

Justice@Work

DECEMBER 2019

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**GALESHEWE COURT PROVIDES
STELLAR SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC**

**NC SOUP KITCHEN,
A GREAT INITIATIVE FOR
THE COMMUNITY TO
ACCESS JUSTICE**

**THERAPEUTIC SPACE FOR
DEWETSDORP COURT**

COVER STORY

**KZN'S MS NODOLA,
A TRUE PUBLIC SERVANT**

JUSTICE@WORK is an online staff newsletter of the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development. It aims to help staff to network, get motivated and stay informed about issues in the department.

For the latest issues and archived editions visit: <http://djini/default.aspx>

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When you're within the employ of the public service, you often hear about the principles of Batho Pele and the message is often echoed on how we, as public servants, ought to bring these principles to life in order to ensure that we give members of the public the best service they deserve.

Equally so, Batho Pele also refers to those who go above and beyond the call of duty to ensure that dispensing these services to the public is not compromised, even if it has to cost them personally. **Justice@Work** brings you some heart-warming stories of our own officials who continue to dispense exceptional service to the people.

Read more about the KwaZulu-Natal court manager from Harding Magistrate's Court who, after her province was severely affected by drought, took her own initiative of physically fetching water from the nearby river, every morning, to ensure that there was enough water for daily survival and the court isn't forced to shut down.

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Another inspiring story is from the Galeshewe Court in the Northern Cape where they experienced persistent cable theft incidents, resulting in interruption of smooth service delivery. This affected the entire court's telephones and internet connectivity for a period of six to seven months. Find out more on how teamwork came into play when all officials put concerted efforts in rescuing the situation in the interest of Batho Pele. This is just one of a few inspiring stories from the Northern Cape region that we bring to you in this edition.

We also share with you some inspiring profiles about your colleagues who continue to serve with passion and diligence and with one goal in mind - access to justice services for previously marginalised communities.

Creating a conducive environment for officials working in the Department's service points is important for health and well-being of staff. One of the courts which mastered this art is the Dewetsdorp Magistrate's Court in the Free State region. Find out more on how to do it with passion and skill.

Do you have similar story ideas that you would like to share with the **Justice@Work** team and readers about your own service point? Please feel free to contact us and we will help you share your good initiatives with the rest of the Justice family.

Until next time,

Luyanda Makapela

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THERAPEUTIC SPACE FOR DEWETSDORP COURT



KZN's Ms Nodola, a true public servant

Virgilatte Gwangwa

Water, as it is known, is the source of life and without it, nothing much can be achieved. Unfortunately, during the drought season that affected the country, over the past years, some areas in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) experienced water shortages; among which was the Harding Magistrate's Court near Port Shepstone.

As it is the 'norm' that 'no water leads to limited hours of work,' it was not the case for Harding Magistrate's Court under the leadership of Court Manager, Ms Nomawethu Nodola. She knew that the public could not afford to be turned back without getting assistance purely on the basis that there was no running water in the building.

During the drought season, the Harding Magistrate's Court did not have water tanks installed as backup for water shortages while some courts adjourned early and postponed matters. Ms Nodola went above and beyond her call of duty to ensure that justice services were rendered despite those challenges.

For almost three years, Ms Nodola would fetch water from the nearby river every morning to ensure that there was enough water for cleaning and flushing toilets. These measures ensured the smooth running of the courts on a daily basis without interruptions to service delivery.

The water shortages started in August 2016 when their area was affected by drought and the feeder dam to their area ran dry. "Since then, I had to travel eight (8) kilometers to and from the river to fetch water," she recalls.

“Positive attitude amongst staff members and not making the water crisis an excuse for not serving members of the public also motivated me to continue collecting the water from the river.”

Ms Nodola had to do this for three years whenever there was no water and kept at it until January 2019, when the Regional Office provided the court with a water tank. She said her selfless act was done in the name of 'Batho Pele', by putting people that they serve first. "We did not want to close our offices because we serve people coming from rural areas, who sometimes travel long distances; we understand that it takes a lot for them to come and seek services; as a result, turning them back is not an option," she added.

Ms Nodola praised the teamwork between stakeholders such as the magistrates, prosecution, lawyers, administrative support as well as general workers who all contribute positively in ensuring effective service delivery at the court. "We all have the same goal in mind which is to serve our people. Positive attitude amongst staff members and not making the water crisis an excuse for not serving members of the public also motivated me to continue collecting the water from the river."



Passionate: Harding Magistrate's Court Manager, Ms Nomawethu Nodola and Mr Alson Ntozakhe, collecting water for cleaning and flushing during the drought season.

BATHO PELE



Her selfless acts did not go unnoticed as she was hailed by the KZN Regional Head, Ms Pat Moodley as a true public servant. “Ms Nodola has displayed true qualities of being a devoted public servants who go out of her way to ensure proper uninterrupted service delivery,” she stated

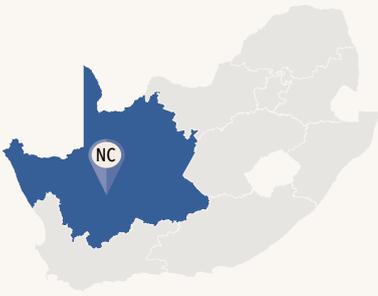
Ms Moodley indicated that KZN region is one of the biggest in the country, with 51 magisterial districts, eight (8) detached courts, 30 branch courts and 29 periodical courts. “Due to the vastness of our region, a number of courts buildings are not well equipped with all necessities needed to maintain and render proper service delivery to the public,” she said.

According to Ms Moodley, it was due to Ms Nodola’s efforts that the KZN Regional Office fast-tracked the procurement of a water tank to be installed at Harding Magistrate’s Court. She added that water tanks are also installed in other courts in the region in order to address water shortages and ensure stability in service delivery. ●

“*Ms Nodola has displayed true qualities of being a devoted public servants who go out of her way to ensure proper uninterrupted service delivery.*”



Selfless : Ms Nomawethu Nodola and Mr Alson Ntozakhe, arriving at Harding Magistrate’s Court with water collected at the river for the sanitation needs of court employees and the general public.



Galeshewe Court provides stellar service to the public

Simon Rathokolo and Virgilatte Gwangwa

On entering the cash hall at the Galeshewe Magistrate's Court, one is greeted with smiles of a team full of young and enthusiastic personnel. Ideally, this is the team that every court in the country should have to ensure that they render services in a dignified and improved manner, regardless of any difficult circumstances they may experience in their work environment.

In October 2016, Galeshewe experienced cable theft which affected the entire court's telephones and internet connection for a period of six (6) to seven (7) months.

However, the team did not let cable theft stop them from working. Instead, they used to knock off late and none of them complained because their commitment is to prioritise service delivery and ensure that members of the public are not negatively affected.

"I felt it necessary to ensure that services are not compromised. Therefore, applying and taking a cellular phone contract without the Department's assistance or compensation was my way of ensuring that the livelihoods of the people I am serving are not affected," says Ms Lesego Mpatshela, cash hall Supervisor at Galeshewe Magistrate's Court. She took a 24-month cellular phone contract from her personal account so that she could stay in touch with maintenance beneficiaries.

"There was no way that clients could not be able to talk to us and enquire about the status of their maintenance matters as that would hamper the service delivery and thereby increase complaints on the bad service we provide. Remember, on their side, they want answers, they do not understand the internal dynamics of the office," explains Ms Mpatshela. Her selfless gesture was not in isolation, other officials also used their personal phones to contact beneficiaries.

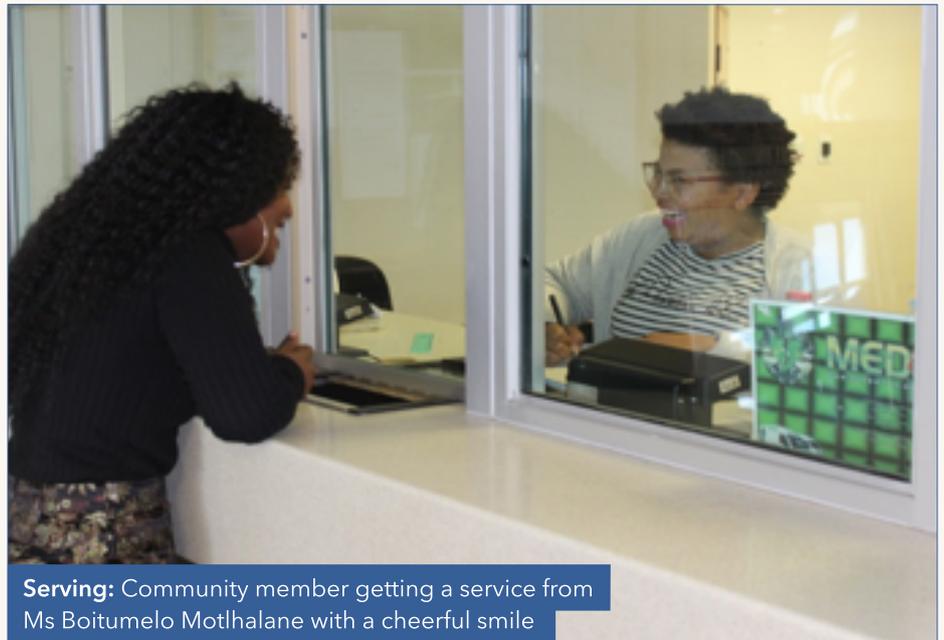
"I felt it necessary to ensure that services are not compromised. Therefore, applying and taking a cell phone contract without the Department's assistance or compensation was my way of ensuring that the livelihoods of the people I am serving are not affected."



Cash hall team: (From left) Mr Vuyo Kwindle, Ms Boitumelo Mptlhalane, Mr Boitumelo Phuthane, (far right) Ms Boingotlo Thabane and Ms Lesego Mpatshela (Supervisor).

During that time, when there was no telephone and internet connection, adds Ms Mpatshela, the staff immediately jumped in and came up with a plan of dividing themselves into two groups. Some had to drive to Kimberley Magistrate's Court to capture clients' applications and make payments to beneficiaries while their counterparts managed the daily complaints and served members of the public coming to the court.

As a method of countering the email challenges, the officials linked their emails with their phones so they could keep the ball rolling in the office.



Serving: Community member getting a service from Ms Boitumelo Motlhalane with a cheerful smile

“ There was no way that clients could not be able to talk to us and enquire about the status of their maintenance matters as that would hamper the service delivery and thereby increasing complaints on the bad service we provide. Remember, on their side, they want answers, they do not understand the internal dynamics of the office.”

Despite all the challenges experienced, the team continued with tireless efforts to ensure efficient service was rendered to the people. Furthermore, officials praised the introduction of *MojaPay* as it brought some relief to the office. Ms Mpatshela said “the transition of *MojaPay* makes things easier for us; the system is user friendly and runs smoothly. Since we started using *MojaPay*, beneficiaries get their money on time”

She further revealed that *MojaPay* has simplified the manner at which they work and does not strain human resources available at the court's disposal. “Due to the effortless work that this new system has created, we managed to move other officials to assist in other sections within the court because of less work load *MojaPay* has created in this section”, she indicated.

Before the establishment of *MojaPay*

- People used to get their money late
- The queues were long
- Bail monies had to be done in the office
- People complained about not having taxi fare to collect their money

After the introduction of *MojaPay* in 2016:

- Less stress for maintenance payment
- Bail monies are paid using EFT
- Long queues in the court are eliminated
- Direct payments to clients' personal bank accounts on time

Mr Tebogso Sereo, Senior Administrative Clerk added that they are lucky to be working with Ms Mpatshela because she always encourages them to work hard and to study further. “It is very good to have this kind of relationship with someone who is part of management,” he said. ●



Ms Kgomo, a life saver for Galeshewe dwellers

Virgilatte Gwangwa and Simon Rathokolo



Passionate: Children's Court Senior Administration Clerk, Ms Mpho Kgomo sharing her passion for her job.

Many families, there is a 'black sheep' as well as the friendliest of them all, the loving and humorous individual. This was the case when **Justice@Work** recently visited the Galeshewe Magistrate's Court in Kimberley; where upon entry the team was met with a warm welcome from an official flashing a 'million dollar' smile.'

This was none other than the Children's Court Senior Administrative Clerk, Ms Mpho Kgomo; an all-round who oozes positive energy which is likely to uplift anyone who comes across her reception. She is the only official responsible for the Children's Court section in Galeshewe but goes beyond the call of duty to assist in other sections whenever there are long queues or if assistance is needed.

Her positivity and energy has created space for members of the public to feel free and seek advice and assistance

“ It is interesting to work with people form diverse backgrounds. When you leave the office, you leave with contentment knowing that you assisted someone and that your help made a difference is someone's life.”

from the bubbly Ms Kgomo. This has encouraged her to know and understand almost everything that happens in all sections as the public do not care whether or not she specialises in the section when they seek advice.

Ms Kgomo's relationship with community members afforded her to be nicknamed, Ms Mpho 'Kgcommunity'; a combination of her surname and the word 'community'. She was further dubbed as the starring of the court because she is always a phone-call away whenever members of the public need assistance.

She admits that she often receives calls even over the weekend from community members and she would ensure that a procedure such as a warrant of arrest is issued if the matter is urgent. "I sometimes go to the police station personally to ensure that perpetrators are arrested, regardless of whether it is the weekend or not," says Ms Kgomo.

“It is really sad to see children being neglected while parents fight each other; my duty is to ensure that children are placed in a place of safety or with relatives who are willing to care for them.”

Due to her positive attitude, zeal and willingness to assist, she often received calls from 'random' people seeking assistance. "I have come to realise and live with the fact that my cell number is not really mine anymore, it belongs to the community."

For Ms Kgomo, working with the community and helping others has always been fulfilling. "It is interesting to work with people from diverse backgrounds. When you leave the office, you leave with contentment knowing that you assisted someone and that your help made a difference in someone's life."

The proud mother of one said she loves her job wholeheartedly as she ensures that whatever she does is in the best interest of children. Due to high domestic violence cases reported at the Galeshewe Magistrate's Court, children are mostly left neglected and vulnerable.

"It is really sad to see children being neglected while parents fight each other; my duty is to ensure that children are placed in a place of safety or with relatives who are willing to care for them," explains Ms Kgomo.

Seeing that some of the children in the Northern Cape are abused by their own parents, Ms Kgomo is optimistic to work as an advocate for children to ensure care, safety and well-being of children upon completing her LLB degree.

Ms Kgomo holds a National Diploma in Law which she obtained from the University of Johannesburg; she is currently studying towards her LLB degree with Unisa.

She joined the court in 2010 working in the Domestic Violence section; she is one of the few officials who have been with the court when it first opened its doors. In 2012, she was appointed as a Senior Administrative Clerk in the Children's Court and has since been occupying that position.

When her office is not busy, Ms Kgomo goes to assist at the Domestic Violence section and other sections, including the Section 33 applications which assist those battling with substance abuse to get to rehabilitation centres. ●



All-rounder: Children's Court Senior Administration Clerk, Ms Mpho Kgomo is always willing to assist in other areas of work.



NC soup kitchen, a great initiative for access to justice

Tsundzukani Maswanganyi and Virgilatte Gwangwa



Giving: Members of the Progress Soup Kitchen providing soup to members of the community.

In the spirit of bringing justice closer to the people, the Northern Cape Regional Office has partnered with various Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in order to reach out to community members. This unique partnership enables the region to work with organisations which provide soup kitchens from different communities in the area.

The regional office decided to partner with soup kitchens in the Northern Cape as they have between 50 – 200 members of the public receiving food daily and some weekly. The decision to partner with soup kitchens came after departmental budget cuts which led to the regional office not being able to cater at their information sessions and resulted in community members being reluctant to attend the information sessions.

“ I have noticed that many of our communities went to bed hungry and thought that I could lend a helping hand by establishing a soup kitchen where we partnered with the Department.”

In February 2018, the Northern Cape Regional Office saw it fit to partner with organisations providing soup kitchens saying that community members receiving food from these bodies were their targeted audience. On the day of the soup kitchen, officials exhibit and share information on services rendered by the Department.

More recently, the regional office together with the Upington Magistrate's Court partnered with Progress Soup Kitchen, not only to feed the masses but to also explain the justice services to community members and how to access them.

One of the organisers, Mr Claudio Kistoo said the attendance by members of the public was poor before they partnered with soup kitchens in the region. However, since they found an alternative way of bringing the community together, they had managed to reach more people to explain justice services.

He also explained that prior the session, they visit communities nearby the court to investigate the most common challenges or cases mostly brought forward by the public. "Although we explain all the services rendered, we also look at the challenges mainly faced by different communities in order to give legal advices through the sessions," he said.

“ Although we explain all the services rendered, we also look at the challenges mainly faced by different communities in order to give legal advices through the sessions,”

Founder of the Progress Soup Kitchen, Ms Katrina Beakus started her organisation back in 2008 when she realised that a lot of people in her community were unemployed. "I have noticed that many of our people went to bed hungry and thought that I could lend a helping hand by establishing a soup kitchen where we partnered with the Department."

"When the Department of Justice approached me, I did not hesitate to partner with them because we go through a lot and we do not know how the courts can assist us. We witness men in our communities being abused by their partners but would not apply for a protection order as they are convinced that only women

can get one. So I am very happy that our members got to hear insightful information and the fact that the law is for everyone," concluded Ms Beakus. ●



Information: Northern Cape Regional Office's Mr Claudio Kistoo informing the community about justice services.

Engaging: Community member seeks clarity on matters raised during the justice services information session.





Court intermediary goes an extra mile in making a difference

Tsundzukani Maswanganyi

After five years of hard work, serving the Department and the community, Court Intermediary, Ms Thembisile Msibi who is employed at the Evander Magistrate's Court in Mpumalanga, has taken her work a step further by helping out her community through outreach programmes.

Growing up in Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal, Ms Msibi currently works and resides in Evander, Mpumalanga where she has been making a significance difference in her community through her work.

Armed with a degree in Child and Youth Development obtained from the Durban University of Technology, her love for youth development is growing from strength to strength, as she also furthers her studies in Project Management with UNISA.

"I am very passionate about going out to communities and sharing with them the type of services we offer as a

“My main purpose is to be of great assistance to children and families who are affected by the scourge of sexual abuse and other forms of violence.”

Department, particularly on how to access such services," says Ms Msibi. She recalls how she has developed passion and skills from working in a very sensitive section of Sexual Offences Court which made her a 'flexible' court Intermediary.

“My passion is working with vulnerable groups; I believe I am an advocate for all victims and witnesses who deserve justice.”

Ms Msibi first joined the Department in 2013 on a contract post as a court Intermediary at the Postmasburg Magistrate's Court in Northern Cape. She further went to Mkobola Magistrate's Court in 2014 and in 2015 she managed to get a permanent position at the Evander Court.

"My passion is working with vulnerable groups; I believe I am an advocate for all victims and witnesses who deserve justice. My main purpose is to be of great assistance to children and families who are affected by the scourge of sexual abuse and other forms of violence," says Ms Msibi.

She shared with **Justice@Work** one of her challenging and yet inspiring story when she was at Mkobola Magistrate's Court, where she used to put pressure on her then court manager to be allowed to facilitate outreach programmes for the community.

After getting permission to do so, "In 2015, I planned and facilitated 18 outreach programmes in



schools and community projects including Izimbizo within the Thembisile Municipality. The turn out and the hunger for information from the citizens as well as our own stakeholders was amazing," she recalls.

Court, she continued with her outreach programme. "With the support of my court manager and the Mpumalanga Regional Office, my passion for reaching out to people grew stronger and stronger.

Ms Msibi went further to join the Thuthuzela stakeholders in Govan Mbeki district where they met once a month to discuss challenges on sexual offences and domestic violence issues, come up with solutions, refer cases to relevant stakeholders and further plan for outreach programmes. Govan Mbeki has a large area called Embalenhle confronted with a high rate of sexual

“ I love my job and appreciate that the Evander Magistrate’s Court management has allowed me to enjoy the Thuma Mina campaign and bring change to the public.”

offences and domestic violence matters.

Since she specialises with those areas it was always easy for her to address the community with their rights and responsibilities. Between 2015 to 2019, she was involved in 38 outreach programs in Govan Mbeki municipality.

"I appreciate the Mpumalanga Regional office for always supporting me in my efforts. Being a flexible court intermediary include my willingness to learn all office work. I avail myself to assist other offices when there is a need. I am always available for children’s court, domestic violence, harassment and maintenance matters. I love my job and appreciate that the Evander Magistrate’s Court management has allowed me to enjoy the Thuma Mina campaign and bring change to the public" she concluded.





Therapeutic space for Dewetsdorp Court

Hlanganisa Mbatha



Welcome: The courts garden entrance.

Many believe that having a great looking garden is an expensive venture which is beyond reach that is not true. 'Given time, simple garden tactics and dedication, result in having an awesome lawn at a minimal cost.'

That is the sentiment shared by Ms Irene Gordon, Senior Admin Clerk at the Dewetsdorp Magistrate's Court, who is so proud of their court's beautiful garden. "I was transferred to the Dewetsdorp Magistrate's Court from Bloemfontein in 1998 and started to give attention to the garden as it was in a bad state. My strategy was to do more with less hence I started to plant new shrubs and roses and various other plants and most of them do not require lots of water or attention," she said.

Ms Gordon says that gardens are not only significant for sightseeing but they can be designed as therapeutic spaces that help relieve physical and mental problems ranging from dementia in elderly people, to depression and trauma in children.

"The science is rooted in the fact that interacting with nature in general and plants in particular improves our well-being. In that view, our garden provides such space for our staff and also the community we serve," she explained.

Furthermore, the act of creating and tending a garden has also been found to have great physical and mental benefits for our staff. "The satisfaction and sense of accomplishment one gets from planting a seed and watching it grow into a tree that provides shade for our court is hard to replace," she indicated

With the attention that the garden needs every week, Mr. Michael Majoang: the court's landscape professional, started to take care of the garden from 2016 and is also very proud of his garden. "We are very lucky to have some water resistant plants therefore we do not have to use a lot of the court's water," he says.

"The science is rooted in the fact that interacting with nature in general and plants in particular improves our well-being. In that view, our garden provides such space for our staff and also the community we serve."

Ms Gordon says the community adores their garden because they normally receive a lot of compliments. "We get lots of praises for the beautiful garden and it's a pleasure to pass by the office and see how beautiful it looks, even the Department of Public Works' officials compliment us when they come here," she added. ●



Hard At Work: Mr. Michael Majoang making the garden neat and clean.

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