



PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

One of the three bridges unveiled at Khamanzi near Dalton last week.

Three bridges unveiled in Dalton

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THE crossing of raging rivers at Khamanzi, near Dalton, will be a thing of the past after the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport in partnership with Department of Public Works unveiled three modular steel bridges in the area last week.

The new bridges and a road will give communities access to schools and to other government services. The construction of the bridges started last year as part of a partnership between the two departments and the South African National Defence Force (SANDF).

Apart from having had to cross raging rivers, residents said they had to travel long distances between Mkhizana and Khamanzi because there were no roads linking the two areas.

Ward councillor Bonga Nzama said pupils were also forced to cross rivers to get to and from schools.

“Children attending to Mphelandaba High and Khamanzi Primary were battling to get to school when it rained.

“Parents took it upon themselves and reported the matter to me. We held various meetings trying to come up with solutions. We then approached the Department of Transport and uMshwathi Municipality seeking assistance,” Nzama said.

Residents said other children dropped out from school out to fear of having to cross the rivers daily.

“Community members were proactive in making sure that the problem is brought to the attention of the officials. All the schools are across the river on the side of Khamanzi area. Even residents had difficulty crossing the rivers when it rained. The distance from Mkhizana area to Khamanzi is about two kilometres, but we were forced to travel through a Dalton road in order to get to Khamanzi which is a distance of about

30 kilometres,” Nzama added.

Ward committee member Phumlani Ntombela said he knew of two pupils who drowned while they tried to cross the river several years ago.

“The incident prompted residents to approach the ward councillor and relevant departments to assist in saving children’s lives. We convened a meeting between the SGB, school principal and councillor in a bid to find a solution.

“We even phoned the presidential hotline that was created by the former president, Jacob Zuma,” Ntombela said.

Another resident Thandiwe Jila said some parents had their children taken out of local schools and sent them to Dalton schools.

Public Works and Infrastructure Minister, Patricia De Lille said when the members of the SANDF arrived in Khamanzi to build the bridges they also discovered that there was no proper road from the schools.

“They (SANDF members) started by building the most of this road and brought in engineering capacity construction. The good thing they did was to train local communities. The Department of Public Works then provided the machinery, but they (SANDF) are really overseeing the whole of this project. They live among the community, work with the community, and help us to train the community. Without the national defence force, we would not been able to do this.

“The defence force is not only there to fight and keep the peace but their contribution to our communities in general must always be acknowledged,” she said.

Newly-appointed KZN MEC for Transport, Community Safety and Liaison Peggy Nkonyeni said: “We are very excited to have been engaged in this collaboration effort that has been initiated by the national leadership. We are committed to even putting resources in order to build more bridges in the province.”



At the unveiling of three modular steel bridges in Khamanzi are members of the SANDF, Transport MEC Peggy Nkonyeni, Deputy Minister Noxolo Kiviet, Minister Patricia De Lille and KZN MEC for Human Settlements and Public Works Ntuthuko Sibiya with other local leaders.