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**Residents yearn for a clean Komani**

By  
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EPWP worker, Bulelwa Dathini, hard at work in Newvale Picture: LUVUYO MJEKULA

Residents of Newvale and Alovevale welcomed a recent clean-up campaign in their areas, but cautioned against electioneering.

“We are happy because at least there is something happening. If they can do this, not only before elections, Komani would be clean again. We have been staying in filth and as you can see, the streets are filthy.

“Komani has never been like this. Today there is a bit of relief, but after the elections we will not see them,” said one agitated 65-year-old Dahlia Road resident who asked not to be named.

This after a team of workers deployed as part of the Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP) by the Enoch Mgijima Local Municipality went on a mission against garbage in the two locations within the larger Mlungisi Township.

One of the cleaners, Bulelwa Dathini, said they were deployed following damage caused by recent rains and subsequent flooding, but also because the areas were covered in filth. “We are happy to clean because we are also residents and we want a clean environment for us and the other residents. Today we made a campaign to clean here in Newvale. Other groups are out cleaning in other areas.”

Another worker, Dumisani Okolo, said. “It is important that we keep the community clean so that our health is in a good state.”

The local residents welcomed the clean-up, but the initiative seemed to trigger more complaints, some even pointing fingers at each other for illegal dumping.

“I am happy about what has happened because it was dirty and our children have been sick. Our councillor, Yongama Adonis, has been organising the municipality to clean here, and has been warning residents about illegal dumping, but they keep dumping garbage,” said Thabisa Jerry, a resident of Newvale.

She said her child had been admitted to hospital twice and she blamed her polluted surroundings. “We criticise our councillors but we do not work with them. You do not see this (illegal dumping) in town, only in the township, and the problem is us township residents,” Jerry said.

Nombuyiselo Mokhosi, a resident of the area between Alovevale and Newvale, said, “I live next to a drain and it causes problems for me. This affects our health. We are old and are sick because of the rubbish. We have sick children because of this.”

Another local, Gladys Fisa, took a swipe at the cleaners. “The cleaners say they have cleaned, but the rubble is still here and the furrow is not cleaned. It’s not the first time they clean, but they don’t clear the rubble, they leave it here. This is not cleaning, it is smelly and now the smoke will give us TB. I agree we need containers in the area.”

Kholeka Tyokwana shared Fisa’s sentiments. “I am complaining about the rubbish in the furrow. My child has MDR because of this situation. My husband picked up a dead dog nearby. I have confronted people about dumping diapers and other rubbish here. They need to clear the rubbish, I am hurt by this. I don’t know if the wound on my leg is not a result of this filth.”

Noxolo Vumazonke, another resident said, “We are sick, we are in pain, we asked the municipality to bring us containers for rubbish to be disposed of. We are not really happy because they set the dirt on fire and the smoke is causing us more problems.”

Petros Jerry called the illegal dumpers out in no uncertain terms. “My problem is that the dirt comes from other houses and it is dumped next to our houses. The councillor does his work, but there should be containers and these furrows cause flooding and damaged roads. People must be respected.”

In response to complaints from some of the local residents that the cleaners allowed smoke to get into their homes, Dathini said the cleaners had no choice but to burn the garbage as some of it included mattresses and other large items which they could not fit into the plastic bags they were given.

Charles Boesak, another fed-up resident, was worried about children who play in the rubbish. “You can’t open the door because of the smell of dead dogs. People come here and dump them.”

Boesak and other residents called on the municipality to act. “What is the municipality doing about that? I am someone who likes cleanliness. We want to live with our doors open.”

Thabisa Jerry added, “We ask the municipality to take illegal dumping seriously and make an example by punishing one person.”

Spokesperson for Enoch Mgijima Municipality, Butsha Lali, explained that the workers were deployed to assist the municipality in its challenges of refuse collection which are exacerbated by lack of resources. There about 74 of the EPWP workers and Lali says they provide extra hands as the municipality is attempting to improve the face of “what we call community assets”. Similar clean-up programmes are being carried out in Ezibeleni, particularly areas where illegal dumping is rampant.

He would not commit to whether containers requested by the residents would be provided but said heavy duty machinery had been procured to deal with the type of refuse human hands would not be able to handle. Burning of the rubbish by the workers was so that the hazard could be reduced, he said.

