



NEW SHERIFF IN TOWN TAKES THE BULL BY ITS HORNS



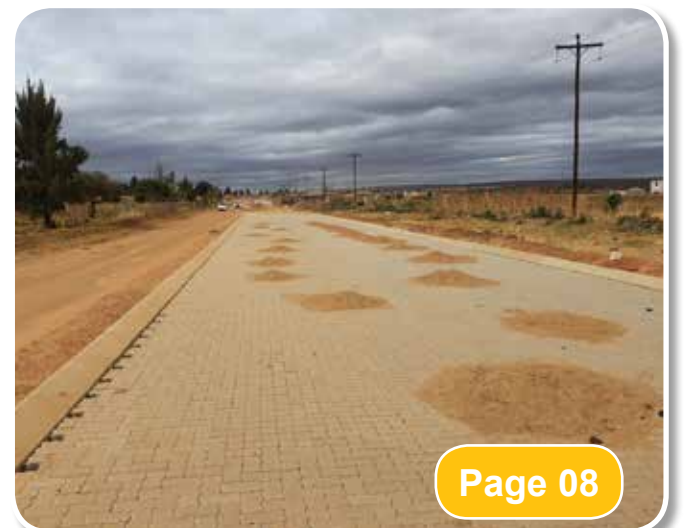
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EDITORIAL COMMENT

What an eventful year! Of course most of it has been characterized by grief and turmoil steaming from the COVID-19 pandemic. Just over a year since the first case was reported, many things have changed. There is however so much to celebrate purely on the basis of being alive. After all, where there is human presence, there is hope for the future.

While the annual calendar is already "quarter past twelve", Government has just concluded its 2020/21 financial year cycle in March. The Department is therefore wrapping up its business with a glance at the past six months in its effort to transform the lives of the people of the Place of the Rising Sun. Certainly, this is a critical constitutional mandate in the advancement of human rights to build an informed citizenry.

First, the "Handyman of the State" has an honour to welcome on board the newly appointed Executive Authority of Public Works, Roads and Transport in Mpumalanga, Ms Mohita Latchminarain. Needless to say, Ms Latchminarain has actually long been involved in the affairs of the Department on her previous life as a member of the Portfolio Committee that oversees the mandate of the Department.

Well, the provision of integrated transport system and public infrastructure is not only a socioeconomic imperative but a human rights issue. While April is Freedom Month, the citizens are never free without the provision of these basic services. That is why the Department through the leadership of MEC Mohita Latchminarain and Acting HOD, Mr Charles Morolo remains committed in accelerating service delivery in a bid to eradicate poverty, unemployment and inequality. This publication highlights snippets of the Department's service delivery agenda from roads construction to transport operations. Other than that, this episode pays homage to all the men and women who held the fort throughout the storm of the coronavirus pandemic.

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Although care has been taken to verify the accuracy of information, the editorial team extends sincere apology for any inconsistencies that may occur.

NEW SHERIFF IN TOWN TAKES THE BULL BY ITS HORNS



AT THE COALFACE OF SERVICE DELIVERY: The newly appointed MEC for Public Works, Roads and Transport in Mpumalanga, Ms Mohita Latchminarain during one of her community engagements.

When Premier Refilwe Mtsweni-Tsipane announced her new Cabinet in February 2021, Ms Mohita Latchminarain was deemed equal to the task to lead as the "Handyman of the State." She certainly took the bull by its horns and hit the ground running from the very first day. Her appointment augurs well with the democratic Government's transformation agenda to recognize and elevate capable and deserving women and youth to the accolades of state power.

As the new member of the Executive Council responsible for Public Works, Roads and Transport in Mpumalanga, Ms Latchminarain is not a stranger to this mandate but has been instrumental in shaping the Department's direction as a member of the Portfolio Committee that conducted oversight on the work of the Department. Prior to that, since joining the Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature in 2019, she has worn several hats including that of Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Premier's Office, Finance, Economic Development and Tourism.

Apart from her political career as a member of the ruling party, this grinding stone is also a qualified Attorney and has served as a Legal Adviser to the Executive Mayor of Steve Tshwete Local Municipality, her hometown prior to joining the Mpumalanga Legislature. She has been exposed to various spheres and functions of Government therefore she has clear understanding of socioeconomic challenges facing the masses.

She is not only a mother who has natural instincts of caring for others, but she is also the youngest MEC in Premier Mtsweni-Tsipane's Cabinet and of course the youngest member of the Legislature in the Province. The amount of responsibility placed on her shoulders bears testimony of the confidence bestowed upon her by the Premier based on her competence and intellectual capacity. During a media engagement the MEC highlighted that one of her key focus areas will be on roads maintenance.

"Our road infrastructure is a critical artillery of socioeconomic development. Unfortunately, most of our roads in the Province have aged and are not in a good state. These include access roads to social amenities, tourism routes and coal haulage. While there is growing demand for new roads, we need to strike a balance between maintaining our old and starting new construction projects due to budgetary constraints. I intend to strengthen the Department's capacity to deal with this matter vigorously and pro-actively. Another way to achieve this is to invest in jetpatchers and rebuild our workforce to fast-track service delivery," elaborated MEC Latchminarain.

Since her appointment to the office, the MEC has been at the coalface of service delivery attesting to the spirit of "Thuma Mina." As the true ambassador of young minds, the Honourable MEC has a dedicated battalion of equally committed and energetic troops to serve the citizens of the Place of the Rising Sun. These young faces include the Office Manager, Mr Josias Motsoeneng; the Appointment Secretary, Ms Amulekani Sambo; the Media Liaison Officer, Mr Kgomoitso Madihlaba; the Community Outreach Officer, Mr Kabelo Mashiane as well as the Secretary Receptionist, Ms Sesi Madalane.



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Secretary Receptionist

MEC LATCHMINARAIN UNLOCKS ACCESS TO SERVICE DELIVERY

The provision of adequate transport infrastructure is paramount to the realization of a better life for all since roads provide access to a number of socioeconomic amenities such as schools, clinics and shops. To fulfill this constitutional imperative, on the 24th of March 2021, MEC Mohita Latchminarain visited Bushbuckridge Local Municipality where she met with community representatives of ward 23, 25 and 26 to deliberate on their request for the upgrading of D438 road between Belfast and Justicia.

The MEC acknowledged the dire condition of the road especially considering its socioeconomic impact it has on surrounding communities. Unfortunately, the recent tropical storm also dealt a heavy blow on a number of roads in the Province. As if that was not catastrophic enough, the coronavirus placed another burden on the Department's coffers which hampered response to these demands.

However, MEC Latchminarain indicated that the matter is receiving urgent attention. ***"I often travel on the very same road and I can attest that it needs urgent attention. Fortunately, designs are nearing completion and soon the Department***

will begin with the procurement process to appoint a contractor," explained MEC Latchminarain.

Since the meeting had resolved that a follow up meeting will be convened to discuss progress, on the first of April, MEC Latchminarain met again with the delegation as agreed upon on the previous meeting. The MEC committed that the project will go on tender in June 2021. Community members will also be kept abreast about other processes that shall unfold to bring the project to fruition. Furthermore, she reiterated that her office doors are always open for engagement.

"Violent protests reverse our gains and course more harm than good. We are here to serve our people and therefore we must engage in a progressive manner to address challenges," pleaded the MEC.

In the meantime, the Department will be finalizing the approval processes of the designs and application for mining license. Unfortunately the delegation refused interim intervention to keep the road trafficable pending upgrading.



PAVING A WAY FORWARD: MMC Bhunu Malandule from Bushbuckridge Local Municipality and MEC Mohita Latchminarain engaging with community members.



PROGRESSIVE ENGAGEMENTS: Community members during a meeting with Government delegation led by MEC Mohita Latchminarain.

PILOTING THROUGH THE WAVES OF COVID-19 AND ECONOMIC TURMOIL



NEW NORMAL: Staff members ready to serve even in the midst of COVID-19 pandemic.

The commencement of the new decade has been overshadowed by waves of turmoil from COVID-19 to economic meltdown and Tropical Storm Eloise. Nevertheless, Government has not closed shop on service delivery. As the custodian of public infrastructure, the Department has its work cut out as an enabler of the provision of basic services such as transport, healthcare and education.

The Department recently held a Strategic Planning session on the 23rd of March to align its service delivery agenda with Government's priorities as articulated by the President and Premier during the State of the Nation Address (SoNA) as well as the State of the Province Address (SoPA) respectively.

During interaction sessions with staff members, MEC Mohita Latchminarain and Acting HoD, Mr Charles Morolo gave a clear perspective on the Department's role in the resuscitation of the economy as well as marching orders to fast-track service delivery.

While COVID-19 is still within radius, the Department is taking necessary measures to ascertain the safety and well being of the workforce. This includes filling of vacant posts to alleviate the burden as well as implementation of workplace plans to minimize workplace congestion. Regular disinfection of workstations, screening and supply of personal protective equipment are all part of the package. Regrettably, the Department has suffered tragic loss of several staff members due to COVID-19. Unfortunately, this has severe repercussions on service delivery.

Nonetheless, the MEC and Acting HoD are working hand a glove to steer the ship towards the path of success amid the ferocious waves of the pandemic.

GOVERNMENT TAKES STOCK OF LONG DISTANCE ROAD FREIGHT AND LOGISTICS INDUSTRY TO CURTAIL VIOLENCE

The trucking industry has recently been making headlines with images of burning trucks flooding the media space. Amongst others, allegations of the appointment of foreign nationals by freight and logistics companies captured the scene.

On the 26th of March 2021, the Minister of Employment and Labour, Mr Thulas Nxesi accompanied by MEC Mohita Latchminarain converged at Emalahleni Local Municipality to meet with the Truck Owners Association and Labour Unions to address the concerns. Discussions included amongst others violence within the sector, appointment of foreign nationals as well as the low number of women participation the industry. Amongst the attendees were truck owners and drivers.

The freight and logistics industry is one of the most critical economic driver in South Africa. Transporting goods such as food and coal to keep the country electrified, to generating thousands of work and business opportunities.

This sector is a force to be reckoned with considering its role towards the economic reconstruction and recovery plan post COVID-19 lockdown, any further setbacks such as labour disputes nullify Government's efforts to resuscitate the economy. MEC Latchminarain who was chairing the session will facilitate provincial engagements on monthly basis to address some of the concerns.

These deliberations will also be extended to the other eight provinces as part of the Ministerial Outreach Programme aimed at addressing service delivery challenges.



EXECUTIVE ORDERS: MEC Mohita Latchminarain addressing staff.



PROGRESSIVE: Acting HoD, Mr MC Morolo steering the ship.

NEW ATMOSPHERE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING AT MPUMELELO PRIMARY SCHOOL

Writer : Benika Khambule

The Mpumalanga Provincial Government is advanced in addressing the infrastructure challenges of schools in the province. A number of schools have been identified for replacements and refurbishments in a bid to meet the new school infrastructure norms and standards. Mpumelelo Primary School is one of the schools that has been earmarked for replacement by the Department. The school is situated in the outskirts of Nkomazi, Middelplaas village in Nkomazi Local Municipality.

Its structures was not conducive for learning and teaching, furthermore, the classrooms were not adequate to accommodate the number of learners in the school. Now, the newly constructed structure will be able to accommodate more learners and the building is safe to stand to natural disaster.

The construction project started in January 2020 and is already at the completion stage. Built at an approximately R28 million; the project comprises of 4 refurbished classroom block, kitchen, new admin block, 16 new classrooms, 1 enviro loo toilet block with 5 cubicles, new 2x grade R classrooms, guard house, toilets and fence, covered parking area and walkways including associated electrical and mechanical works, storm water reticulation and a new water tank to accommodate fire needs. To date, thirty five (35) local residents benefited from the project with SMMEs through sub-contracting.

According to the Project Manager, Mr Solly Nyambi, the Department is working tirelessly to ensure that the project becomes a success. ***"The Department will ensure that the project is completed on time and it empowers the community,"*** said Nyambi.



LEARNING AND TEACHING MADE EASY: Mpumelelo Primary School.

Kamdladla Clinic Opens Doors To Healthy Lifestyle

Writer : Benika Khambule



BETTER HEALTH CARE: The newly completed Kamdladla clinic in Nkomazi Local Municipality.

The community of Kamdladla in Nkomazi Local Municipality will no longer travel longer distances to access health services, since the Department completed the construction of a new clinic in the area. The old clinic was in a dilapidated, without proper equipment to service the whole community. Patients used to travel to nearby villages to access health services. Completion of this new facility comes at a very critical time of Covid-19 and members of the community need an accessible healthcare facility that will cater to their healthcare needs.

Built at a cost of over R10 million, the clinic will now serve a broader community of Kamdladla and its neighbouring villages. The project scope included the construction of a new clinic, alterations, renovations of existing buildings to ablution and waiting area, demolition of existing structures, electrical upgrades, provision of water storage, upgrading of sewer reticulation and septic tank.

According to the Acting Director: Infrastructure Implementation, Ms Zandile Ratshitanga, the project started in November 2019 and is now ready for operation. In the process, the Department created more than 18 jobs opportunities for local people and SMMEs through sub-contracting. Ms Masesi Nkosi, who is a resident at Kamdladla shared with @work about the challenges they faced as the community in accessing health services.

We used to travel longer distances to neighbouring villages such as Schulzendal and Middelplaas to access health services and sometimes affordability of transportation would become a barrier. ***"We hope that the new clinic will meet our needs as the community during this time and we are delighted to receive such a state of the art facility,"*** said Ms Nkosi.

AERORAND BUILDS A BETTER FUTURE FOR LEARNERS IN STEVE TSHWETE

Writer : Rachel Nkosi

The Mpumalanga Provincial Government continues to roll out education infrastructure projects throughout the Province to widen the doors of education.

Aerorand Primary School in Steve Tshwete Local Municipality adds to the long list of newly built schools that are already operational within the province. The project started in October 2018 and completed during December 2020.

The construction of the school has cost the department more than R57.7 million. The design takes into account the overwhelming demand for schooling space and, as a result, the school will accommodate more than one thousand learners each with twenty-four (24) classrooms. It will boast with new library, computer centre, admin block, kitchen, school hall, administration block, guard house and forty ablution facilities. The design of

the buildings incorporates several green features.

Out of this project 114 job opportunities were created to the community and small businesses have gained out of this development. The majority of the builders are from the local community in Nkangala District Municipality.

"The department is building these schools in the townships to get rid of costly transport costs and learners that have to walk long distances to arrive at schools and to restore the dignity to the people of Mpumalanga," said

Mr Aaron Mbatha, the Nkangala District Head.



BEGINNING OF A BRIGHTER TOMORROW: Aerorand Primary School.

CONSTRUCTION OF MPISI PRIMARY SCHOOL UNDERWAY AMID COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Writer : Portia Mnisi



SECURING THE FUTURE: Mpisi Primary School construction work in progress.

The demolishing and construction of Mpisi Primary School is under way at Cottondale Village in Bushbuckridge Local Municipality. The old structures were built by the community ages ago. The Department as the implementing agent is responsible for the construction of the school at a cost of more than R50 million. The project started in May 2019 and it was expected to be complete by end of May 2020, but work was extended until December 2021, due to COVID 19 pandemic and lockdown regulations.

The scope of work includes the building of new 24 classrooms, kitchen, guard house, fence, water, electricity, parking, carport, construction of 25 Enviro-Loo Toilets, computer centre as well as 4 Grade R Classes and Ramps. The construction of the project created more than 30 job opportunities for people of Bushbuckridge Local Municipality. Local businesses benefited from the project.

We spoke to Ms Mahlatse Mokoena a mother of two, who benefited from this project. She appealed to community members not to vandalise the property instead protect the infrastructure against criminal elements living in the community.

Ms Patronella Chungwane a Grade 6 Learner from around the village of Cottandale said that the Computer Centre will help them to understand more about technology, and they will use the structure to do research for their homework.

DECENT ABLUTION RESTORES DIGNITY TO LEARNERS

Writer : Benika Khambule

The Department has a role to provide decent sanitation and basic services to all schools in the province. To date, hundreds of schools across the province have been provided with modern and decent ablution units. More schools are expected to benefit from the programme.

The sanitation programme has become integral in the fight against the spread of the coronavirus in schools, hence the Department prioritized in response to COVID-19 by building ablution facilities.

MC Zitha Primary School at Masibekela in Nkomazi Local Municipality is one of the schools that benefited from the



SANITATION IS A PRIORITY: Recently built modern ablution units.

programme recently. The project started in October 2020 and was completed in February 2021 at a tune of approximately R2.1 million. The scope of work included the demolition of 24 pit toilets, construction of 16 new enviro-loo toilets and 4 urinals, 10 basins, 2 x drinking fountain, provision of 2 x 5000lt water tanks, including water reticulation and support structure and equipping of borehole. Eight (08) work opportunities were created for the local residents. Speaking to Ms Blessing Sibiya, a Grade 6 learner, she said: ***"The new ablution will not only improve our level of learning but our hygiene and dignity as well."***

Dignity restored at Hlomani Secondary School with Enviro Loo

Writer : Portia Mnisi



NEW AND IMPROVED: Enviro Loo ablution units for learners.

One of the major role of the government is to restore dignity to the previously disadvantaged community. Dignity has been restored to Kennen Primary School learners when pit toilets were replaced by new sanitation facilities. The Enviro Loo provides clean, safe and affordable sanitation that use no water or electricity. It does not also used chemicals and has zero environmental impact.

Kenned Primary School benefited from the initiative. The Department demolished the existing pit toilets and constructed 16 Enviro Loo toilets. The project started in October 2020 and it should be completed by the end of January 2021 with the total cost of more than R2.5 million.

This project also created 15 job opportunities for the community of Casteel in Bushbuckridge Local Municipality where Women and the Youth mostly benefited

Miss Grennet Chiloane a grade 5 learner from the school said ***"I am so happy about the new sanitations, I can now wash my hands and feel safe and clean especially now because of the Covid 19 pandemic were encourage to wash our hands with soap and clean water"***.

BIDDING FAREWELL IS A SATIRE OF MIXED EMOTIONS

Good byes are always hard to bear even when motivated by the desire to pursue new opportunities. One is often caught up on a cross road of sadness and jubilation. This was exactly the case when the Department bid farewell to a couple of its longest serving soldiers. While some are taking a well deserved rest from the hustle and bustle of the nine to five regime, others are redeploying their skills to new ventures.

Mr Stephan Pienaar, Director: Roads Planning and Design has been in service for 48 years and needless to say he is a reservoir of experience. Many engineers have been groomed by his expertise in the roads construction industry. He is an embodiment of the caliber of men and women who have served the people of South Africa with pride and determination.

Amongst these soldiers who managed to pave their way through the ranks of command is Mr Francis Motha, Chief Director: EPWP and Chief Architect of Riverside Government Complex; Rev. Matsamela Moloï, Chief Director: Transport Operations; Mr Molibi Makgalemane, Director: Land Transport Policies and Strategy as well as Mr David Nkambule, Director: Ehlanzeni District and former Head of Communications. Their contribution to the betterment of the lives of the people of Mpumalanga will always be appreciated.



Mr David Nkambule
Ehlanzeni District Head



Mr Stephan Pienaar
Director: Roads Planning and Design



Mr Molibi Makgalemane
Director: Land Transport Policies and Strategy

MORE MUSCLES TO STRENGTHEN LAW ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT

More muscles are to be deployed to strengthen law enforcement operations in public transport. This transpired during MEC Mohita Latchminarain's meeting with POPCRU representatives on the 13th of April 2021. The meeting was a reaffirmation of commitment from both parties to ensure that Transport Inspectorate which has been rated the best performing unit in the country for two consecutive years, remains at its peak of performance. The Department has already advertised a learnership programme in an attempt to beef-up the workforce. As a result, 100 law enforcement candidates will be recruited and trained during the current financial year. Furthermore, the unit is expected to fill nine vacant posts within the near future.

The Minister of Transport, Mr Fikile Mbalula through the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC) donated twenty brand new high performance vehicles to the Department last year December 2020. These vehicles have come at a time where the Department was in dire need of automobile muscles to deal with the mammoth task of keeping the commuters of public and scholar transport safe on the road especially in the midst of COVID-19 pandemic. These vehicles have since been allocated to all the Districts of the Province however more fleet is still required particularly in view of the new recruits.

Being rated the best in the country certainly does not come cheap. Over the Easter weekend, the Department called upon the men and women of the badge to rise to the occasion. Of course, they did not disappoint but embarked on a massive sweep and clean operation. About 400 public transport vehicles including minibuses, midibuses and buses were impounded for non-compliance with the National Land Transport Act 5 of 2009. The Act prohibits offenses such as overloading, operating an unroadworthy vehicle and operating without a permit or contrary to its terms and conditions. Nevertheless, the officers braved the odds to ensure that the road is safe and lawbreakers are brought to book.





ROAD CONSTRUCTION BRINGS RELIEF TO MATSULU RESIDENTS

Writer : Benika Khambule

The construction of road D2978 in Matsulu has now been completed. In over 12 months, the community of Matsulu has a new road constructed at a cost of R24 million. The 2.14 km stretch road which connects Matsulu A and B in the City of Mbombela is now open for traffic. Over the years, the road had deteriorated badly and the Department came to the rescue.

The project started in September 2020 and is now complete. The project scope included the rehabilitation of the road layer works, surfacing, storm water control including new culverts, subsoil drainage, v-drains, kerbs, walkways, road signs and road markings. This project was implemented using labour intensive methods in a bid to

maximise job opportunities. During the construction process, more than 32 work opportunities were created from the project and local SMMEs had an opportunity to participate.

This project received an applause from the residents since this has been one of their major outcries. Mr Nicholas Ntimane who is a regular road user said he is happy with the completion of the road. **"The road was not user friendly, as community we are very excited that the issue of potholes on this road will be a thing of the past,"** Mr Ntimane concluded with a joyful smile.



SAFE TRAVEL: Complete road D2978 in Matsulu.

Paving of the road from Oakley to Mkhuhlu

Writer : Portia Mnisi



IMPROVED ROAD SURFACE: Near completion road paving from Oakley to Mkhuhlu.

The role of the Department and the Municipalities is to provide efficient, effective and affordable road infrastructure that promotes socio-economic development and to make sure that roads are easily accessible so that the community can reach out to the service delivery they need, and they can be able to travel from one place to another.

The community of Oakley and surrounding areas from Bushbuckridge under Bojabela District benefited from the Paving program. The 3.4km road from Oakley to Mkhuhlu will be costing more than R23 million. The community benefited through job creation for local people and empowered local businesses through sub-contracting some portion of the work, and the contractors were advised to procure material locally. The project started in December 2020 and is currently at 60 percentage and it is expected to be complete by end of March 2021.

We spoke to Mr Joseph Mogale who runs a transportation business around the area, he was very thrilled with the act of the Department. **"I would like to thank the Government for creating job opportunities though the project was for a short period but the community at large has benefited from it."**

MOLOTO VILLAGE PAVES A NEW PATH TO ACCESS SOCIAL AMENITIES

Writer : Rachel Nkosi

The days of driving on bumpy road surfaces are a thing of the past for the community of Moloto village outside KwaMhlanga, Thembekele Hani Local Municipality. This follows the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport's initiative of brick paving of 1.3 kilometre of the D567 Road.

The R 9.2 million project was planned to start in March 2020, but due to unforeseen circumstances of Covid-19, it started in December 2020 and projected to be completed in December 2021. The paving of the road forms part of the Department's mission to improve road conditions whilst providing employment and skills development opportunities. The project has able to provide 30 job opportunities for the community. The Nkangala District Head, Mr Aaron Mbatha said "The maintenance of the road surface is of great importance to ensure the smooth running of traffic to Moloto village. This is just one part of the Department's focus areas of improving the lives of our people.



PAVING A WAY FOWARD: Moloto village paving under construction.

The initiative will also assist to improve service delivery, because the village will now be easily accessed. Now that the road is fixed, we have no doubt that local drivers and visitors will enjoy driving into the village without hesitation," concluded Me Mbatha.

Many car owners and commuters could not hide their excitement and kept talking about how the improvement of the road would impact their daily lives. One of the local member, Moses Mahlangu, said: **"It was hard to travel on this road to work before, now it will be easy to get to work on time. We are happy to know that department takes service delivery very seriously."**

Rehabilitation Clewer-Kriel road helps to curb carnage

Writer : Rachel Nkosi

In keeping with its constitutional mandate, the Department spent R120 million to rehabilitate approximately 10.55 kilometres of P141/1 Coal Haul Road between South of Clewer and North of Kriel in Emalahleni Local Municipality, Nkangala District.

The project started in April 2019 and completed in February 2021. Some of the improvements entail widening of the road, construction of stone

concrete side drains; improvement of drainage through installation of subsoil drains, guardrails, fencing and road marking.

During construction, the project had a strong economic empowerment component with 17 local sub-contractors appointed to do various jobs on the project. It also provided temporary employment to 126 workers appointed from the communities affected by the project. These included women, young people and a person living with a disability.

According to Mr Aaron Mbatha, Nkangala District Head, the rehabilitation of the road had restored it to a user friendly condition, eliminating all potential risks which might be of danger to road users. He further stressed that the project created work opportunities and training for local communities and SMME's.



CONNECTING THE MINING INDUSTRY: Newly built coal haul road between South of Clewer and North of Kriel.

Hendrina road construction spins work opportunities

Community benefit has been a key spin-off in rural infrastructure projects in the Mpumalanga, where township roads, some of which are falling to pieces, are upgraded and repaired. In just one road improvement project alone, in the outskirts of North of Hendrina, Steve Tshwete Local Municipality, temporary jobs are being created for unemployed youth including person living with disability to help in the upgrading and construction of a 13 kilometre D2274 Road and 2 (two) bridges.

During the improvement period, the R336.4 million project is projected to created ± 200 work opportunities and 30 local Small, Medium and Micro-sized Enterprises (SMME) to be hired. The project was handed over to Xmoor Transport (Pty) Ltd construction company by the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport in October 2020 and planned to be completed in March 2023.



ONE COMMUNITY AT A TIME: Upgrading and construction of D2274 Road.

Writer : Rachel Nkosi

“There is a double benefit here, people are finding work while improving their own living environment. We use local labour whenever we can. The contractor have experienced patching staff on their payroll that pass on skills to many of the men and women they hire for local labour jobs. I am confident that the right contractor have been selected to complete the projects within allocated period contracted,” said Mr Aaron Mbatha who heads Nkangala District.

REHABILITATION OF P36/1 COAL ROAD IN DELMAS

Writer : Rachel Nkosi



DRIVING TO A BETTER FUTURE: Construction of P36/1 (R50) road in Delmas underway.

As part of Department's commitment to investing in infrastructure that facilitates economic activity and leads to job creation. Just over a year ago, the coal road P36/1 (R50) had many challenges that included constant congestion as resulting from clogged-up single lane road running from Delmas to (N12) Gauteng Border, and consequently, another single lane for traffic coming from the opposite direction.

The R130 million project is located at Delmas in Victor Khanye Local Municipality, which falls within the Nkangala District. The amount will be spent to rehabilitate 9.1 kilometres of the road. It started in July 2020 and the aim is to have the road fully operational in or before November 2021.

“The need to rehabilitate and upgrade this section of the road is of paramount importance to sustain the traffic along these routes. Our aim is to upgrade the major networks that need urgent attention to ensure continued mobility for our people,” Mr A Mbatha elaborated.

He further added that the department is pleased that the intervention will improve safety and provided access to a developing business node in the area.

During the improvement period, a total of R39 million is estimated to be spent on local Small, Medium and Micro-sized Enterprises (SMMEs). The project also has provided 17 temporary work opportunities so far. The local community formed of the significant workforce that is working on the project.

COVID 19 VIRUS CAUSES DISTRESS TO NYS PROGRAMME

Writer : Portia Mnisi

The National Youth Service Programme at Bohlabela district became the latest casualties of the Covid-19 pandemics as training for newly recruits for 2020 had to be halted. Recruited NYS participants had to take a three months break to comply with Lockdown regulation, thus affecting the entire 2020/21 NYS plan. According to Mr Lui Mahlabane, a project co-ordinator stationed at Acornhoek, "Covid-19 had a negative impact on our current year plans, since we had to extent training for two month."

One of the NYS participants, Ms Ruth Mashego, explained that the virus has brought fear and distress in her life. The 31 year old said that going to her workplace, Acornhoek hospital, caused her too much anxiety due to high number of Covid patients. **"I am expected to do plumbing and electrical work at the hospital, but the risk of contracting the virus scares me"** she said. Despite the challenges about the pandemic, Ms Ruth appreciates the skills which she acquired during the NYS programme.



SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: National Youth Service participants painting the walls at Acornhoek Hospital.

PUBLIC WORKS HEROES SAVE LIVES IN BERNIES HOSPITAL

Writer : Dimakatso Matentshi



OXYGEN OF LIFE: DPWRT officials in their workshop where they replenish with oxygen cylinders for Bernice Hospital.

Supplying oxygen or medical air in order to save patience in hospitals, clinic particularly ICU is a scary thought to most people especially during this volatile Covid 19 period for fear of contracting the virus. However eight officials from the Department stationed at Bernie's Hospital working in ICU is part of their daily lives as they supply oxygen.

Our heroes and heroines are working tirelessly to fill-up cylinders with oxygen to gas bank and COVID wards at Bernie's Hospital in Delmas to ensure sufficient supply. The high demand for oxygen in the hospital prompted government to increase the number of cylinders at Bernie's hospital from 80 to 120, putting more pressure on the workers as they are expected to work extra shifts in a bid to meet the high demand. Since the start of the pandemic, our heroes just like many other health care workers braved the Covid pandemic putting their lives at risk to save millions of South Africans.

The team is headed by Ms Bonny Mashiloane Moela. According to her, safety of employees is of paramount importance as disposable work suits, sanitizers and masks were provided. **"Despite the risky working condition, none of the eight employees contracted the virus since the start of the pandemic as covid regulations are adhered to"** said Ms Moela.

Emerging Contractors Continues To Earn Their Mantle With Delivery Of Roads Infrastructure

Writer : Mpho Gabashane

Emerging and small contractors, especially those owned by previous disadvantaged groups such youth, women, people with disability in particular and black people in general continue to make their mark in the delivery of roads infrastructure in Mpumalanga.

Such a contractor is Ndoni Properties which was awarded to upgrade (building a new tar road from grave) a 2km road P57/2 from D3967 (near old Mapulaneng hospital) to R40 (near Bushbuckridge saps) (2.05km) in Bushbuckridge. The project, which was built to the tune of R22 Million, began in September 2019 and was competed in November 2020, six months after original planned completion date, due to Covid-disruptions.

The scope of work included amongst others; construction and clearing of open side drains and channels, the erection of new guardrails, accommodation of traffic through temporary deviations and stop and go, painting of new road markings and erection of new signage and the construction of stone pitching / concrete side drains Re-vegetation/ rehabilitation of disturbed areas and removal of unsuitable materials.

As with all other infrastructure projects, where the department is obliged to empower local people, 32 local people were fortunate to earn a living during the construction of the road and over half a million rands was spent on procuring services from local small business.

INTER-PROVINCIAL ROADS KEY TO UNLOCKING INTEGRATED ECONOMIC GROWTH

Writer : Mpho Gabashane

The common saying that infrastructure is the heartbeat of any successful economies throughout the world, is finding practical expression with the rehabilitation of Road P95/1 from Gauteng border crossing through Verena in Nkangala District of Mpumalanga to Limpopo.

The R163 million project's scope of work includes amongst others reconstruction of the road, repairs of road base failures, raising the road level by 300mm, reworking of existing and new base, culvert widening, subsoil drainage, v-drains, including surfaced shoulders, road signs and road markings.

As with many infrastructure projects which had to endure Covid-19 disruptions, this project, which began in May 2019, has had to be revised from the original completion date of November 2020 to September 2021.

On a positive note however, this project has up to date been created 83 work opportunities mostly being women and youth. Another important aspect of project is Government's commitment to empower local SMMEs. In this regard, almost R 42 million is estimated to have been invested through sourcing of services and material from local businesses.

Umjindi Village Enjoys the Fruits of Democracy

Writer : Dimakatso Matentshi

Democracy is beginning to bear fruits in the impoverished village of Umjindi, as the local community are easily accessing social amenities with ease after the completion of the upgrading of road D236 west of Barberton. Patients are breathing a sigh of relief as public transport system including the paramedic services are now reaching all the mountainous parts of the area with ease since the road has been surfaced and smooth.

According to a 28 year old local resident, Ms Nomsa Nkosi from Emjindi Royal Trust, ambulances could not reach other parts of the village during rainy season due to the poor condition of the road. ***"I believe our votes were not wasted as government finally listened to our grievances and constructed the road"***, she smiled.



LONG ROAD TO FREEDOM: Umjindi Trust community enjoys the fruits of democracy with newly built road.

The Mpumalanga Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport as an implementing agent contracted, Readira projects, to upgrade the road from gravel to surface standard at a cost of more than R202 million. Work opportunities were created during the process with twenty four (24) SMME's benefiting out of the total budget.

The scope of work includes the rehabilitation of 5.3km existing surfaced road. Construction of 13 box culverts and one new bridge structure including new pipe culverts, subsoil drainage, concrete-lined and unlined v- drains, bus bays, paved walkways, guardrails, kerb and channels, gabions, stone pitching, fencing, road signs and road markings.

"STOP GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN TAXI RANKS"

– says Deputy Minister Transport

Writer : Dimakatso Matentshi

The abuse of women and children by men are the worst atrocities the country has ever faced, as cases of rape and killings are escalating daily. We should not turn a blind eye and expect that these inhuman tendencies will disappear unless we take firm stance to completely eradicate them. Taxi operators should refrain from harassing women at the taxi ranks because of their preferred dress code, we strongly oppose this barbaric behavior". The statement was echoed by the Deputy Minister of Transport, Ms Dikeledi Magadzi, during a road safety awareness and Gender Based Violence (GBV) campaign. Ms Magadzi together with a delegation from the transport industry and local municipalities visited Mpumalanga province on Monday the 14th of December 2020.

The entourage started their visit at Iraq taxi rank in Middelburg, Steve Tshwete local Municipality, in which pamphlets about GBV and road safety were distributed to passengers. Messages on Covid 19 were the order of the day, as the Deputy Minister encouraged commuters to wear masks and sanitize. Thandeka Buthelezi from Middelburg ext 5 commended government on its firm stance on GBV.

"We truly appreciate efforts made by government in educating taxi drivers about abuse of women, since they enjoy humiliating us when we are dressed in miniskirts or tight clothes" she said.

The Provincial Secretary of SANTACO, Simphiwe Sibanyoni assured passengers that the organization will do everything in its power to educate operators about GBV and harassment of women in taxi ranks.

The entourage later joined victims of abuse at Emalahleni Municipality, Springvalley Primary School, where the Deputy Minister donated food parcels to 28 survivors. One beneficiary is Florence Magugula. She thanked the Deputy Minister for an early Christmas present. My kids will enjoy the food parcel, we truly appreciate the Minister for promoting the fight against women and children" she concludes.



BLESSED IS THE HAND THAT GIVES: Victims of GBV receive food parcels.

DEPARTMENT CONTINUES TO BEAR THE BRUNT OF A DEVELOPING ECONOMY

Writer : Mpho Gabashane



PAVING THE WAY Mining truck passing through the newly built Montagu haul road.

Mpumalanga is a Province rich in natural resources and cultural heritage. Manufacturing represents, the largest sector in the Province (21%) by value add, closely followed by Mining (19%). Mpumalanga is therefore regarded as the energy hub of the country given the fact that coal mining which is input product for generation of electricity, accounts for most of the total mining mineral output in the province.

In the past, rail transport was the most used mode to transport coal from the mines to the towers. With increasing neglect of rail maintenance, Eskom overtime opted to make use of freight to transport the coal. This has resulted in massive burden on the department as heavy coal carrying trucks daily commute the Highveld roads beyond limits. The department as custodian of public infrastructure is often stretched beyond limits in trying to meet the competing demands of constructing new roads especially for previously disadvantaged areas and maintaining economic routes on the other hand.

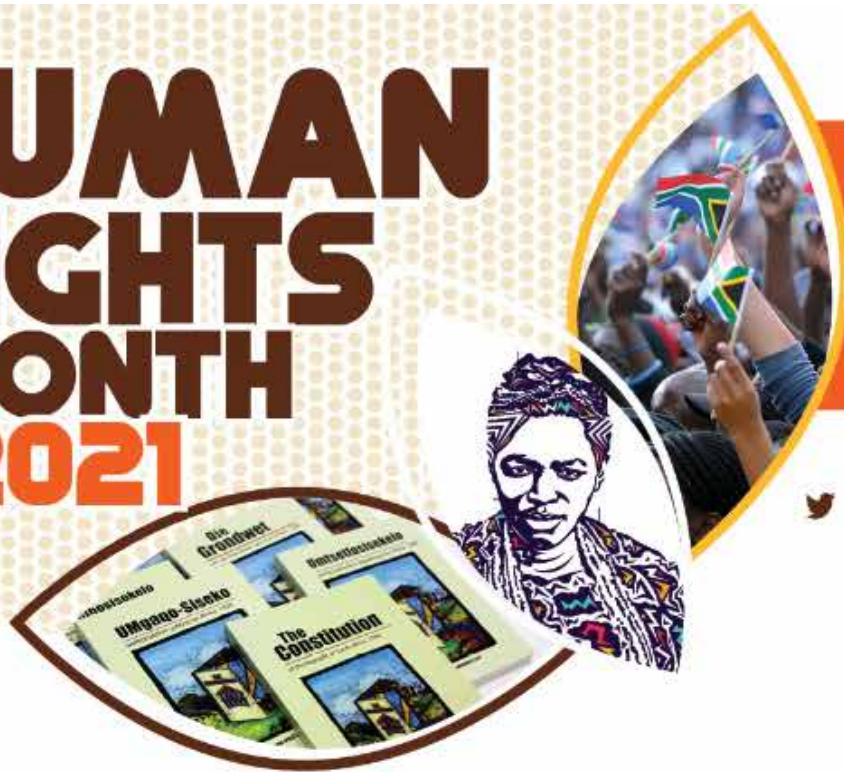
The case in point is the heavy rehabilitation of coal haul road P49/1 from Montagu Street (Middelburg) to N4 (4.3km) in the Nkangala region of the province. The word heavy is used conscious to

demonstrate the impact of economic development in the diminishing coffers of the department. The scope of this project included amongst others construction of new pavement layers, breaking up of existing pavement layers, earthworks, layer works, stabilisation, patching and repairing edge breaks, Storm water drainage system establishing of new ancillary works, maintenance of ancillary works, kerbing, guard rails, roads signs and road markings. The practical completion of this 4.3km road which began in March 2018 at the tune of R81 million, was achieved in November 2020, eight months behind schedule due to Covid-19 economic & social disruptions.

The critical and pleasing aspect is that the contractor was able to exceed the stipulated 30% set aside for local SMME's, which if taken on the total spent would be just over R 24 million but his was exceed with total spent on local SMME's amounting to R 28million, four million over the minimum threshold. Another exciting aspect is that women and youth were greatest beneficiaries on job creation with the implementation of the project. The project, throughout its implementation, created 58 job opportunities for local people with 30 being young people and seven for women.

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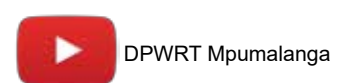
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