

A closer look at Nongoma through the eye of “Operation Sukuma Sakhe”

Stories by Vusi Shabalala and pictures by Sane Khumalo

The provision of basic services to the people is one of the major pinnacles of “good governance” that any government would wish to accomplish without the increasing hindrances that are experienced across South Africa. As it is noted today “service delivery”, “poverty alleviation” and “rooting corrupt elements within the Public Service” remains a priority for the Government of the day and these would also remain on the wish list of every government which is to come – in ensuring that there is a positive response to the needs of the people.



Above is the Mhambuma Community Hall in Nongoma where the War Room members convene for their meetings

The KwaZulu-Natal Government, led by Premier Dr Zweli Mkhize, has through “Operation Sukuma Sakhe” campaign made its own fair share of progress notwithstanding to acknowledge that there are still outstanding issues to be vehemently addressed and dealt with by the Province.

Having expressed the premise, the current state of affairs within the Provincial structures of government has come to light in that this is the time for the province and its people to reflect on the commitment towards “service delivery” success or progress made thus far.

Considering that the Premier’s Imbizo which is scheduled for Wednesday 26th of September 2012 at Nongoma is underway, the KZN Public Works’ Communication Team joined forces with the Provincial Communication’s Task Team led by the Office of the Premier towards the Ulundi and Nongoma destinations. This was not just an ordinary journey but a “closer look at Nongoma through the eye of Operation Sukuma Sakhe”.

As we arrived at Ulundi on Tuesday the 11th of September 2012, we knew quite well that there is the entire two scheduled days of hard work ahead awaiting the Communication Task Team, that is the 12th and 13th of September 2012 respectively.

During the two days the following projects around Nongoma had to be visited with a view at profiling all successes and challenges service delivery through “Operation Sukuma Sakhe”. It should also be noted and confirmed that kwaNongoma stands to be amongst all areas that warranted a government attention that responds to Government’s Key Priority Area on “rural development”.



Ms Khethiwe Mhlambi, the coordinator for the Nongoma Local Task Team War Room during her briefing interview. On the morning of Wednesday the 12th of September 2012 the “communications team”

had a 30 minutes briefing session at the Ulundi Garden Court Southern Sun with the aim at unpacking the two day programme. As I take you through to Ulundi and Nongoma be reminded and mindful that we cruised through very conducive weather conditions and atmosphere that was quite appealing and welcoming to the hospitality of Nongoma.



Members of the Nongoma Ward 15 Committee: (fltr): Messrs. B.Zungu, B.W. Zulu, V.T. Ntshangase and S. Zungu

Our first stop shaped the day's work at the Mhambuma Community Hall where a War Room briefing coordinated by Ms Khethiwe Mhlambi from the Corporative Governance and Traditional Affairs based in Ulundi and briefing was conducted by Councillor B.W. Zulu who is the Ward Councillor for Ward 15 in Nongoma. Other representatives who were also present are Councillors Sibusiso Zungu and Bhekithemba Zungu, both from Ward 15; Mr V.T. Ntshangase, an employee of the Kwa-Zulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs and also serving as Chairman of the Bulelwane Irrigation Scheme at Osuthu; Messrs. Siphon Gazu and Chris Sosibo, both from the Zululand District Municipality. Other representatives were met on sites during the respective visits. The sites and projects that were visited and each with its own impact are hereunder briefly profiled.



Seen on the right is Ms Hlengiwe Mthembu, the Service Office Manager for Nongoma Local Municipality, during a briefing session at the Osuthu Youth Skills Development Centre in Nongoma

It all started with **an exclusive and intensive interview with Ms Khethiwe Mhlambi, the coordinator for Nongoma Local Task Team** regarding the issues of concern on the part of the communities in Nongoma and the other surrounding areas. In her assertions she indicated that "the unavailability of identity documentation facilities for the people around especially the youth is a huge problem and the provisioning of ambulance service for emergency situations that may arise." Secondly, we need to relook at the travelling distance of school children to and from school on daily basis", thirdly "we are also faced with the early teenage pregnancies at schools, as of this current stage, we have already registered approximately 25 school female pupils at Falaza High School who have fallen pregnant." She lamented. "It is understandable that our government is doing something but I believe there still a lot to be addressed on the part of the families around. This is because some pupils are subjected to these problematic activities due to family pressures and ignorance of the rights of these girls. Some families subject these girls to early marriages which indeed require government intervention" she complained with deepest concern. There are however positive inroads that we have registered as a War Room of this Ward." She then continued that "we have cemented strong relations with the Ward Councillors whereby a War Room Task Team

has been formulated and has since undertaken to canvas or lobby with school authorities in dealing with juvenile delinquency at Falaza High School and further to other nearby schools that may be affected.” She confirmed.

“One other element that has stricken the communities and government in totality is the issue of poverty and housing for the needy” she stressed.

The interview did in some way provide a clearer picture of the issues affecting communities at Nongoma and Ulundi respectively.

The first site visit was at the Bulelwane Irrigation Scheme, a water provisioning service that caters for the community members within the areas of Mhambuma and Dungeni in Nongoma. This is an active project ran by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs.



A view of the technical staff while adjusting the water purification pipes at the Bulelwane Irrigation Scheme. Above is Ms Nompumelelo Mncwango and Ms Nokuthula Ntombela (headaddress on)

The **Bulelwane Irrigation Scheme** is constructed in such that it automatically purifies the water that is consumed by community members of the areas. It has been noted that the project has not been fully completed and because of the high water demand by communities there was still extended construction project underway onsite. Adding to the challenges is the management and maintenance of the facility

by the leadership of the service. However, the positive spin-off to the project is that to date the scheme has injected 165 members who serve and manage the project and 1016 beneficiaries attached to the scheme.



An inspection at the pump line to Mahlombe water tank

Our second site tour to the **Youth Skills Development Centre**: The tour briefing was conducted by Ms Hlengiwe Mthembu, the Service Office Manager: Nongoma Local Municipality. The Youth Skills Development Centre is a centre built in the Osuthu area, which is an area in the Osuthu Traditional Authority, in the Nongoma Local Municipality. It is closer to Enyokeni Royal Palace, in ward 15 and very remote and far from most infrastructure and CBD. Furthermore, Osuthu contains the combination of older citizens who are basically uneducated and a youthful population is the majority. Most of the youth has completed matric with no opportunities for further skills development. The unemployment rate adversely contributes to the high rate of poverty. The Youth Skills Development Centre will make provision of the following services to the Osuthu community:

- An internet Café for youth to get linked and connected to new Information Technology development and information for their development;
- Social Cooperatives will be trained and linked to the Department of

Trade and Industry and the Department of Economic Development, through the centre;

- Institutional capacity building for the Non Profit Organisations (NPOs) will be facilitated at the centre;
- It will house a funded Youth NPO which will facilitate soft skills trainings to accommodate youth from youth headed households and families that cannot afford to send them to nearby FETs;
- Social Behaviour Change Programmes addressing teenage pregnancies, drugs, substance and alcohol abuse, domestic violence, youth headed households, unemployment will be hosted at the centre;
- The centre will provide an enabling environment for incubating the skilled youth and assisting them to form SSMEs.

Partners in “service delivery” by the centre in order to bring sustainable growth to the youth and the community through the centre will be affected by various Departments and Non-Governmental Organisations, amongst others are: Departments of Social Development, Health, and Home Affairs; the South African Police; South African Social Security Agency (SASSA); LOVELIFE and SANCA.

From the Youth Development Centre, all roads headed to **Enyokeni Sports Field** which is situated at Edengeni in Nongoma. This project falls within the ambit of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Sports and Recreation. There were no activities planned for the tour. However, it should be mentioned that the facility is indeed a “must-have” project for the community. A range of cultural, recreational, sporting and leisure activities will be catered at the sports field. This also includes the annual reed dance organised for the Royal

Palace. The “communications team” had an ample opportunity to taking pictures. The overall site of the field covers all sporting codes that the Departments of Sports and Recreation has in its systems.



Above is Siyathuthuka Crèche situated in Ndengeni, part of Nongoma



The children that are catered at the crèche most of them are the Ndengeni residents

After just brief snap shots at the sports field, the entourage proceeded to the **Siyathuthuka Crèche**. The crèche is under the management and supervision of Ms Thembi Myeni who serves as a committee member of the War Room Task Team for Ward 15, but she was unavailable when contacted for comments, however, we managed to be in touch with Ms Sibongile Zulu who has been with the crèche for almost 12 years since its establishment in 1985. “The crèche currently receives its grant support through the KZN Department of Social Department at a monthly sum of approximately R10 000.00 but the amount normally varies” she stated. “Furthermore, it also caters for work opportunities to four female employees including myself and at this stage the crèche only serve children from the 6 months to 5 years of age and service the

Edengeni community at this stage. “The facility is quite average for now even though there is room for improvement when more funds would be injected to it. It is a facility structure having almost all basic service delivery requirements such as water, toilets, and electricity as well as sleeping materials for the children is available” said Ms Zulu. “We have currently only 80 children in our facility and of most are from Edengeni.” She confirmed. There is indeed hope for the best in future.

During the afternoon, **our visit ended at the Sizanani Goat Farming and Osuthu Clinic** as the two facilities are close nearby each other.

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs is responsible for the Sizanani Goat Farming Project is managed by Mr Dumile Zulu. For operational purposes the project has approximately 14 members and has to date injected a total of 98 beneficiaries. The available number of goats at the project farm is 142.



The AIDS Management Project team: Mr(left) Bhekithemba Zungu, Ms Thuli Mahlambi (centre) and Mr Ntokozo Zungu

An interesting establishment was that I managed to scoop information that at the Sizanani Goat Farming, there are a block of offices for use by its personnel. One of the office blocks is currently utilised for counselling of people affected and infected with HIV/ AIDS living around Osuthu and the surrounding areas of Nongoma. The Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) known as

“AIDS MANAGEMENT PROJECT”, a project aimed at encouraging people towards “positive living” which is managed by Ms Thuli Mahlambi and Messrs Ntokozo Zungu and Bhekithemba Zungu, with the latter also serving as a Councillor of the Traditional Leaders for the Ward 15 in Nongoma. The project’s brand name has not been officially launched but initially the projects aims amongst other aspects to:

- ✓ Creating awareness to people on the importance of healthy and positive living;
- ✓ Encouraging people towards testing for HIV and AIDS;
- ✓ Inculcating in people the sense of prevention of any health hazardous circumstances including behavioural traits;
- ✓ Providing care and counselling to those that are infected and affected by HIV and AIDS; and
- ✓ Provide any other support and or care that may be deemed necessary to the needy people.

At this stage the AIDS Management Project is still an emerging institution which has a barrage of build-up mechanisms in contemplation for its proper establishment.

Another walk-about was conducted at Osuthu Clinic which a nearby site to the Sizanani Goat Farming Project. Interviews were conducted with Sir Manqe, a male professional nurse.

Day one’s site tour was concluded at the **Falaza High School**. The school is also part of Nomgoma and has from the rumour we heard been labelled and muddled by trouble school children. There was a rumour of the kids being unruly and delinquent. However, the visit gave another picture. As we arrived at the school’s entrance, we were crowded by school pupils dressed in a very beautiful black

and yellow school uniform showcasing a sign of welcome to the visiting entourage. This to me resembled the opposite of what we have been told. While photo shots were taken, we then took straight for interview with Mr Mzeni Zungu, the Head of the Falaza High School.

Falaza High School has been established in 1984. According to Mr Zungu, “this school should in actual facts be registered as a comprehensive school and the provincial Department of Education is also aware of this status” said Mr Zungu. “The reason for it being a comprehensive school is that we still have technology structures at the school which active and sustained” he added. The school’s grading demarcation stands at Grade 8 to 9 for GET and with Grades 10 to 12 for FET. “I should also indicate that the school also has Grade 10 to 12 classes that specialise in the Mechanical Technology” stressed the Head of the Falaza. Other additional studies or curricula that the school covers include amongst others, Consumer Studies, Laboratory Studies, Welding, Motor Mechanic, Arts and Culture, Computer Studies, Natural Sciences and Social Science Technology.

When asked about the personnel capacity, he replied that “we have at this stage 41 educators of both genders and an enrolment of approximately 1160.” According to Mr Zungu, the school also offer most of the sporting codes for girls and boys respectively.

During day two of the site tour coordinated by Ms Nolwazi Nombela from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Human Settlements, the “communications team” visited four housing projects in Nongoma, one at KwaNcwane in Nkonjeni, three at Matheni, Holinyoka were toured and a closing chapter was with a new R69 KwaKhangela new road construction project. Even though these projects were

identified through the OSS campaign, the brain child of the end product was the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Human Settlements.

The first beneficiary of the house was Mr Mzwakhe Mazibuko, a very strong, positive but blind community member of KwaNcwane. Mr Mazibuko unfortunately sustained injuries by fellow co-workers that led to the loss of his eyesight while tendering a temporary job at a local company became a possible beneficiary from the government. He currently lives with a family of eight, his elderly mother, Ms Senzeni Luthuli, two siblings and two children born from his two sisters who also unfortunately passed on. According to Mzwakhe, he made his personal call and plea through the submission of a letter to the MEC for Health, Dr Dhlomo, while he officially opened and handed over a clinic around the area. However, the matter was also further pursued by the War Room Coordinators in collaboration with MEC Dhlomo where after the matter landed on the right hands of the Department of Human Settlements. The project was completed at the cost of approximately R64 042.86. This is a four roomed establishment with two bedrooms and an open plan structure. In commendation, both Mr Mazibuko and his mother expressed their appreciation to MEC Dhlomo for his urge to take up matter with sincerity and honesty, the community members within the area, the councillors and eventually the Premier for leading role on the “Operation Sukuma Sakhe”.

We then continued to KwaMatheni area in Holinyoka, Nongoma where three beneficiaries also had to share with us their excitement with their fulfilled gifts of hope. The first visit was to the Khumalo family with Mr Mandla Fondo Khumalo being the identified house beneficiary. Like the previous beneficiary, Mandla is also plagued by a

disability factor. His case in this instance is a speech defect that is quite impaired. However, it is observable that Mr Khumalo can at least manage to see, listen and comprehend when communicated with. Before he was identified by the authorities, he was living a shack dwelling which was erected for him by his younger brother, Mr Zakhele Khumalo, who also because of work commitment does not stay with Zakhele to care for him on his daily chores.

Exclusive interviews were conducted with both the Khumalo brothers. It was also in a similar state of affairs in that they profoundly complemented the initiatives and support of the Provincial Government. Some brief video snippets of all the recipients were also taken for showcasing during the Premier's Imbizo on the 26th of September 2012.

We then continued to the remaining two female beneficiaries being Mrs Mirriam Khumalo and Mrs Florence Khumalo. The two mothers received their homes after an extended consultation with the structures of the traditional councillors of the War Room of Holinyoka. After their formal submission for the application of houses was considered, the matter was positively resolved as both houses were almost completed within the similar time frame because they both together with their respective families occupied their houses by December 2011.

The most intriguing factor is that all the housing recipients have been provided for with all major basic services such as a shelter that has electricity and water. It should be acknowledged that there is still more to do by the Provincial Government. However, there is equally more positive pockets of success that the Province of KwaZulu-Natal Government has achieved in ensuring that basic delivery services are proffered to the needy, especially to the poorest of the poor.

In summing up and analysing the visit to Ulundi and Nongoma, it is indicative that there positive strides that the Provincial Government has registered. However, one must also acknowledge and confirm that despite the progress, there is still more work to digest through for ensuring that the people of KwaZulu-Natal are indeed on course in as far as development is concerned. Furthermore, the priority by Government to develop rural areas is the roadmap to success and true freedom. This may seem to be a slow pace... but it is a step ahead.



Sr Manqele with a patient at the Osuthu Clinic



Recently purchased resources: A computer classroom at the Falaza High School



Mr Mzwakhe Mazibuko, one of the homes beneficiaries with his mother during the visit. The official hand-over will be done by the Premier on the 26 September 2012



Above and below is Mr Mandla Fondo Khumalo with his brother on the right also received a new *house (behind)*



Above here is Mrs Mirriam Khumalo who also benefited through the housing scheme through Operation Sukuma Sakhe