



# From the Pen Of the Municipal Manager

*"The Hub of Legends"*

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## **THE UNSUNG HEROS AND HEROINES OF THE SEWER PUMPSTATIONS AND THE FIRE AND DISASTER EMPLOYEES**

I have taken decision to move my focus from the strategic input that one normally write about for this quarter in order to communicate a message of those that I observed in action as I personally visited their sites of operation- I am referring here to the unsung heros and heroines of the sewer pump station and the fire and disaster officer.

On the 30th December 2009 I visited seven sewer pump stations to ascertain whether the men and women tasked with the most important job of cleaning the "screens" of the stations are really doing their job and whether they were happy about what they are doing.

The visit was never announced through their managers as sometimes you may find that they might be told that the Municipal Manager will be visiting and some or all might look busy. As I watched these unsung heros and heroines it reminded me of the words of the communist that I am familiar with, Mao who said "all men must die, but death can vary in its significance." I then said ja all workers must work ,but work can differ in its significance.

Here are the people/workers doing the most significant job with no one recognizing the significance of what they are doing. If they are not there cleaning those screens and checking whether the spillages in the event that the pump is out of order, our dams are going to be polluted and diseases might break and the mighty might not be that mighty at all.

Like in all sectors as the saying goes "a huna shango li sina mpengo" there was nobody at the pumpstation at Mbilwi and the screen was full. I left for Maniini B where I found the Technician fiddling with the electricity to run the pump. I waited there until the pump started working. I looked around the pumpstation yard, it was clean with green grass planted, but to my surprise the poor lady there did not have the necessary clothing and she was wearing what we termed *Mariposa* during the seventies .

Proceeding to Maniini B I realized that the lady working there was barefooted. As I request a photo with her she quickly said she must first fetch her boots. The so called boots do not even have laces and I asked myself a question, do these people have an

understanding that you should wear protective clothing at all times and not when there is a visitor. I asked her when last she had been given a uniform, she claimed that it might be somewhere between 2000 or 2001. That is the period when the process of transfer of the water function from the then DWAF was beginning.

I proceeded to Muledane station where I realized that the pump had stopped working. The granny there is about to go and phone the supervisor who will further phone the electrician. I personally phoned the electrician who fortunately had not left Maniini B. He arrived within 25 minutes and fix the problem and the pump started working again. The granny does have neither protective shoes nor clothing. I was joined by the supervisor who told me that there are people who should be visiting the stations on a daily basis but I could not understand why these workers did not have the tools of the trade.

I will not want to dwell much on the other three areas I visited, the point that I wanted to share with the workers and the employees of the District is that as and when you are operating your computer behind your desk there are people out there who are making your life better. As and when you are not processing their payments because they cannot fill the necessary forms, remember the importance of their work.

The second group of people that one would like to acknowledge their contribution is our firemen and women and the disaster and risk management team who were manning the various operating centres around the district during the festive season.

These men and women went beyond their call of duty and identified a number of risk areas like potholes, stray animals, areas that will require de-bushing along the main roads, etc. It will be important that the responsible business units within the district and local municipalities, the provincial and national departments come to the party in order to assist in the interventions that have been identified in the report presented to all stakeholders who participated in the meeting arranged specifically to congratulate these unsung heros and heroines of our district.

To those that I have seen in action, I know that some of you will not be able to see this message, I say hold on to your work-someone is watching and one day you will receive your reward, which, for me is the satisfaction that you have contributed in your own way to bettering the lives of so many residents of the district who may not even care that you are there or not because “you never let anyone know how hard you work” under what condition and circumstances. As one African philosopher said, “we glow in the reflection of *your* halo. “

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