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ALMOST DONE The Ikageng reservoir is set to bring water to approximately 22 000 households

CLEANING FOR RAMAPHOSA

After a frenetic of frenetic activity ahead of president's visit, things went back their disastrous normal, writes **Lucas Ledwaba**

The government machinery went into full swing ahead of President Cyril Ramaphosa's recent visit to the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality in North West. "We were cleaning [everywhere]. We were busy. We were fixing roads and collecting rubbish from dumping sites [along the streets]," said a woman employed on the expanded public works programme, recalling events leading up to Ramaphosa's visit last week.

The District Development Model, which was launched by Ramaphosa in 2019, is set to get all spheres of government, from local municipalities to national departments, working together "in a more effective and coordinated way".

The programme aims "to help municipalities better plan, budget and implement projects and programmes". Ramaphosa, ministers and mayors visited the area as part of the government's plan to monitor progress on the implementation of the model.

SUDDEN SPRING CLEANING

The sudden springing into action by the government machinery in preparation for the president's visit gave residents living in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda municipality a slight glimpse of what it's like to live within a functioning local government that lives up to its mandate to deliver basic services to the people.

For a couple of days, the streets were clean, police were patrolling the streets, and politicians who the residents only see around election time or in the media were mingling with the people and listening to their concerns.

"We were working that week. They always say there is no budget to do some things like patching potholes. But suddenly last week the budget became available. Was it because the president was coming?" she said, pleading to remain anonymous because she was worried her comments could land her in trouble.

The Dr Kenneth Kaunda is a category C municipality that incorporates three local municipalities - JB Marks, the City of Matielosa and Maquassi Hills.

WATER AND ELECTRICITY ISSUES

Ramaphosa's imbizo, which drew thousands of residents, was held at the Ikageng Sports Complex. Community activist Mahadiso Mohapi and other residents from Kanaana travelled the 60km to the imbizo in a minibus provided by the government.

"Water [shortage] is a big problem here in Kanaana. We always have containers filled with water in case we experience long-term power cuts. Almost every day we have water cuts from around 9pm to 6am the following day," said Mohapi.

Part of Ramaphosa's visit included a visit to the construction site of the Ikageng Reservoir which is set to be completed by July next year. It is expected that the project will benefit an estimated 22 000 households on completion.

The power outages in Kanaana are exacerbated by cable theft.

RIFE LAWLESSNESS

The high unemployment rate and rival zama-zama (illegal mining) gangs have resulted in not only a breakdown of law and order, but also other ills, including high levels of gender-based violence. "The municipality said in its final integrated development plan for 2022-27 that, in 2020, its unemployment rate stood at 21.3%. The municipality notes that a decline in total employment was experienced in mining, which used to be the main employer in the district, but now contributes only 6% to overall employment.

"I asked the president to intervene [about gender-based violence]. It is very high. Women are being raped in their homes; even grandmothers are not safe. People break into homes and rape women," said Mohapi.

The imbizo heard from the panel of ministers accompanying Ramaphosa that more than 6 000 zama-zamas have been arrested across North West in a bid to curb crime.

STANDARD RDP HOUSES

Tshediso Ketja, a resident of in Phatsima extension 5, which is also part of Kanaana, is worried his RDP house



MONITOR PROGRESS President Cyril Ramaphosa engaged with community members in Ikageng during the presidential imbizo on 20 October



MAKING A POINT Residents of Ikageng told the presidential imbizo in North West about mounting service delivery challenges, including water outages, power cuts and the poor state of roads



may be blown away in a storm soon. "When there's a strong wind, I hang over the roof to stop it from being blown away. Some of the houses have already been blown away. "The people who built these houses just put a lot of sand and no cement. That's why they are falling apart," said Ketja. He could not attend Ramaphosa's imbizo as he had a piece job to do. In an area with such high unemployment levels, any opportunities to earn a small living are cherished.

ZAMA-ZAMA'S TURF WAR

Kanaana under the City of Matielosa is surrounded by at least 11 gold mine shafts which have become a war zone for rival illegal mining gangs.

But even pronouncements about arrests to residents battered by crime and lawlessness that continues to ravage their community were not reassuring. "They are always saying the same thing, but nothing changes," said Mohapi, who is also a member of the Mining Affected Communities United in Action said.

"We are not safe. We are now used to this life where gunfire erupts at any time of the day. Even the police are afraid of coming here," she said.

HIGH COST OF LIVING

Among other issues, residents told Ramaphosa about the harsh reality of service delivery failures such as constant water cuts, poor roads, the high cost of electricity, power outages and the deplorable state of public infrastructure.

"Our roads are bad. The municipality is patching up potholes instead of building new roads. In our section, the road was so bad they used a grader to dig out the old tar. But they have not replaced it since," said Mohapi.

A woman, who lives with her small child, mother, sister and her child in Sarafina section in Ikageng, lamented the high cost of electricity and the poor state of roads.

She also raised concerns about the erratic municipal billing system.

"One month you pay R650 for water. Then next month they send you a bill much more than that, maybe R800, when we did not even have water for most of the month," she said.

In 2006, she applied for land where she planned to build her own house, but has not received an answer since.

"There are way too many shacks here. People are frustrated because they want houses but the municipality is not helping. Even when you apply for land, they say nothing. People then decide to build shacks anywhere," she said.

She said the road passing through her neighbourhood is so rocky that even taxis refuse to travel to that section.

"People are not working. But the price of electricity is so high. R100 gives you just 46 units (kilowatt/hours). Life is very hard here. I know of people who can manage to buy only R10 worth of electricity because they are not working. So they cook once and the electricity is finished," she said.

As a result, some residents use paraffin stoves to cook their meals and warm their water for bathing. But this too doesn't come cheap as 2 litres of paraffin cost R25.

Apart from the water and electricity issues, residents raised concerns about the sink resulting from raw sewage flowing down the streets and through properties from blocked pipes.

Asked whether she expected life under the municipality to improve following the presidential visit, the woman, who worked hard on preparations for the gig, was not hopeful.

"Look, the president came here and people spoke and they also made promises. But this week they did not collect the rubbish from our street," she said.

- Mukurukuru Media

What the AG found at Dr Kenneth Kaunda

AUDIT OUTCOMES

- Unqualified with findings in 2020/21 and 2019/20
- Qualified in 2018/19 and 2017/18 with good quality financial statements submitted for audit

UNAUTHORISED EXPENDITURE

- 2020/21 R70.1 million
- 2019/20 R70.7 million
- 2018/19 R68 million



FRUITLESS AND WASTEFUL EXPENDITURE

- 2020/21 R11 million
- 2019/20 R11 million
- 2018/19 R10.6 million

IRREGULAR EXPENDITURE

- 2020/21 R225.8 million
- 2019/20 R198.2 million
- 2018/19 R141.9 million