and the fundamental causes of poverty.



(Above) Mr Xolani Xulu, Senior Manager: EPWP briefing the 25 volunteers



Above: (far left) Mr Thokozani Caba (DSD Chairman), (third from left) Mr Siphiso Msoni, Assistant Manager: EPWP & Special Projects: KZN Public Works' Southern Region and (in purple top) Ms Siphindile Mathonsi, Administrative Officer: EPWP KZN Public Works' Southern Region

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Public Works and Msunduzi Municipality representing the Government together with the Sakhumnotho Development Services (SDS) representing a community-based entity initiated a "strong force towards poverty alleviation" in continuing to supporting the Provincial Government towards the implementation of policies which promote balanced, sustainable and inclusive development for all of its citizens. The initiative is solely focused on the daily environmental management of the Msunduzi Municipality towards keeping the city clean and free from any health hazardous effects. This operation has more to do with keeping the city clean from any waste pollution, on-site clearance of waste products around the streets, street corners including all other hidden spots around the CBD area.

It should be commended that the Sakhumnotho Development Services (SDS) initiative is a brainchild of three local residents of Msunduzi namely, Mr Thokozani Caba who serve as Chairperson, Ms Sinqobile Ngqulunga who serves as Treasurer and Communication Officer and Mr Mandla Zuma who is a Process Manager from Msunduzi Municipality. The three made all efforts to consult with all possible

Government departments, with a view at trying to source buy-in and support in the implementation of their concept.

The KZN Department of Public Works' role to this initiative serves as the prime pillar in a form of monetary funding to drive the initiative. Public Works is currently leading the Sakhumnotho project through the leadership of Mr Xolani Xulu, the Senior Manager for the Directorate Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP) supported by his team.

On Wednesday the 14th of August 2013 the three bodies (Public Works, SDS and Msunduzi Municipality) convened for a special volunteer briefing session at the SDS offices which are located at the Long Market Street Taxi Rank in Pietermaritzburg. The aim of the briefing session was to engage with the participants to the Sakhumnotho project. To date the Sakhumnotho project has formally appointed a total number of 25 participating volunteers (females and males). The work schedule is from 7:00 to 15:00 on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. This initiative exists on the basis of an active memorandum of agreement (MOA) signed by the three social structure parties and also the contractual agreements signed for by all volunteering participants. Amongst key issues raised by Mr Xulu during the briefing were:

- That volunteers will be paid a stipendiary amount of R1500 on a monthly basis which is in any case not equal to salary but as a means to reduce poverty;
- Adherence to the rules and regulations such as compliance to daily attendance to work stations, wearing of corporate wear during official duties,

signing of duty register when resuming for daily duties, etc. set for the project;

- Refraining to bringing the project image under disrepute by any means of behavioural conduct or as may be deemed unmannerly;
- Conform to strict management of remuneration provided for and or refrain from the misuse of stipendiary allocated for positive use of responding to personal basic needs such as food, clothing, transport and toiletries;
- Ensuring that volunteers instil the spirit of team work and togetherness, especially when on duty.



Above: Listening attentively are the some of the Sakhumnotho Development Services volunteers

In essence, Public Works has through EPWP deemed it financially, legally, humanely and socially viable to support the project as it recognises the need to protect the interests of the disadvantaged, as an important component in human development, and is assisting the government with the capacity building that promotes equitable social inclusion and poverty reduction. As a result, various initiatives such as the KZN Integrated Greening Programme and the Maintenance Programme also led by Mr Xulu have already been implemented at different levels and in a wide number of locations throughout KwaZulu-Natal.

With an expansive poverty alleviation portfolio, EPWP is indeed assisting in improving the livelihoods of the poor and vulnerable groups in Msunduzi Municipality and the surrounding areas and ecologically fragile areas are kept well maintained so as to respond to the call towards a green environment.

Mr Sipho Msomi, the Assistant Manager: EPWP & Special Project for Public Works' Southern Regional Office also had his fair share on the programme. He provided detailed support to the volunteers in understanding the content of the 'employment contract'. This is a very thorny exercise because once it is not done and also for officials to making sure that all volunteers do understand what a contract entails would eventually lead to negative or grave repercussions. However, the 'questions-and- answer' session served as evidence and it was clear and indicative that the volunteers have been thoroughly engaged on the project and also about its importance towards sustaining the betterment of peoples' lives.

The progress of this project lies in the hands of those citizens who are committed to the good course of prosperity of its municipality and the Province. The interesting part is that the MOU has ensured that the partners of this project have endorsed the following commitments, with each department having a specified delivery role:

- Public Works has committed to ensure the availability of the budget related to the stipendiary payment of volunteers for the duration of the contract period;
- DSD will have committed to manage the Human Resource capacity, administrative and logistical function of the operation. This include the

monitoring of the workforce during the actual cleaning of the city; and

- Msunduzi Municipality has committed to avail all work related resources such as the work gear wear/ attire, transportation of staff when required for use to and from the 'Boxed Areas', tools for cleaning and clearance and any other material that may be deemed necessary for use for use by the volunteers during the contract period

Mr Mandla Zuma also spoke to the beneficiaries and encouraged them to take advantage of the opportunity that government and Sakhumnotho has availed to them. He further appreciated Public Works, led by Mr Roger Govender, for heeding the call to clean the City and also stated that they are the first Department to respond in such a positive manner. Mr Zuma wished that Public Works could be given more funding so that the programme can go beyond the current financial year. This will help sustain the livelihoods of programme beneficiaries and also ensure clean city for a much longer period.



This is a City at work and a lot is expected from the people of Msunduzi Municipality. It is anticipated that more will be injected to ensure that the

environment in which people live always remains clean and healthy taking into account that people also participate in Government programmes that uplift their lives.

