



human settlements
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



TaseKHAYA

Department of Human Settlements

Official External Newsletter

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EDITORIAL COMMENT



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The Department is being appreciated for its decision to take an affirmative stance in a bid to address the sluggish behaviour by non-performing contractors. This comes amid MEC Speed Mashilo's unembellished talk in one of his meetings recently with contractors and consultants in the built sector to address and sensitize them of the negative impacts of their poor workmanship which ultimately qualifies the department for an audit opinion. One can only hope that this will definitely drive some sense home and begin to see commitment and more dedication from those who are being given the opportunity to assist the Department deliver on integrated sustainable human settlements in the province.

Much appreciation goes to the Provincial Executive Council for once again touching base with the communities through overarching engagements that took place at the recent Outreach Programme as well as the Premier's Imbizo in the DR JS Moroka Local Municipality. We want to believe that the many youths that were there will definitely take up space and heed to the call of actively participating in the Mpumalanga Youth Development Fund meant to change their lives.

Meanwhile, Councillors from various municipalities were taken through human settlements legislations, policies and subsidies offered by the Department. The National and Provincial Departments of Human Settlements in collaboration with the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) have taken a step to capacitate councillors in human settlements from different municipalities in the Province for they can be better placed to assist government at greater lengths through consolidating issues of service delivery on the ground.

There is so much hope and confidence that henceforth our foot-soldiers will be able to deal coherently with the relentless issues of illegal occupation and selling of RDP houses and continue to ensure that proper beneficiary lists are managed to avoid criminal elements by incorrigible chancers who are always looking for ways to defraud the system. It is also impressive to note the efforts by government to engage and teach aspiring service providers who wish to participate in doing business with the public sector. It will be a positive feat to see more up and coming aspiring business people young and old joining the fort and contribute actively to the economy of the province and open up more space for healthy business competitions.

That's it for now, enjoy your happy read.

Remember to do what you can, with the little that you have – wherever you are.



IMBIZO: COMMUNITY GETS TO ENGAGE WITH THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

“We have promised to serve you, be your eyes and ears in the legislature” this was pronounced by Mpumalanga Premier, Ms Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane at the recent Imbizo held at Senotlelo village in the Dr JS Moroka. The Imbizo was part of the three day Executive Council Outreach Programme in the Municipality aimed at engaging with the community of Nkangala in dialogues on how the government can improve services and give a platform to community members to share their everyday challenges.

With a relatively high number of unemployed people in the within the municipal jurisdiction, Mtshweni-Tsipane encouraged them to not be spectators of the economy but to contribute towards its viability and growth. She encourages the youth to apply for the Mpumalanga Youth Development Fund which was developed by the Provincial Government to support youth enterprises and as an intervention to address youth unemployment. The

fund is allocated R60 million in the 2022/23 financial year. A point in case of a young lady who benefitted from the Mpumalanga Youth Development Fund is Ms Lungile Mkhize a 29 years old poultry farmer from Siyabuswa. She started by producing 300 eggs a day and the number escalated to 10 000. Her company LPF is amongst the 60 companies that benefitted from the funding.

In the dialogues with the community members, the people of Dr JS Moroka pleaded with government to come up with permanent solutions in whatever problems they are solving. Additional to the challenges faced by the community were the uncompleted projects which are allegedly reported complete. Apart from the sharing challenges, the Executive Council Outreach Programme brought hope to the community. 39 low cost houses will be constructed at Seabe Village, in the Dr JS Moroka. The shortage of water is a major setback in the area,

the municipality have 75 000 households, amongst that number 5 557 are without infrastructure to provide them with water. In spite of the number of households without water, the ones that were serviced with bulk services still endure shortages of water given that the community vandalises the structures. The vandalism makes the process of supplying water to be problematic.

“Government will not be able to provide water to all households if people keep on stealing the furnished infrastructure. Community members are urged to report the sabotages of infrastructures,” warned Mtshweni-Tsipane. As a permanent solution to the water the water problem in the area the Premier stated that, “The construction of the Mkhombo dam is at 97 percent towards completion. 11millitres of water will be extracted daily from the Loskop dam and be distributed to Dr JS Moroka and Thembisile Hani Municipalities”.



EXECUTIVE: Premier Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane addressing members of the community of Senotlelo, Dr JS Moroka Local Municipality during the recent Executive Outreach Programme.

“The construction of the Mkhombo dam is at 97 percent towards completion. 11millitres of water will be extracted daily from the Loskop dam and be distributed to Dr JS Moroka and Thembisile Hani Municipalities”

TERMINATION OF CONTRACTS LOOMING TO NON-PERFORMING CONTRACTORS



POOR RESULTS: Human settlements consultants together with contractors during a summoned meeting by MEC Speed Mashilo regarding shoddy workmanship in the delivery of projects.

Non performing contractors contribute heavily to the department's failure to meet its set yearly targets. MEC Speed Mashilo echoed this sentiments during a meeting with all consultants and contractors responsible for social amenities, community residential units and integrated human settlements in the province. Mashilo expressed that this poor workmanship by some of these companies took the department to irregular qualification from the Auditor General.

"Contractors are appointed on the basis of professionalism. If a service provider carries no capacity the department will not hesitate to terminate and stop doing business with them," called out Mashilo while expressing his frustrations at

the poor delivery rendered to the department. The meeting was a call for concern to all contractors who have been appointed by the department in the past three years and still have not completed projects. Growing the flame bigger is the report received by the MEC from the portfolio committee that projects which have been appointed a while back are not yet completed.

"I am not a student but a leader and been in leadership for many years. I am going to terminate contracts of those contractors who are failing to reach targets. I agree as a department we have shortfalls with contractors who were building faster however due to lack of cash flow they were told to halt," he said while adding that non completion

of projects cost the department a lot of money hence those who do not have the capacity to finish off were requested to come forward.

On the other side contractors and consultants cited challenges with regards to projects on site. Indicated challenges are land invasion, lack of bulk infrastructure and community unrests. MEC Mashilo reminded contractors and officials that the department's mandate is to deliver integrated human settlements not to do favours. "Contractors who encounter issues of non-payment due to officials who expects pay back must come forward to my office and those who fail to monitor projects will be dealt with," said Mashilo as he concluded.



Contractors who encounter issues of non-payment due to officials who expects pay back must come forward to my office and those who fail to monitor projects will be dealt with



NEEDY BENEFICIARY ELATED TO BE USHERED INTO A NEW HOUSE

Life for a 51-year old single parent of nine will never be the same again following the Department of Human Settlements' intervention into her desperate life for proper shelter. Ms Lisbeth Matlala recounts many difficult years of trying to apply for a government low cost house without success. However, the grandmother of five beautiful kids has now just become a proud owner of a newly built house fully equipped with furniture that has been donated by kind-hearted local business people. The Seabe lady, from the DR JS Moroka Local Municipality has been depending on social grant with her nine children and five grandchildren.

Her house comes as part of the department's 200 houses that are currently being constructed in the area to help many other needy households who find themselves in a similar situation as hers. Expressing her delight, Matlala said that this couldn't have come at the right time than now: "I am so excited. I have prayed, waited and wished for this to happen without despair and today I am so grateful that at last, I got my house. Thanks for not overlooking my plight. From now on my family and I will be able to sleep peacefully in a safe and more liveable house," said the seemingly grateful Matlala.

Overwhelmed with her neighbour's breakthrough, Ms Martha Mmila appreciated the good gesture by government and encouraged many others to stay put for their time is just about to happen. "We are thankful for what you have done for our friend and neighbour. We are hopeful that with the 200 houses that have been mentioned a lot of people will get to benefit." The delivery took place during the Provincial Executive Council Outreach Programme that was held in Senotlelo where community members were afforded with the opportunity to engage with the Executive Council regarding their needs and areas of community development.

MEC Speed Mashilo ushered Matlala and her family to the house as part of improving people's livelihoods and enhanced development. He however made a promise to come back to handover the remaining houses before November this year. This comes amid a group of disgruntled community members confronted Mashilo seeking clarity on the delivery of the currently incomplete units that were left unattended for a while with the contractor having neglected the site in Seabe village.

"As government there are so many elements that we need to deal with and some of those includes halted projects that have been neglected in our communities by people whom we have entrusted to deliver these services for our needy beneficiaries. I am confident that come by the end of November serious strides would have been made in terms of progress on the projects that have been stalled. I commit to come back and see to it that all the houses that we have projected to deliver around this community are completed and people get ushered in," confirmed Mashilo who also handed over groceries to the Matlala household.



GRATEFUL: MEC Speed Mashilo officially handing over house keys to Ms Lisbeth Matlala with Acting HOD Ms Hazel Zitha cheering on.



I have prayed, waited and wished for this to happen without despair and today I am so grateful that at last, I got my house.



GOVERNMENT EMPOWERS COUNCILLORS

Councillors from various municipalities were taken through human settlements legislations, policies and subsidies offered by the Department. The National and Provincial Departments of Human Settlements in collaboration with the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) have taken a step to capacitate councillors and human settlements from different municipalities in the Province. Most of the critical issues that came under discussion evolved around the apparent mismanagement of beneficiary lists and the illegal occupation of government's subsidised houses within localities.

Opening the two-day session, Ms Duduzile Singeni from the National Department's Policy and Research Unit welcomed all the newly elected councillors and emphasized that they need to assist the Department in ensuring the improvement of people's lives by providing basic services such as water and sanitation, proper houses and other opportunities. "As the Department we rely on you for communities to access appropriate and sustainable housing, water and sanitation services, and ensuring public participation" charged Ms Singeni. Chairperson of South African

Local Government Association (SALGA), Cllr Fridah Nkadameng welcomed the initiative taken by the Department to capacitate councillors as they are key to service delivery. "The induction is important as it educates us on how to immediately respond to issues raised by communities. It also enables us to take well informed decisions as guided by the Department's policies", stressed Nkadameng. She further noted that now councillors know that beneficiaries must comply with the Human Settlements Policy on Senior citizens, people living with disabilities, orphaned children and then the rest of the applicants.

The meeting concluded by making a submission that councillors must encourage beneficiaries to register their housing needs with their respective local municipalities. The housing needs are captured on what is referred to as the National Housing Needs Register (NHNR). It was advanced that potential beneficiaries be sourced from the NHNR and such persons must ensure that their details are continuously updated at their municipalities. The recent two-day induction session with the councillors was held in Middleburg, Steve Tshwete Local Municipality.



FOCUS: Nkomazi Local Municipality Acting Municipal Manager, Dr Derrick Ndlovu (right) with Human Settlements Head, Mr Jerry Khoza at the MUNIMEC Session.

SERVICE PROVIDERS RECEIVE PLAUSIBLE KNOWLEDGE ON BUSINESS WITH GOVERNMENT



GOVERNANCE: MEC Speed Mashilo together with the Acting Head of Department Ms Hazel Zitha during a stakeholder engagement meeting.

The Mpumalanga Executive Council took on a three-day Community Outreach Programme in the Dr JS Moroka Municipality to monitor and ensure the smooth rolling out of service delivery. Engaging with stakeholders was part of the different programmes administered throughout the three days. The department offered an engagement session with aspiring service providers to tutor them on processes and requirements needed in order to do business with them.

Welcoming the quests, Acting Head of Department Ms Hazel Zitha mentioned that the purpose of the engagement is to share the work the department is doing and how best service providers can benefit from its services. The session was held in Kga- Phahla a village located in the Dr JS Moroka Municipality where it is deemed a predominantly rural area with a high level of unemployment. Zitha was very adamant that the session will greatly benefit the locals and change their mindset with the

courage to want to participate in job creation activities from now henceforth.

Expressing the challenges faced by the Municipality, MEC Speed Mashilo mentioned the high number of unemployment, high number of uneducated people and shortage of water. "The high number of illiteracy is a call for concern especially in the construction industry. A number of contractors who want to do business with the department submit incomplete documents given that they do not know how to fill them and this jeopardises chances of scoring business".

Imparting knowledge to the community will empower them for a number of opportunities offered by government. An information session on supply chain process was presented to the service providers by the department's Chief Financial Officer, Mr Sthembiso Nyoka. In his presentation he emphasised education as key in directing stakeholders on processes to follow when doing business with government.

“The high number of illiteracy is a call for concern especially in the construction industry. A number of contractors who want to do business with the department submit incomplete documents given that they do not know how to fill them and this jeopardises chances of scoring business”.

Supply chain management strategies or policies to follow as a service provider includes registering with Central Supplier Database (CSD) and it accessed through the www.treasury.go.za.

“Goods or services that need to be procured if are below R1 million, quotations are requested from service who are registered on the CSD. Where goods or services are above R 1 million the department issues an advert in the tender bulletins which is issued monthly by Provincial Treasury,” explained Nyoka who further added that appointing service providers, the department use the creation of panel for service providers,

bids to appoint one service provider for specific projects and request for quotation.

Other institutions which presented their programmes to the service providers included the National Home Builders Registration Council (NHBRC) and Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA). Mr Bhekumuzi Mahlangu from NHBRC encouraged service providers who are involved in building homes to register with NHBRC and builders who meet the prescribed industry standards criteria in terms of competence, construction experience and financial capability are certified.

MADIBA MONTH WELL CELEBRATED

“

I am so grateful that the contractor adhered to the specification of the house to cater for special needs for my child. I will forever be grateful for your intervention and the generous act of giving you have displayed to me and my family,

”

In commemorating Mandela month, the Makena family from Dikgwale Village in Dr JS Moroka Local Municipality, Mpumalanga received a fully furnished sponsored house, blankets and groceries donated by Motheo Construction. As promised few months ago during a sod-turning ceremony, Human Settlements MEC Mr Speed Mashilo handed over the house to the family in collaboration with the Nkangala District, Dr JS Moroka Local Municipality and Motheo Construction as part of the Mandela Day Commemoration.

Receiving the house, an emotional 52-year old Ms Mmangakane Nurse Makena could not hold back her tears of joy as she received her house keys. Makena delightedly thanked all government institutions as well as all the sponsors who donated the household materials: “I am so grateful that the contractor adhered to the specification of the house to cater for special needs for my child. I will forever be grateful for your intervention and the generous act of giving you have displayed to me and my family,” she said, however pointing out that she would have loved her recently passed son to be part of the ceremony unfortunately he passed on months before moving into the beautiful house. Motheo Construction’s Project Manager,

Ms Lebo Zwane exclaimed that it is a great privilege given that the late Dr Thandi Ndlovu who was the founder of Motheo Construction believed in giving back to the needy. “We are pleased today to see how happy the family is and that their lives will never be the same, and indeed we have honoured Madiba’s wishes,” said Zwane. Motheo Construction was established 25 years ago and has built over 90 000 government subsidised houses throughout the country.

Throughout the month Mashilo also distributed over 100 blankets to the elderly and patched potholes in partnership with the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport. He continued donating tracksuits to needy learners at Shokgo and Makhosonke Primary schools. “For 67 years, Nelson Mandela devoted his life to the service of humanity as a human rights lawyer, a prisoner of conscience, and an international peacemaker, amongst others. So let us dedicate time and work selflessly to improve the less fortunate”, articulated Mashilo. This year’s campaign is commemorated under the theme – “Do what you can, with what you have, where you are” – a noble call for all to be of service to the less fortunate.



GIVE: MEC Mashilo handing over blanket to elderly beneficiaries at Dikgwale Village

GOGO DUBE BENEFITS DURING MANDELA MONTH

Celebrating Mandela Month, Every year on 18 July South Africans and the international community honour former President and international icon, the late Nelson Mandela through the Nelson Mandela International Day. As the world celebrates the International Mandela Day, the Mpumalanga Provincial Government called on citizens to mark the day through measures that will eradicate Gender Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) in the society.

Human Settlements MEC Speed Mashilo handed over a fully furnished house to 73 years old Gogo Johnna Dube and food parcels and together with other senior citizens received

50 blankets during the start of the Nelson Mandela Month Campaign in Enhlazatshe, Chief Albert Luthuli Local Municipality.

Gogo Dube who is wheelchair bound stays and takes care of her three grandchildren and their only source of income is Dube's disability grant. Thus, Mashilo stressed the need for indigent groups tracing when planning projects. 'We happy that today Gogo Dube we have to improve in locating such beneficiaries', said Mashilo. Gogo Dube was discovered by the Office of the Premier which then requested the Department to assist and prioritize her on any ongoing projects.



OVERJOYED: 73 year-old Gogo Johana Dube delighted to finally receive her newly built house equipped with sponsored furniture.

"I am so grateful that I pray God could grant me more years so i can live and enjoy this house while i am alive," said Gogo Dube.

It was a moment of joy and tears at the same time as Dube could not hold her tears back when receiving her fully furnished house she has been waiting for a long time. "I am so grateful that I pray God could grant me more years so i can live and enjoy this house while i am alive," said Gogo Dube.

The house that Gogo Dube received is part of the 37 units earmarked for construction in the area resulting from damages caused by Cyclone

Eloise in various areas under the Chief Albert Luthuli Local Municipality. Gogo's house came as an addition to the project scope. The entire project was delivered at a budget of over R4 million. The Department continued with Mandela Day activities at Dr JS Moroka on the 18-19 July 2022 where MEC Mashilo handed over a donated house, led the patching of potholes and distributed 100 blankets to identified beneficiaries.

RENTAL TRIBUNAL AWARENESS

In an effort to raise awareness, the Department of Human Settlements held a two day consultation session on Rental Housing Regulations in the Province. The rental sector is a lucrative market prone to disputes, frail relations between property owners and tenants thus in need of harmonization. The Department has been meeting with property owners, social housing institutions, members of public to solicit public comments the gazetted amendments. The two sessions in Mpumalanga were held recently in Govan Mbeki and eMalahleni Local Municipalities.

During the sessions it was indicated that there are major amendments in the draft regulations. The regulations seem to find solace from both ends of the divide. Bonginkosi Shiba, a tenant from Govan Mbeki Local Municipality welcomed the introduction of the rental relief fund. "COVID-19 disaster showed

us flames and many people could not afford rental owing to retrenchments, thus the permanent relief fund provision will come in handy in future distressing situations", said Shiba. On the other end Carel Dirker a property owner from Dirker Enterprises gave a positive reaction with the introduction of the appeals body and the prescribed way of handling the deposits. "These regulations offered more mechanisms in disputes resolutions and it is a great thing", he said.

Alluding to major amendments in the draft regulations, Mpumalanga Rental Housing Tribunal Director Mr Roy Ledwaba said the regulations merely augments the objectives of the Rental Housing Amendment Act by giving uniformity in the functioning of the Rental Housing Tribunals across provinces during the session in Witbank. "The regulations revolutionize the rental sector, as a matter of law

all lease agreements must be reduced into writing. The regulations also give guidelines with pro-forma lease agreement which must be complied with it will be mandatory that property owners issue receipt to tenant for monthly rental fees received," emphasized Ledwaba.

It is also important for property owners to remember that the amendments also establish the Rental Housing Tribunal as a forum of first instance in rental disputes. It also introduces novel yet appeals body appointed by the Minister.

As experienced with COVID-19, the regulations also proposes rental relief fund that can be accessed by tenants and property owners in periods of distress. The regulations also directs municipalities to establish rental information offices which can also mediate on some lighter issues in ensuring the involvement of all spheres of government.



PROVIDING GUIDANCE: Human Settlements Rental Housing Tribunal Director, Mr Roy Ledwaba enlightening tenants and estate agents on rental disputes and other related issues in the sector during a consultation session.



"The regulations revolutionize the rental sector, as a matter of law all lease agreements must be reduced into writing. The regulations also give guidelines with pro-forma lease agreement which must be complied with it will be mandatory that property owners issue receipt to tenant for monthly rental fees received"



CELEBRATING WOMEN'S MONTH



MBOKODO: The department's influential women in a celebratory mood during the commemoration of Women's Day at Ingwenyama Lodge .

Commemorating women's month and celebrating it under Women's Socio-Economic Rights and Empowerment theme. Mpumalanga Provincial Women's day was commemorated in Dipaleseng Local Municipality, Balfour. The venue was fully packed with different people from different walks of life, who were colourful and beautiful in their different traditional attires. It is also imperative that this day we honour the over 20 000 women of all races and creeds who displayed unity in purpose to protest against the imposition of apartheid regime 58 years ago.

On this auspicious day, we pay homage to all our heroines who, through their words and most importantly their deeds, taught us the true meaning courage, sacrifices and determination in pursuit of the noble goal of equality, freedom and the conferment of dignity to all. "The commemoration of Women's day this year is blighted by the wide array of challenges women face today. Sadly, all evidence shows that women continue to bear the brunt of our society's major challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality," remarked Premier Refilwe Mtsweni-Tsipane. Moreover, in the spirit of celebrating women's month

as Mpumalanga Department of Human Settlements, MEC Speed Mashilo has not waived the government's commitment to see more women in construction. As such the Department boast a total percentage of 40 per cent of women doing construction in its database. "We recognize their impact, growth and resilience, especially in the construction industry that has always been male-dominated," said Mashilo adding that as we celebrate Women's month we ought to give necessary support to women to be home builders for a sustainable future.

As the country celebrates women's month in August, it is characterized by honors of women's contribution to the struggle as well as societal development. It is in this recognition that the department in line with the government's policy on women empowerment, continues to afford space to women in the construction sector. The policy has a preferential procurement as an enabler affording a plethora of women an opportunity to participate in this seemingly male dominated sector.

One of the women empowered by the department, Ms Nomshado Madonsela (63) of Basadi Civil Construction is

currently in grade seven and now she boasts extensive experience in the built sector where she has decided to pass her skills to young and aspiring contractors. "The contribution of the department in my life has been immense. Basadi Construction is currently implementing 79 units project in the locality of the City of Mbombela and this serves as a testimony to us for our undying dedication to achieve and actively play a meaningful role in the ever so demanding industry," revealed Madonsela.

She confirms that it was never easy when she ventured into the industry as she had to quickly come to terms with terminology of the industry. She advised emerging women contractors that they need to work hard and be committed to their work if they were to make it in the industry. In her views, Madonsela said she has always viewed the concept of women empowerment as an opportunity for women to take up space. "Women need to influence social change and direction by being active participants in the male-dominated economic sectors". The department will always empower women to make sure that Socio-economic Rights and Empowerment is achieved.

STAKEHOLDERS JOIN IN CONVERSATION WITH THABA CHWEU DISABILITY FORUM

Persons living with disabilities are among the most allegedly marginalized in the country, moreover, have less achievement with regard to economic participation and higher rates of poverty than people without disabilities. The Mpumalanga Department of Human Settlements took it upon itself and embarked on a round table discussion with the Thaba Chweu Disability Forum in order to share necessary information on how the department operates as well as opportunities that are available for them to participate in.

“Persons with disability experience the highest degree of socio-economic marginalization, hence they become more vulnerable especially when they are without access to decent shelter. The Department need to take into account the socio-economic needs of people with disabilities and ensure that there are resources to equip them to better their livelihood. This could be through affording them better education, empowerment and shelter as guided by the Bill of Rights” enlightened Ms Nomvula Khonjelwayo, Assistant Director for Special Programmes in the department.

The session invited direct external stakeholders such as the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), National Home Builders Registration Council (NHBRC) and internal stakeholders from Beneficiary Management, Legal Services, Rental and Property Management and Supply Chain Management. The presentations done by stakeholders were presented enabling mechanism

and opportunities to reduce the challenges which disable them from participating as equal citizens in society. According to SAHRC, the constitution places a positive duty on the state to respect, promote, protect and fulfil the rights in the Bill of Rights, including the rights of persons with disabilities. It does so through the legal framework which creates primary responsibilities on key government departments to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities.

“The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (PEPUDA), 4 of 2000 promotes equality and provides for measures to facilitate the eradication of unfair discrimination, hate speech and harassment on the grounds of race, gender or disability, amongst others. With specific reference to disability, no person may unfairly discriminate against any person including: Denying or removing from any person who has a disability any supporting or enabling facility necessary for their functioning in society,” this is according to the SAHRC.

In the conversation with the forum NHBRC recommended different courses offered by the council. The council offers CETA accredited courses to assist the emerging home builders through training and inspection. This is to achieve and maintain satisfactory technical standards of home building. Training courses includes bricklaying, plastering, plumbing, roof, carpentry, construction management, project management, and finance for non-financial manager, health and safety and house development value chain.



DEVELOPMENT: Departmental Special Programmes Assistant Director, Ms Nomvula Khonjelwayo.



Persons with disability experience the highest degree of socio-economic marginalization, hence they become more vulnerable especially when they are without access to decent shelter



CELEBRATING HERITAGE MONTH



JOVIAL: Departmental officials Ms Thobile Mbowane and Nontobeko Nkosi with their cultural attires.



BRIGHT: Ms Susan Kgopane and Ms Patricia Nepfumbada on their colorful traditional attires.

The textbook meaning of heritage defines it as a property that descends to an heir or something transmitted by or acquired from a predecessor. To put it in context, the food we eat, music, and attire, amongst others form the tapestry of Heritage Day. At least for a day, South Africans get a rare experience of their identity. For a day, one marvels at the richness of their types of food and feels different but good in their traditional attire while dancing to the sounds of their music. It is one's heritage after all.

The sad part is that people – especially in this country - have been turned into tourists in their own heritage. Their identity no longer forms part of their daily lives, it is one to be visited occasionally. Foreign tendencies have formed habits that, in turn, are creating new identities and heritages. It is these new heritages that the current generations will bequeath to forthcoming generations.

September is Heritage Month where the nation observes and celebrates all that it inherited from preceding generations. This is the sort of inheritance that includes—but is not limited to—culture, traditions, monuments, and knowledge, land and belief systems. It anchors the nation. The value attached to any form of heritage is what sustains it and any inheritance that may be deemed to be of less value, loses its significance with the progression of time.

Heritage Month and Heritage Day is the time the nation ought to celebrate oneness in diversity. Unity in diversity requires clarity of mind and extreme levels of tolerance for each other's uniqueness. South African society presents such diversity in languages, cultures, religions, tribes, politics and nationalities, among others. Although some of these are inherited and others are acquired, they create a mosaic worth embracing and celebrating.

We, however, need to be critical of what we celebrate considering the distorted nature of some of what we have inherited. Language is one critical aspect of people's heritage. It defines who they are and through it, people are able to create their worldview and develop relationships, not only

with one another but with their world as well. Africa's history of colonialism and apartheid that is perpetuated through various colonial matrices of power continues to impact negatively on linguistic interactions. The impact is such that the indigenous African languages are quickly losing their depth as communities experience a linguistic shift to English, which is a minority language but due to its economic dominance, commands authority.

African parents are putting up with a system that demands their children be taught in a language other than their own and many of them see nothing wrong with that. Given a chance, they would demand that the status quo be upheld or even enhanced. These are the lived experiences of colonisation and its impact on daily lives including language. If you control people's language, you control their understanding which forms their worldview. You further control the extent of their development, as language is pivotal in ingenuity. Ingenuity speaks to inventiveness and originality. Surely, such cannot manifest through the second, third or fourth languages of instruction — a common phenomenon across the African continent.

Even as people celebrate their heritage, many are struggling to identify some features of their heritage in their languages, let alone start and finish a sentence in their mother tongue. In some communities, it is even seen as a sign of being educated. What type of education is this that disinherits you of your mother tongue?

In celebrating diversity, why is it that it's only the black child who gets given an English name? So many questions are indicative of a system that is unkind to language diversity as it is lopsided to disadvantage indigenous African languages. It renders celebrations of unity in diversity a mockery. However, we as a people would have moved further away from who we originally are. This has dire consequences on the identity and progression of the nation. As we celebrate this September, let us critically think about what it is that we are celebrating when we are detached from the heritage ceded to us by the generations before us. (Credits: UOF)



VISION

Integrated sustainable human settlements and improved quality livelihoods

MISSION

To coordinate and facilitate the creation of integrated sustainable human settlements through:

- Servicing of sites, construction of houses, issuing of title deeds, resolution of rental disputes and other socio-economic facilities for poor communities
- Collaboration with other state department in delivery public facilities
- Collaboration with the private sector and other government agencies

VALUES

The values of the Department rest on Batho Pele principles.
The Department is committed to maintain the following values:

CORE VALUES

Equality
Integrity
Accountability
Professionalism
Value for money

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