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TAKING PARLIAMENT TO THE PEOPLE

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NCOP takes Parliament to Kwazulu-Natal

The National Council of Provinces (NCOP) is this week in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) in Ugu District Municipality for its Taking Parliament to the People programme. Ugu District Municipality includes Ray Nkonyeni, uMdoni, uMuziwabantu and uMzumbe local municipalities. The theme for this week's programme is "Working together to ensure faster improvement in the delivery of services to communities", writes Mava Lukani.

service delivery, the NCOP decided that this week's programme should be held in KZN's Ugu District Municipality. The programme will focus on water and sanitation, water infrastructure development, road infrastructure, safety and security, human settlements, agriculture, local economic development and the provision of social services.

Mr Masondo noted that the 2021 riots and floods earlier in 2022 destroyed people's lives and damaged water, roads, electricity and housing infrastructure in KZN. "These risks, particularly those caused by the effects of climate change, remain with us."

To understand the negative impact of the July 2021 unrest to the economy, Mr Masondo pointed out that in Ugu alone, which has large tracts of fertile land for agriculture, over 500 000 tons of sugarcane were destroyed, which would have been worth millions of rands in potential revenue. The Ugu Fresh Produce Market was also destroyed in the riots, directly affecting tens of thousands of jobs and many more indirectly.

"We will be failing in our duty if we do not to reiterate the point made by the leaders in the province and nationally during the time of the unrest and afterwards, that we must guard against destroying the very resources and the means we need for our own livelihoods and development," said Mr Masondo.



Delivering an address to mark the opening of the programme, the Chairperson of the NCOP, Mr Amos Masondo, said it is fitting that after a hiatus of two years due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Taking Parliament to the People is held in KZN, particularly in light of the devastation in the province caused by public violence, destruction of property and looting during the July 2021 unrest and the damages triggered by the floods earlier this year.

Mr Masondo mentioned the NCOP's constitutional responsibility to represent the interests of the provinces. The NCOP must also provide for the different categories of municipalities to be represented in Parliament. It must also facilitate co-operation among the different spheres of government, namely national, provincial and local government.

The NCOP has various ways of fulfilling this mandate, one of which is the Taking Parliament to the People programme, which was initiated in 2002 to facilitate public involvement in legislative and other parliamentary processes.

KZN has a number of service delivery challenges and this affected the outcome of the 2021 local government elections. Other problems relate to developing the province's large rural community.

Following a series of engagements with its provincial counterparts and informed by the desire to facilitate collaboration to improve

Section 139 intervention must help municipalities out of difficulties



The Speaker of KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Legislature, Ms Nontembeko Boyce, has appealed to the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) to ensure that section 139 interventions help municipalities out of difficulties, writes Sakhile Mokoena.

Speaking during the opening of the NCOP's Taking Parliament to the People programme in Ugu District Municipality, Ms Boyce said municipalities cannot be under a legislation that places them in administration, but which doesn't help them out.

"We are calling on the NCOP to ensure that the interventions made by government through section 139 are made in order to assist municipalities out of the challenges that they face, not to have municipalities perpetually under administration through section 139 intervention.

"And this doesn't only rest on the MEC of Cogta and the NCOP, but it is also upon us as citizens, as leadership of municipalities, to cooperate with the appointed administrators to help our municipalities out of trouble.

"Currently we have a number of municipalities under 139 interventions and

we hope your coming here will help and have some of them standing on their own without intervention," Ms Boyce said.

Section 139 of the Constitution states that when a municipality cannot fulfil its obligations the relevant provincial executive may intervene by taking any appropriate steps to ensure fulfilment of that obligation. The intervention may include dissolving the municipal council and appointing an administrator until a newly elected council has been elected, if exceptional

circumstances warrant such steps.

Reflecting on the state of service delivery in the district and other municipalities in the province, especially the challenges on the provision of water, the Speaker said this often led to instabilities as frustrated citizens protested and blocked the N2 road, causing disruptions to the economy of the province and the country.

"Whether these matters are in Ugu, Umzinyathi or Thukela they affect the governance of the province and the development of KwaZulu-Natal by causing instability. We hope the coming of the NCOP here will provide lasting solutions," she said.

She also commended the latest interventions already made by government, especially in Umkhanyakude District through the granting of access to the municipality to use Jozini Dam as a resource to ensure water provision in that district.

This development will address the discriminatory situation of communities living next to big dams and other water sources, but being unable to get water. "We are sure that this will spread to other districts, including the metro. The people of Umkhanyakude can no longer look at a dam that is full of water and yet they cannot have water coming to them, this is really great progress," she said.



Kwazulu-Natal Premier announces digital technology programme to equip youth for Fourth Industrial Revolution

KwaZulu-Natal is embarking on a massive upskilling programme and revamping the education system to prepare the youth for the radical technological changes that come with the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), an advancement in digital technology that will have a major impact on every industry across the globe, writes Sakhile Mokoena.



This announcement was made by the Premier of the province, Ms Nomusa Dube-Ncube, on the first day of the NCOP's Taking Parliament to the People Programme held in Ugu District Municipality.

She said an analysis of the implementation of the National Development Plan undertaken in 2011 found that on a quantitative basis, education and training outputs have improved in KZN over the past 10 years. However, one of the factors that they now recognise is that the province's learners do not meet international benchmarks when it comes to

maths, science and ICT.

"This is one of the factors that explains why many of our school leavers and graduates are struggling to find work, especially as the world adopts the 4IR. We recently started addressing this issue vigorously with the launch of the Smart Province, which will see the roll-out of the digital economy and 4IR skills and all its attendant technologies," she said.

The Premier also announced that the province has launched the first mobile digital analytics skills laboratory in

Pietermaritzburg last month. "With this launch, our learners are taking a giant leap to be part of new possibilities offered by digital technology. This is part of the Connected Smart Province Project, which will see especially young people being trained in various skills linked to the 4IR," she said.

Ms Dube-Ncube wants the youth to take advantage of the digital economy, by working on robotics, drone technology, mechatronics and other current technologies. The province intends to expose learners from a young age to space technology, the internet of things, data analytics, multimedia production and 4D technology.

Already, 20 young people are undergoing training in the digital skills and drone technology used in a number of sectors, including in smart technology and in intelligent transport systems to monitor and recover accidents and save lives.

"We also want to use 4IR in enhancing policing and the fight against crime, with drones being used to monitor high crime zones and capturing footage of criminal activity and also disaster-stricken areas. "Police will be able to deploy smart technology in facial recognition and to monitor crime scenes, without necessarily placing themselves in the line of danger," she said.

Ms Dube-Ncube believes technology can help reduce the crime rate, improve investigations and assist in locking up offenders. She also mentioned that it can be used as an early-warning signal to prevent deaths in disasters and property loss.



Taking Parliament to the People programme is in KZN to speed up service delivery

The National Council of Provinces (NCOP) flagship Taking Parliament to the People programme is a good way of resolving long-standing water challenges in the Ugu District Municipality. These sentiments were expressed during the opening ceremony in Gamalakhe in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), writes Malatswa Molepo.

The theme of the annual week-long programme is “Working together to ensure faster improvement in the delivery of services to communities.” Each year during the Taking Parliament to the People programme, permanent NCOP delegates converge in the selected province to conduct oversight over the implementation of various government programmes. Public hearings on a wide range of issues take place, as well as site visits to the

places where various interventions are implemented.

“The biggest challenge we have in Ugu District Municipality is the issue of the unavailability of water. We are happy that while we have held interactions with the Minister of Water and Sanitation and the Premier of KZN, which has delivered some results, this programme will assist in ensuring that we resolve some of the challenges that we have as a municipality,” said the district municipality Mayor Ms Phumlile Mthiyane.

Ms Mthiyane highlighted that the recent unrest in the province eroded the little progress that had been made to deliver services to the municipality’s 825 000 residents. “About 12 water tankers and a number of vehicles were torched during the unrest, which unfortunately means two steps forward and 10 steps backwards in our quest to deliver quality services to the people”.

Ms Mthiyane said the people of the district and their municipality are resolved to



overcome these challenges. This Taking Parliament to the People programme will assist in directing the provincial and national governments’ focus towards the municipality. “The challenges we have will eventually be resolved. The audit reports by the Auditor-General show the resolve by leadership in district and local municipalities to achieve the objects of the Constitution for municipalities,” concluded Ms Mathiyane.

The NCOP’s KZN programme focuses on agriculture, economic development, human settlements, the development of road infrastructure, the provision of quality water and sanitation, and policing.

Minister of Water And Sanitation promises urgent provision of water to UGU district communities

The NCOP invited government ministers to answer questions from members of the public on poor delivery of basic services that include water and sanitation, writes Mava Lukani.

The question and answer session occurred after the opening of the programme, with the Minister of Water and Sanitation Mr Senzo Mchunu and the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Ms Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma in attendance.

The residents who took part in the session pointed out that although water is life, all levels of government fail to deliver it to them. They spoke about their bitter



experience of poor water service delivery and said they have to share the same water sources as their domestic livestock. Some municipal wards in the district do get water and others do not, while others have not seen water in the taps since 2012.

A representative from Ward 32 in Ray Nkonyeni Local Municipality recounted how they had not had water in their taps for a long time, but then, a few hours before the 2021 local government election, they started to receive water. However, their joy was short-lived, as it stopped again three days after the elections.

Some participants told the NCOP that they even receive bills from their municipalities charging them for the water they have used and yet no water is provided. Some participants

said they have been without water for more than three years and continue to draw water from the nearby rivers. The people said there are enough boreholes and water in Ugu; the problem is with delivery.

Mr Mchunu replied by saying that the Department of Water and Sanitation was in Ugu District Municipality in June 2022 at the site of the Umkhomazi water project launch to deal with the various challenges in the district. A war room has since been set up to alleviate all the challenges.

Planning work on various interventions is at an advanced stage, with R150 million being sourced for that intervention. The department will use pipes to provide water, as boreholes are stolen shortly after they have been installed. The Mayor of Ugu District Municipality also mentioned that the municipality is busy putting together a R22 million project to deliver boreholes to communities that do not have water in the district.



Culture of non-payment for services increases financial burden on local government



The ongoing trend in which government departments, state-owned entities, business and households refuse to pay for municipal services is exacerbating municipalities' financial pressures and affecting service delivery, writes Malatswa Molepo.

The South African Local Government Association (SALGA) has called on the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal to intervene by putting measures in place to enforce payment for municipal rates and services. SALGA made this call during the first day of the National Council of Provinces' (NCOP's) Taking Parliament to the People programme in Ugu District Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal.

According to National Treasury's local government revenue and expenditure report for the 2020/21 financial year, municipal consumer debt amounted to R230.7 billion, with government accounting

for 6.7% or R15.5 billion of the total outstanding debt.

"The reality is that this culture is not assisting and makes it harder for municipalities to deliver quality services. We urge the national and provincial government to assist in finding solutions to this long-standing matter," said Ms Ntombifuthi Gumede, the Deputy Chairperson of SALGA in KZN.

Councillor Gumede also highlighted the importance of collaboration among all spheres of government to overcome the

myriad challenges South Africa faces. "We must, as a matter of urgency, work together to ensure the delivery of quality service to the people. There remains a worryingly high number of municipalities that struggle to deliver services. And the only way they will be able to overcome this is through collaboration, first by sharing best practice and second through the support by all sphere of government as envisioned by Section 154 of the constitution," Ms Gumede emphasised.

Also, the proper implementation of the ideals and prescripts of the inter-governmental relations framework can provide a structure to achieve the goal of universal access to quality services for our people. Also, the proper implementation of the recently developed District Development Model can provide a clear and effective path to success in collaborative resolution of challenges.

However, the disparities between the huge services backlog and the funding municipalities have available to resolve the problem exacerbates the problem. Low revenue collection rates compound the situation. "We hope that this programme will assist with solutions to these challenges to ensure the delivery of quality services to the people," Ms Gumede concluded.

