

EZOTHUKELA NEWS

Uthukela District Municipality Online Newsletter

Volume 2 Issue No.: 06

Apr - Jun 2020

CoGTA MEC visits the district to raise COVID-19 awareness



The Honourable MEC for CoGTA Sipho Hlomuka visited the Uthukela District Municipality in a continuous efforts to raise awareness about the COVID-19 pandemic in Okhahlamba and Alfred Duma municipalities. Mayors, Deputy Mayors, Speakers, Councillors, members of the Uthukela District Command Council (DCC), SAPS, RTI, Public Safety, officials and stakeholders also formed part of the campaign.

The main focus of the campaign was on social grants pay points and supermarkets where there's normally an influx of patrons and road blocks. This also presented with an opportunity to do community awareness, educating about the importance of social distancing and hygiene standards. The first stop was at Winterton WTW whereby the MEC was briefed by the Technical Services team about its operations.

The entourage then went to visit pay points in Bergville to talk to the patrons about the pandemic and also to determine whether there was compliance with the regulations. After that the team set up a roadblock to distribute leaflets and check whether motorists were also complying. Not even a rainy weather could dampen the team spirit.

Having finished the work, the team then went to visit the Alfred Duma municipality in Ladysmith. The MEC had anticipated that it might be difficult to manage the situation because of the payment of grants. According to him vendors were allowed to sell food at the pay points so that older people would have something to eat. The MEC also mentioned that it should be seen to it how these people are assisted in every way possible. He urged that water must be distributed to the communities to make sure hygiene standard is not compromised.

Mr Hlomuka also said roadblocks will assist to determine who's supposed to come to town. "Any person with a fake permit must be arrested with immediate effect. Law enforcement will be implemented. The reality is that it has not sunk in on our people's minds that this deadly pandemic does exist," said MEC Hlomuka. The MEC also mentioned that masks should be changed constantly and regulations be implemented in order to effectively curb this pandemic.



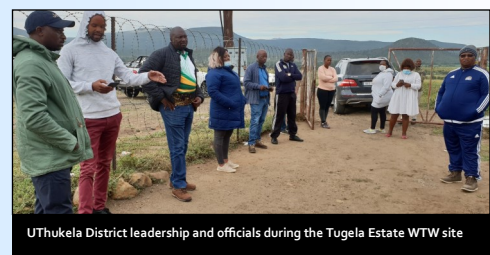
MEC Hlomuka and officials conducting roadblock in Ladysmith

The MEC and the team then conducted the walk-about inside a select few supermarket premises checking out the general hygiene conditions and also talking to the people. The team was satisfied with the cleanliness and arrangements of safety measures found there. They also distributed awareness leaflets to the patrons queuing outside. The day was ended by conducting another roadblock on N11 before Helpmekaar turn off. The purpose was to check if motorists and public transport were complying with the regulations. Warrants, driver's licenses, PDPs and general things were also inspected.

Leaders monitor water situation in Tugela Estate

Just as health practitioners emphasise the issue of cleanliness as one of the important ways to keep the COVID-19 pandemic at bay, the Uthukela District Mayor Cllr AS Mazibuko accompanied by Deputy Mayor Cllr NW Mchunu, Chairperson for Water, Sanitation and Technical Services Cllr S Dlungwane including Councillors, EDTEA, Umgeni Water and officials visited the Tugela Estate Water Works to monitor the plant operations.

Mayor Mazibuko mentioned that it is should be known that the plant was handed over to Umgeni Water as the agency is now running some of the bulk plants in the district. "The main purpose of us coming here was to get a glimpse of how the plant operates and also to get to know if there are any challenges encountered in terms of pumping and supplying water to the communities," explained the Mayor. Both Umgeni Water and Uthukela District Operators assured the Mayor that water supply was managed well and people get water supply as per the schedule.



Uthukela District leadership and officials during the Tugela Estate WTW site

They acknowledged though that there are some challenges experienced in one or two areas but the issue was being attended to. Cllr Dlungwane promised the operators that they will get spare parts and equipment to overcome some of the challenges faced with. It is hoped that this will assist in terms of making sure that everyone has water supply, particularly, in the areas that are currently having challenges. The Mayor said he will make sure that the commitment made by Cllr Dlungwane sees the light of the day.

Places like Oqungwini and surroundings were also visited and they already have existing pipelines and running taps. The Uthukela District Technical team then fixed more stand pipes along the roadside to enable the community to have access to water supply at their proximity, much to the appreciation of the members of the community.

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Stakeholders work to combat the spread COVID-19

The struggle to combat the COVID-19 pandemic in the district continued where the Uthukela District Command Council led by Mayor Cllr AS Mazibuko, Deputy Mayor Cllr NW Mchunu, Alfred Duma Deputy Mayor Cllr T Hadebe, Speaker Cllr T Ngubane, District Health Dr T Zulu, Councillors, SAPS, Public Safety and officials visited the shopping centres in Ekuvukeni and Ezakheni to check if they were complying with the lockdown regulations and to raise awareness.

There was a concern though about some people who were bringing children to do shopping with them in one centre. The Mayor advised them that such practise was against the law as they were not observing the lockdown regulations. Workers were also advised to sanitise all the time. Grant payment queues were monitored and the leadership was pleased with the way they were arranged, keeping with social distancing requirements.



"We are here to check if the supermarkets are complying with the safety and hygiene standards as required. But also we would be interested to find out if the stores have not inflated prices because of the situation we find ourselves in. What must be known is that the only people who are allowed to go out are those seeking medical attention, buying food and collecting grants, others must stay at home," commented Mayor Mazibuko.

The Mayor also emphasised that law enforcement must be fully implemented. The influx and access control at the supermarkets that were visited was strictly observed by the management. Masks and sanitizers were made available to staff members and patrons were sanitised on entry.

The next activation was held at the Ezakheni Plaza where a large number of people were queuing outside with strict access control being enforced by the security personnel. Social distancing markings were clearly visible and adhered to by the patrons. Inside there were child restriction signs on display. The centre was very strict on the lockdown regulations, only allowing essential services shops to operate much to the appreciation of the leadership.

"We're trying to deal with the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic because as government officials our purpose is to contain the spread of the virus. We are also raising awareness to the public about this pandemic so that they know and practise what we are preaching," said Dr Zulu.

MEC fumigates informal settlements

MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA) Ms Nomsa Dube-Ncube, Uthukela District Municipality and Alfred Duma municipality embarked on a mass fumigation of informal settlements programme in Ward 10 in Thembalihle outside Ladymith.



MEC Dube-Ncube during the fumigation of Thembalihle informal settlement

The MEC was accompanied by Traditional leadership Inkosi Sithole, Uthukela District EXCO Member Cllr T Shabalala, Alfred Duma Speaker Cllr T Ngubane, Councillors, Department of Health, Agriculture & Rural Development, Human Settlements and SAPS participated in the programme.

The mass fumigation commenced in Thembalihle informal settlement while other teams departed to Qwaqwa informal settlement as well. The

COVID-19 informal settlements sanitisation programme was aimed at eliminating the spread of the deadly Coronavirus in the densely populated areas.

"UThukela is one of the priority districts and serious efforts have been undertaken to fight the spread of the Coronavirus and to stop potentially deadly transmission amongst our people. A lot still needs to be done for us to turn the corner. Apart from mass screening and mass sanitisation, there really is a great need for constant education and awareness campaign to fight Covid-19. I am confident we will prevail over this situation," said MEC Dube-Ncube.

Mayor do oversight visit on water issues

The search for extra groundwater to increase the water supply in all three local municipalities is bearing fruit. Uthukela District Mayor Cllr AS Mazibuko accompanied by Chairperson for Water, Sanitation and Technical Services Cllr S Dlungwane, Cllr S Msibi and officials went to Okhahlamba municipality to do an oversight visit to determine the functionality of the boreholes drilling programme in KwaNkuxa, Esitateni and KwaMkhalimi Farms in Ward 1.

This was in line with the COVID-19 pandemic mitigation implementation plan. Cllr N Bhengu from the ward also joined the Mayor and his team to witness for herself. The project is being undertaken by Sydwalt Construction. Eight boreholes have been drilled and equipped in Ward 1 but the team managed to visit four of them in the above areas. The total number of boreholes to be drilled in Ward 1 alone is 17. All four visited boreholes are functioning properly.

"We are especially grateful that we have found potential boreholes in these areas, as water provision has been a challenge not only in these areas but to others as well. We would like to decrease water challenges in these areas by providing our communities with reliable water sources in line with the mitigation plan for the COVID-19", explained the Mayor.

Speaking on behalf of the community of KwaMkhalimi, Sifiso Makhaza thanked his Councillor and the Mayor for doing a wonderful job for the community. He said people, particularly women, used to go a long distance to fetch water from the springs. Now that the boreholes were drilled within a walking distance things will be much easier for them.



Mayor Mazibuko, Cllr Dlungwane and Cllr Msibi handing over one of the boreholes to the community members

MEC joins the UThukela DCC mass screening and distributes food parcels

Uthukela District Command Council (DCC) led by the Honourable MEC District Champion Ms Nomsa Dube-Ncube and Uthukela District Mayor Cllr AS Mazibuko joined the Alfred Duma Local Command visits in ward 14, Burford and ward 20, Ntombi's Camp for mass screening and testing outreach. The programme commenced in Burford where the Alfred Duma Deputy Mayor Cllr T Hadebe, Health Department, EDTEA, Ward Cllr S Kubheka, Cllr T Njoko, SAPS, Public Safety, Field workers and officials were briefed about two identified beneficiary households in the area that would be visited.

One family of nine members all of whom were unemployed and barely surviving on the social grants. The leadership informed the family about the COVID-19 pandemic and thereafter they were screened. Nobody showed any signs of the virus. The MEC then handed the family food parcels and money donation and also advised them to see the Social Development or SASSA to make arrangements for food parcels until their situation improves. They thanked the MEC for her intervention. The food parcels distributed are her stuff in the office that have been collected for this purpose. The screening and testing programme on the other hand was also continuing. A few households were thus visited. The MEC advised another family about the importance of education and encouraged them to do school work diligently in order to change their lives for better.



The MEC then led a team to visit ward 20 in Ntombi's Camp where there were also two child-headed households with no one employed. Just like the other households visited they also relied heavily on social grants for survival. In one family visited it was found that a seven year old child was not attending school because she had lost her birth certificate and a four year old child was not attending a creche either. The MEC promised to assist in finding her the school as she was informed that the said certificate had been found. Food parcels and money donations were handed over to these families. Pamphlets and soap bars were distributed to the communities.



Speaking to the healthcare workers at the end of the programme Ms Dube-Ncube commended these foot soldiers who are working tirelessly under difficult conditions. She was also critical of misinformation circulating about the COVID-19 pandemic. "Social media, fake news and resistance are but some of the difficulties you encounter in your day-to-day activities. We know it is not easy but you need to go out there and serve the community. It's been a call for all of us during this coronavirus-induced lockdown. We also understand it has caused huge social and economic upheavals but as the government we took the right decision in the interest of everyone. We are grateful for what you are doing and wish you to continue doing your work to the best of your abilities," MEC Ncube-Dube said.

Passing his closing remarks after the activities of the day the District Mayor was so grateful for all the MEC had done. He mentioned that the MEC was part of the programme that started in Burford earlier on and also took part in the second one in Ntombi's Camp. "We started in Burford in the morning with the testing and programme up until this point where we have reached our end of business for today. We wish to thank our MEC Champion for all what she's done for us and the community as a whole. Our programme is work in progress, we must soldier on", said Mayor Mazibuko.

KZN Legislature investigates state of school readiness

KwaZulu Natal Legislature oversight saw Members visiting various schools in Okhahlamba and Inkosi Langalibalele municipalities. The purpose was to check the state of preparedness in schools after COVID-19 lockdown. During the visits, Members led by Honourable Otto Kunene and Honourable Nhlakanipho Ntombela were accompanied by officials from the Department of Education who had to account on the challenges facing schools and the plans of addressing them.

Other departments such as Social Development, Health, CoGTA, Public Works as well as District Mayor Cllr AS Mazibuko, Okhahlamba Deputy Mayor Cllr T Ngoza were part of the delegation. The visits also included stakeholders that comprised School Governing Bodies (SGBs), teacher unions, ward councillors, Interfaith leader and other community structures. Three schools in Okhahlamba, namely; Nobomi HS, Tshanibezwe HS and Dukuza PS were visited.

In his remarks the Mayor Cllr Mazibuko said that "the novel COVID-19 pandemic has brought about the new normal in our lives hence we learn new things about it on a daily basis". According to the reports from the school principals they seemed ready to resume with schooling activities. They shared a common challenge with the screening done by one person. Water supply was mentioned as another challenge except in Tshanibezwe HS. There were concerns raised about educators who were not trained in dealing with COVID-19 pandemic.

In some schools hand washing stations were not completed by service provider. In Dukuza PS the stations were not installed at all, they were lying on the floor. PPE had been supplied to the schools but were not enough. In Inkosi Langalibalele municipality uThukela District Deputy Mayor Cllr NW Mchunu, Speaker Cllr PG Strydom, Members of the Legislature, Cuban Doctors, Health, and other stakeholders visited the Lyndhurts PS, Drankensburg Comprehensive and Enhlanganisweni PS while other team visited Sizathina HS, AmaHlubi HS and Inkosi Mjwayeli PS.



Mayor hands over spring water scheme to the community

Water is one necessity where all the living things are dependent on. In a planet where there's generally no water, there would be no life at all. So in an effort to ensure that everyone in the Uthukela District has access to this precious resource, the District Mayor Cllr AS Mazibuko visited Emaswazini in Ward 4 to hand over spring water scheme. He was accompanied by Okhahlamba Deputy Mayor Cllr T Ngozo, Chairperson for Water, Sanitation and Technical Services Cllr S Dlungwane, GM: N Khuzwayo, Technical team and officials.



Cllr Mazibuko, Cllr Ngozo and Cllr Dlungwane with uThukela DM

The Uthukela District Technical Services team built the spring protection scheme to provide water to the community. The duration of the project was two months. It is estimated that it cost around R490 000 to implement. The scheme located high up in the mountains, consisting of three static tanks. It draws

water from the mountain spring and feeds a larger part of Ward 4. People will now have access to water supply closer to their homes.

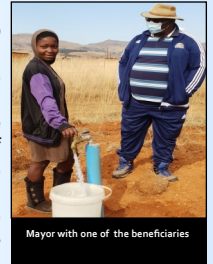
According to the Area Engineer S Mazibuko the project has been successful in its implementation. There's another project down the hills that was implemented but there was an outcry from the community saying that not all of them were getting water from it. So they pointed out that there was a spring up in the mountains that can feed many people hence the project was initiated. The tanks are located at least a kilometre below the spring. There are about 30 standpipes connections supplying water to the communities.

The Deputy Mayor was grateful that the community of Emaswazini will be accessing water from now on. "We hope Uthukela District will also proceed to do the same in other areas as well. COVID-19 pandemic has brought about new challenges but please don't despair", she said. Cllr

Dlungwane acknowledged the shortages of resources including the manpower but commended the team for a sterling job. He said the technical team is currently busy constructing sewer station in Bergville and they will need more manpower and skills development.

The Mayor admitted that the district has a challenge with regards to the issue of water and sanitation provision and thanked the technical team for a job well done. "We have a responsibility to service our communities all the time. Okhahlamba is rich with the abundance of water yet they are having challenges with the supply. The National government has a plan to assist the community with reliable water supply", commented Mayor Mazibuko.

He said it was always good to utilise internal services rather than outsourcing. He went on to say we have to build the capacity internally so we can rely on ourselves. "We have many projects to refurbish our schemes but also we have illegal connections. We hope having more schemes will assist in cutting out utilisation of water tankering system. There's also other projects that are in the pipeline. All wards that have challenges will be attended to as well. The safety of our infrastructure relies much to the community", the Mayor concluded.



Mayor with one of the beneficiaries

Vandalism of the schemes and theft of generators is a huge challenge. Gogo Zwane, speaking on behalf of the community, appreciated the work done by the team. She said before the project they used to fetch water from the river far away from home. The tap will help them a lot as children will now be getting water closer to their homes. The team then visited the Mnweni water reservoir which is going to connect few reservoirs to feed the whole of Ward 4. The reservoir is drawing raw water from the nearby river. It is envisaged that once the job is finished nobody will run out of water.

KZN Legislature embarks on health facilities functionality inspections

Members of KZN Legislature led by Honourable Nhlakanipho Ntombela embarked on health institutions oversight inspections as part of the Provincial Legislature's Health Functionality visits. The programme started in Estcourt and Emmaus where Members visited various health facilities including hospitals and clinics. They were accompanied by Uthukela District Deputy Mayor Cllr NW Mchunu, Health District Director Dr T Zulu, EDTEA, Inkosi Langelibalele municipality and fieldworkers.

The purpose, as outlined by Ntombela was to make sure that government health institutions are well in order during the COVID-19 period. Dr ME Kekana Acting CEO at Estcourt Hospital gave a presentation on the functionality of the hospital. The institution do have mobile clinics for clients who are unable to reach the hospital. The hospital itself is a 24 hour service facility offering a wide range of health services with 307 beds

It has about 11 fixed clinics, 4 mobile clinics and 367 Community Care Givers (CCGs) with a supervisor and facilitator. They have the isolation and quarantine wards with 72 number of beds allocated. The hospital has reached its full capacity due to the pandemic. They have a dedicated screening desk in the entry. PPE are in full utilisation and have enough stock.

The Zwelisha Clinic provides primary health care services. It offers service to over 14000 population. Training on COVID-19 has been provided to all staff members. The clinic is well covered in terms of staff category except for cleaning duties which is covered by EPWP. Enough PPE have been supplied to the clinic. It has infrastructure challenges in terms of ablution facilities. Good news is that medicine is always available.

Another team led by a Member of the Legislature Miss Z Cele, Okhahlamba Speaker Cllr S Zulu and officials visited Emmaus Hospital as well. The CEO Mrs Mzizi said they receive referrals from six clinics and mobile clinics around Okhahlamba municipality. She elaborated that they have severe acute rate of malnutrition cases of children over the years because of high unemployment rate in area. This is a clear indication that the government intervention is needed in relation to the matter.

The hospital converted the TB ward for isolation and quarantine and has 32 beds. They have also transferred 14 professional nurses to help in the COVID-19 ward now they have shortage of professional nurses but currently the staff is being reshuffled. At Mazizini Clinic Sister Hlongwane presented on their services saying that they provide comprehensive primary health care services. No covid 19 cases have been reported in the facility as yet. The challenge they face is that the clinic is built on a small piece of land, surrounded by the households with no adequate space.



Hon. Ntombela, Deputy Mayor Mchunu, Dr Zulu and Sir Nhlabathi conducting inspections at the Zwelisha Clinic

Uthukela District Municipality brings you current news

Published by Communications Unit

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