



Thusong Service Centre



Government services where you live

Thusong Service Centres  
**SUCCESS  
STORIES**



REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Thusong Service Centres, known originally as Multipurpose Community Centres (MPCCs), were conceived in the earliest days of democratic South Africa as one of the primary vehicles of development communication. Thusong Service Centres provide opportunities for people to develop and progress towards a better life through access to information and services. This access was historically denied to the majority of South Africans. Access to services and information are enshrined in the Constitution of 1996 and it is crucial that these are brought closer to the people as an integral part of the developmental agenda ushered in by government in 1994.

To put this into effect, the Thusong Service Centre programme of government was initiated in 1999 to provide access to information and government services in an integrated manner, especially targeting outlying, rural areas where people live. These communities were faced with travelling long distances and poor service standards. Through the Thusong Service Centres' efforts to address historical factors limiting citizen access to government services, information and developmental opportunities.

The first generation of the Thusong Service Centres was set to establish 46 Thusong Service Centres – one in each district municipality; while the second generation of the programme – approved by Cabinet in January 2005 – envisaged at least one Thusong Service Centre in every local municipality, including metropolitan municipalities, by 2014.

After consultation with government and research among the public, the name of the MPCCs was changed. Thusong is a Sotho word meaning “A place of help.” This change indicated the Thusong Service Centres' alignment of their work with the values embodied in Batho Pele principles.

While there is still more work to be done, and while some Thusong Service Centres face significant challenges in governance, finance and operations, major progress has been made in rolling out the second generation Thusong



Service Centres as part of government's strategy to create access for the poor and the marginalised and vulnerable groups of our society. Currently there are 183 Thusong Service Centres across the country offering almost 4 000 services to an average of three million users a year. These Thusong Service Centres are complemented by integrated mobile routes – mobile vehicles of key government departments such as Department of Home Affairs (DHA), Department of Labour (DoL), Department of Social Development (DSD), and agencies such as the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) and the South African Social Security Agency (Sassa) which go out together to places where buildings do not exist.

The rationale is to ensure that government is able to reach all its citizens, including those living in far-flung and sparsely populated areas of our country, particularly where it is not feasible for government and its partners to set up major infrastructure, which costs a great deal. The mobile routes are done in an integrated manner, with all three spheres of government, government agencies and institutions, and other social partners including business and community groups, working together.

In 2006, Cabinet approved a clean-up strategy for the first generation of the TSC following a successful review of the Thusong Service Centre programme. One intervention aimed at improving the communication and marketing of the programme and the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) planning in partnership with government communicators across the three spheres of government, has taken this challenge seriously.

Added to this is the fact that 2014 is a very significant year in South Africa since we celebrate 20 Years of Freedom and where we can say conclusively that the Thusong Service Centres have indeed brought relief to millions of people who are serviced by these centres. Government acknowledges that more needs to be done to address challenges in the Thusong Service Centres through:

- better customer service
- training staff
- enhancing management skills



- strengthening adherence to Batho Pele principles in the Thusong Service Centres
- improving the way technology and social media are used to promote the Thusong Service Centres
- ensure that Thusong Service Centres operate well and are financially sustainable.

The case studies celebrate some of the achievements of the Thusong Service Centres as well as heroes and heroines in the Thusong Service Centre community over the past 15 years by their commitment, enthusiasm and dedication from government and its partners. Internationally, this year is crucial as it allows for the United Nations (UN) to review progress made in achieving the millennium development goals (MDGs) around the identified eight key priorities. Here at home, these priorities have also been outlined as the ones to drive the work of government.

It is one of the successes of the Thusong Service Centres that government can record progress in the implementation and attainment of some of these targets. Thusong Service Centres coordinate programmes aimed at empowering communities to become self-reliant and sustainable. Economic opportunities are promoted as well as skills development and training for young South Africans. Thusong Service Centres enhance the fight for a green society and promote responsible and active citizenship.

Partners and stakeholders in this process include business, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), parastatals, academic institutions and ordinary, patriotic South Africans who are promoting the vision of a caring and inclusive society through their goodwill.

The case studies reflect with pride a few significant examples of success in the Thusong Service Centres. They provide examples of democratic, development communication in practice in economic information dissemination; social justice and community development initiatives; promoting the green economy, and skills development.

We trust these will inspire not only readers to active participate in the Thusong Service Centres, but encourage a cross-pollination of best practice nationwide.





## FOREWORD



The Thusong Service Centre programme has over the years managed to provide a platform from which all sectors of society could converge and share information, deliver services, transfer skills, create employment and business opportunities to those with entrepreneurial interests.

Above all, the programme has also assisted those in distress and in dire need of social assistance. This was achieved by partnering and soliciting sponsorship from the private sector as part of their corporate social responsibility programmes, NGOs, faith-based organisations (FBOs) as well as traditional leaders. Good samaritans have also emerged from time-to-time in communities to lend a helping hand to those in need and are also part of the Thusong Service Centre community.

This year marks the 15th anniversary of the programme and the last year of the implementation of 2014 Business Plan. For the past 15 years the Thusong Service Centre programme has been one of the critical driving forces of change in South Africa and will therefore, on an annual basis, take a stand in organising coordinated events to celebrate and profile the achievements and milestones attained by the programme in widening access to government services.

This year South Africa also commemorates 20 Years of Freedom. The Thusong Service Centre programme, as part of the celebrations, would also showcase and profile some of its key achievements by documenting its success stories.

A comprehensive review of the Thusong Service Centre programme is also underway to propose interventions aimed at addressing various challenges



pertaining to the overall coordination of the programme, management framework and how the operations of the Thusong Service Centres are funded. This review would assist the programme to achieve even greater heights once its recommendations have been implemented.

Today I am pleased to share with you some of the success stories from initiatives coordinated and implemented at our Thusong Service Centres.

Together we move South Africa forward by bringing integrated government services closer to the people.

MS PHUMLA WILLIAMS  
GCIS: ACTING CEO





## 1. MAMELODI THUSONG SERVICE CENTRE: CHANGING THE FACE OF HIV AND AIDS GAUTENG

The Mamelodi AIDS Training Information and Counselling Centre (ATICC) project was initiated after the World Health Organization (WHO) advised health departments around the world in 1987 that it was essential to educate communities about HIV and AIDS.

The City of Tshwane opened its ATICC in the central business district of Pretoria after its two health professionals, Reggie Stigling and Veronica Tateni Khosa had received training at the national ATICC in Johannesburg.

The majority of the patients allocated to each nurse were from black communities.

Negative attitudes, stigma, and a general lack of knowledge about the disease were common in those early years and ATICC patients who disclosed their HIV status to their families, their loved ones and employers were often rejected. As a result, there was a great deal of pressure on Sister Khosa to help patients cope under such difficult circumstances.

In 1994, the ATICC relocated to Mamelodi Thusong Service Centre to give communities easy access to its services. In the same year Khosa retired. With her pension, she established Tateni Home-Based Care. Named after her, Tateni Home-Based Care was seen as an extension of the ATICC.



Khosa and team of volunteers at the Thusong Service Centre.



Working with volunteers and Cathrine Thonga, seconded by the City of Tshwane to assist, the project focused on providing HIV and AIDS counselling, voluntary testing, as well as HIV and AIDS training to families.

Patients were regularly visited at home and patients and caregivers were assisted and taught about nutrition and how to take care of themselves or a sickly person. “I wanted to make a difference and directly respond to the plight of those infected and affected by the disease. I would supply them with food parcels, napkins, and other basic healthcare utensils such as gloves, and disinfectants,” said Thonga.

Presented at the WHO Summit in Geneva by the South African Government, the Tateni Home-Based Care model was viewed as one of the best practice models in the world and replicated in other countries. During her tenure, Thonga refined and enhanced the model by ensuring that volunteers received the necessary training. “Communities demonstrated a passion to work with us on the project and we had to develop the criteria for the recruitment of our volunteers,” she said.





Unemployed youths, the families of affected people, patients and people cast out by their communities were given three days of basic training in HIV and AIDS and 10 days of lay-counselling support. In addition, the project also developed and identified other platforms aimed at reducing the rate of infection, promoting a healthy lifestyle and encouraging proper care and support for infected and affected individuals.

These activities included door-to-door campaigns, the distribution of condoms, activities aimed at moral regeneration and health talks provided regularly by the various support groups collaborating with the project.

“I was first introduced to the project in 2011. At the time I was very sick and bedridden. Thanks to the current manager, Ms Jacqui Koka, who held my hand and gave me hope, I am currently working as a coordinator for a support group and I conduct health talks. To date I have assisted close to 200 people,” said Ms Tiny Moloji with modesty.

Because of the ATTIC, the community surrounding the Mamelodi Thusong Service Centre and that of the greater Mamelodi as a whole enjoy benefits that include:

- a) A number of NGOs and support groups were initiated to support HIV and AIDS affected and infected individuals, as the project could no longer absorb more members.
- b) Unemployed youths are given something meaningful to do instead of being involved in criminal activities or loitering.
- c) The project helps to ease the burden on the healthcare sector, particularly the limited healthcare facilities available in the area.
- d) High schools in the area are assisted in developing leadership by taking disobedient learners on leadership camps as part of a “breaking attitudes” programme.
- e) Volunteers acquire day-to-day survival skills and other necessary skills to enhance their chances of finding employment.
- f) Volunteers receive a stipend to help sustain themselves and their families.
- g) By 2014, the project has assisted about 100 000 individuals every quarter through various support groups and has reached about 21 000 households.



- h) Project members face many challenges that they must address so that the project can increase its impact on the community, including:
- There is a lack of funding for initiatives or activities such as planned or newly identified projects. Funds to pay health institutions such as rehabilitation centres in cases where identified government facilities are full are lacking.
  - HIV-positive pregnant women are afraid to disclose their status to their partners and therefore fail to comply with their antiretroviral (ARV) treatment.
  - A lack of funding for stipends that cover volunteers' monthly expenses, as the project sometimes runs out of funds before the end of the financial year.
- i) "On behalf of management, our staff and volunteers, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to the City of Tshwane Municipality and Mamelodi Thusong Service Centre for providing us with an opportunity to provide the community of Mamelodi with information and easier access to our services. Let's continue to work together to change the face of HIV and AIDS," said Ms Jacqui Koka.



## 2. BHOMELA THUSONG SERVICE CENTRE: SMALL STEPS TO A BETTER LIFE – KWAZULU-NATAL.

In November 2004, a fully-fledged Thusong Service Centre was launched to provide basic services to the community of Bhomela, Nyandezulu and surrounding areas. The Thusong Service Centre surpassed expectations by initiating two projects namely: the Simile Sewing Project and the KwaNdalane Computer Skills Project, which empowered the community with knowledge, skills, created jobs, empowered the women, opened business opportunities and provided education.

In 2005, the Hibiscus Coast Municipality promoted business opportunities using the poverty alleviation funding from the municipality. When the Thusong Service Centre was launched, 12 women were encouraged to register their names with the municipality for them to be allocated space and funding for a sewing project so that they could generate their own income from the project.

Between 2005 and 2006 the Hibiscus Coast Municipality provided the 12 beneficiaries with training for three months in skills such as buying cloth, cutting the cloth, how much time you should spend on each step of the preparation, how to pin the cloth and how to thread a needle, before moving to the next level.



Some of the products produced by Simile Sewing Project.



When the beginners' level of training was completed the municipality brought in the sewing equipment for the ladies to put the theory into practice. The equipment and material included tables, chairs, cupboards, sewing machines, cotton and cloth.

As a result of the success of the first phase of training in 2005, the project generated a good income for Ms Mester Sabelo. She said, "I was able to buy blocks and extend my house with one more bedroom."

Between 2007 and 2008, another group of facilitators was brought in by the municipality to further the women's sewing skills. The training took six months focusing on the Afro-centric approach to bedspreads, quilts and pillows. The municipal official responsible for the centre provided books to assist the women with other ideas.



Ladies of the Simile Sewing Project showcasing their work.

The *Southern Explorer*, one of the well-known newspapers in KwaZulu-Natal, gave a lot of publicity to the project to the extent that tourists were flocking to buy the African print (*isishweshwe*) and other products from the Simile Sewing Project. This made the project grow and the business became more sustainable. The women expanded the business by producing more items from *isishweshwe* besides the quilts and pillows. As the project continued to receive more attention from other communities and attracted tourists to the centre, the municipality and Rotary International helped the ladies with space



to exhibit when big events were held in Port Shepstone and surrounding areas and also with the space to sell at malls. This was one of the ways in which they marketed their business and generated more income.

The business was growing to such an extent that poverty was alleviated in Ms Zethu Mthiyane's family. She put up a fence around her house and bought some traditional pots.

“We really thank the Hibiscus Coast Municipality and the municipal official responsible for the Bhomela Thusong Service Centre for teaching us skills to start our own business and be able to take income home,” said the ladies of the Simile Sewing Project. Mama Vivian said, “With my first income from this project I bought myself a bed and a coffee table.”

### **Computer Skills Project**

Bhomela Thusong Service Centre in partnership with Esayidi Further Education and Training (FET) College in Port Shepstone used the Bhomela Thusong Service Centre Telecentre to offer the youth and larger community of Nyandezulu computer-training programs to enhance their skills. The Esayidi FET College and Bhomela Thusong Service Centre ward councillors did a skills audit in Port Shepstone and identified Nyandezulu under Bhomela Thusong Service Centre. A needs analysis was done to determine which three-week and three-month programs to teach. The college provided a facilitator who trained community members in the following programs:

- Introduction to computers
- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft Excel

In November 2013, the first 10 students enrolled, completed the course in March 2014 and received their certificates of attendance from the Esayidi FET College. For some of the students it was their first encounter with computers, while other students were matriculants who were looking for jobs. With the computer training, the 10 youths were able to create their own CVs without having to rely on others to do it for them.



After receiving her certificate Siboniso Zungu said, “The Bhomela Thusong Service Centre helped us so much by offering the computer training. They helped to bridge the skills gap by affording us an opportunity to learn basic computer literacy. I am now able to do my own CV. I do not have to ask people to help me with it anymore.”

“The Thusong Service Centre is very close to our neighbourhood, we are no longer spending money to travel to Port Shepstone. At the Thusong Service Centre we received information such as the computer skills programme, which has improved my ability to use a computer,” said Thokozile Makhanya, one of the students who received training.

Other attendees wanted Esayidi FET and Bhomela Thusong Service Centre to offer advanced training programmes.

“The whole community is very privileged to be given this Thusong Service Centre,” said the municipal official responsible for the Thusong Service Centre. “However they could make even more use of this Thusong Service Centre,” concluded the official.

In celebrating the 20 Years of Freedom, the Bhomela Thusong Service Centre is proud of its achievements. It furthers government’s performance outcomes and outputs to better the lives of ordinary citizens in partnership with the Hibiscus Coast Municipality.



Beneficiaries of computer skills by Esayidi College in conjunction with Bhomela Thusong Service Centre.





### 3. COLESBERG THUSONG SERVICE CENTRE: AN ENABLING CENTRE FOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT – NORTHERN CAPE

The Department of Public Works (DPW), celebrated 20 Years of Democracy, by supporting Outcome 4, which states: “Decent employment through inclusive economic growth.” Partnering with the Umsobomvu Municipality in Colesberg in Northern Cape and the Colesberg Thusong Service Centre, the DPW ensured government initiatives that contribute to policy priorities in terms of decent work and sustainable livelihoods also benefit Colesberg and its surrounding areas by bringing services and opportunities closer to the people.

The DPW, through the Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP), introduced a learnership programme in construction aimed at equipping the youth of Colesberg with skills. In December 2010, the department placed an advertisement at the Umsobomvu municipal offices. They invited all people who had passed Grade 12, with Mathematics and English, computer literate people and people who had a background in the construction industry.

Earlier in 2011, 50 candidates were shortlisted and were briefed about the selection criteria. In March 2011, the selection process took place in the form of a theoretical (understanding of the construction industry) and practical test (calculations). Candidates were expected to obtain 50% in each of the tests to be able to enter the learnership programme.



Beneficiaries of the Vukuphile Project.



In May 2011, 30 successful candidates received letters of appointment and started phase one of their learnership on 13 June 2011. The three-year Vukuphile Learnership Programme for the Colesberg community included different projects such as roads, pipelines, paving and building.

The first phase of the project ran from June to September 2011. The students learnt the theory of business construction. One of the 10 construction companies sharing the training cost of R10,5 million was responsible for this first phase of the training. The theoretical part covered how to do the specifications for projects; how to operate plant machines, and other technicalities and logistics of the construction industry. During this phase the municipality taught the learners, among other things, about professional communication in the workplace and how to deal with clients. Nedbank and the DPW signed a memorandum of agreement that Nedbank would pay the learners a stipend of R670 to assist them with travel expenses and other things.

Nedbank also agreed to financially assist those learners who were already operating businesses. Other learners who wanted to start businesses were also assisted with funding during the three years of the programme. From September 2011 to April 2013, practical classes concentrated on pipework. This was done along the banks of Orange River in Bloemfontein.



Beneficiaries of the Vukuphile Project.



“The practical part of the training was received with enthusiasm and joy. It added value as we were exposed to the actual work. The stipend also increased to R5 000 and we were able to provide for our families,” said Joseph Khosani one of the learners who also owns Khosani Construction.

The learners are now waiting for the last phase of the project, which will be the pipeline from Noorpoort to Colesberg. After the pipeline has been completed the learners will have completed their project and they will receive their certificates. “We are very proud about the work we have done so far and the skills we acquired. No faults were reported on the pipeline we did along Orange River,” said the learners.



The group leader, Ms Phindile Makhathini, said, “When I applied for the learnership I did not know anything about construction and had no interest in it because I always perceived construction as a career for people who wanted to get dirty. I applied because I wanted to receive an income. I had been sitting at home without a job since 2006. Now I am proud to say I am very grateful for the learnership opportunity that was given to me. I have developed much love for construction because there are lots of things or small projects you can do. I’m now able to communicate professionally in the workplace. I know how to work in a team, received some computer training and management skills.



“The 20 Years of Freedom gave us many opportunities. I’m very thankful to the South African Government for giving us opportunities to develop and learn new skills through the EPWP. I’m now my own boss, owning a company. I’m also able to create jobs by employing people in my company. I’m very privileged to have had the opportunity of this learnership to enhance my knowledge and skills so that I could plough back into the community using the tools we are equipped with in this learnership,” said Timothy Nyirha.

Sharing the same sentiments all learners concluded by saying, “A big 'thank you' to the democratic government. Because of it we can see light in our lives compared to before 1994 when we had no hope. We are thankful for the opportunities that the Thusong Service Centre created. We are able to use the facilities in the Thusong Service Centre and also attend our classes as it is central for all of us. We won’t forget the DPW and the EPWP for providing us with poverty and income relief. Most importantly we are grateful for the skills, education, training and knowledge we acquired here. This will enable us to go out there and stand on our own feet. Young people must take these opportunities seriously because this is free education brought to us by government. There are youths who have been given these opportunities but threw them away. It’s time for us to work together with our government, use the skills they have given us, plough back to our communities to enhance the economic growth of the country and help government alleviate poverty and unemployment.”

When opportunities such as these present themselves, it would add more value if people were immediately placed in companies after completion of the raining programmes to avoid situations where young people ended up in taverns because they still can’t find work.



## **4. SIYATHEMBA THUSONG SERVICE CENTRE: AN EVOLVING MODEL OF EXCELLENCE – MPUMALANGA**

The Siyathemba Thusong Service Centre was established in 2007 with two staff members – a centre manager and an information technology specialist – with two desks and two tables. Currently the centre offers government services from eight different service providers namely Sassa, DoL and DHA, the Small Enterprise Development Agency (Seda), the GCIS, the South African Revenue Service, Legal Aid Board and community development workers (CDWs). Over the past years the Thusong Service Centre produced very successful and sustainable projects, namely: the community garden and the computer centre.

### **Community Garden Project**

One of the Siyathemba Thusong Service Centre's outstanding features is its community garden, greened with vegetables such as spinach, beetroot, spring onions and cabbage. The project focuses on poverty alleviation.

The idea for a community garden was as a result of a report about five members of the Siyathemba community who were scavenging the nearby dumping site. The Thusong Service Centre manager, Tsietsi Mokoena, investigated the matter and found that these were single, unemployed mothers. Mokoena suggested that the five ladies start a community garden to help feed their families.

In 2008, Boitumelo Lehobye, the GCIS Senior Communication Officer, engaged more stakeholders to come on board. The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries supplied the starter packs with garden tools, seed and manure. The Siyathemba Thusong Service Centre through the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs made land available. The Department of Health (DoH) is currently managing the project emphasising healthy lifestyle within these communities. Dipaleseng Municipality supplied water and the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform provided Jojo tanks and sprinklers for the garden.



In 2009, the community garden started off with the chosen group of people to cultivate vegetable gardens on the land. The Thusong Service Centre also put security measures in place to ensure the garden's sustainability. Initially five gardeners worked on the project. Two elderly people from the community joined the group later in 2009. They were selected to be included in the project according to criteria that the DoH uses.



Very soon the garden expanded to the size where 12 gardeners were needed to grow vegetables at the Thusong Service Centre. By then the community food garden was providing food to about 42 households, including their extended families. "We really appreciate the support we received from government. We are now able to eat fresh produce and can sustain our families," said Maria Mlangeni, a project beneficiary. "We also have healthier lifestyle because we know which foods are good for our bodies," she added.

A team of CDWs determined the needs of families that needed land to grow vegetables.



Beneficiaries of the vegetable garden reaping what they sow.



In 2010, the food garden was expanded to twice the size it was when it started because of the need for food from the community. The number of beneficiaries also doubled to about 87 households who were provided with fresh vegetables every month. Service providers also came flocking to the Thusong Service Centre in need of space.

In 2011, the community food garden grew to triple the size it was before because of the demand of vegetables, and it fed 114 beneficiaries. Towards the end of the year the number of beneficiaries had increased to 163.

The 12 gardeners were able to produce enough vegetables to supply food to 203 people from their vegetable block. Other families who can afford to pay for the vegetables buy them from the different blocks of the garden. Each gardener generates an income of about R500 a month. “We are very proud because our project has reached a stage where we can now sell the surplus and are able to generate an income. We use the money to buy meat and household essentials,” said Isaac Shabalala.

In 2013, Mokoena, said, “I started my own vegetable garden called ‘Centre Manager’s garden.’ I used a tractor tyre, painted it and planted spinach in it.” Mokoena said he started the garden for these two reasons:

## **Education**

The Thusong Service Centre manager interacted with community members who visited Sassa and the DHA and whose applications for grants were still pending. He suggested that they participate in the tyre garden to grow their own vegetables to have food to eat while they were waiting for the approval of their application for social grants. After he had talked to the community members and gave them advice, they each received a bunch of spinach from the manager’s garden. The Thusong Service Centre manager’s interaction with the people was also aimed at accelerating the pace of service-delivery departments on processing applications of community members.



Centre manager's garden.

## **Bridging skills gap**

To encourage the community of Siyathemba that even though they do not have space to make gardens in their own yards, they can use a tyre, which does not take much space, put soil in it and grow vegetables. This does not need heavy tools and a lot of water; they could actually save water.

## **Beneficiaries of the community garden**

Maria Mlangeni is one of the first gardeners who received a demarcated section of land to grow vegetables in 2009. Ms Maria is now producing spinach, beetroot, tomatoes, cabbage, carrots, green beans, pumpkins and maize. "I was sick and not able to do anything, Mr Mokoena came to my rescue. He guided me and assisted me to start my own portion of food garden. Today I'm very healthy, happy and stress free because since I started the garden I was able to provide food for my 12 grandchildren and other community members who are in need," she said.

"I applaud Mr Mokoena. He gives us hope and encourages us all the time. He is not doing it for money like other people and he really helps people. I thank him so much because he gave me hope for a better life and he is a hero to me," added Ms Maria.

Shabalala, one of the gardeners, grows carrots, onions, beans, sweet potatoes, potatoes, sugar cane, spinach and beetroot. He shares the same sentiments, saying, "We thank Mr Mokoena who procured the land for us to alleviate





poverty and to be active again. We are able to feed our grandchildren, assist other needy families and sell what is left to get some income to meet our daily demands.”

## **Computer centre**

In 2010, Great Basin Gold Mine, one of the Thusong Service Centre’s private service providers, donated 13 computers, 13 desks, 13 chairs, a projector, white screen, a storage cupboard and a printer to the centre. Mpumalanga Economic Growth Agency (MEGA) made a donation of R100 000 to enable the Thusong Service Centre to provide computer training to the community. The computer centre then served two purposes by providing the following services:

Community Access – Internet services aimed at assisting pupils and students to do their assignments and search for information. Unemployed matriculants and graduates were also able to apply for jobs online.

End-user computing, it’s a computer course, which runs for six weeks and accommodates two groups of people, maximum 12 members in a group. The lessons are offered every day from 8:00 to 13:00.



From various segments of the community, the Thusong Service Centre’s manager then identified the need for professionals to learn about various computer software packages, thus giving them the skill to effectively conduct their duties. By the end of 2010, 500 people were trained in basic computer skills mainly covering Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Outlook.



Others who received training over and above the initial 500 are school principals in the surrounding area, the Police Station Commissioner and senior nurses from Siyathemba and Greylingstat.

Health sector workers found the training programme particularly handy. Previously, they relied on the administrators to get data, which was not verified. After receiving computer training they are able to retrieve the data on their own and use MS Excel as part of their reporting tools. Almost all the principals who received training are now proud owners of laptops and they are able to use them frequently.

Two women, Ms Mofokeng and Ms Buyi, both got jobs at a micro-lending company in Balfour. Another beneficiary found a job at the South African Post Office. The positions required people who were computer literate and equipped with specialised skills. The computer centre later partnered with the University of South Africa (Unisa). Using the computers, the students of Siyathemba do not have to travel to Johannesburg anymore to submit their assignments. They are now able to submit their assignments from the centre. As a result of this partnership, two students have registered for Master's degrees with Unisa and are receiving computer training to enable them to conduct their research.

Sizwe Shabalala, one of the youths who is looking for a job said, "I have started to use Internet services more than a year ago. It is free of charge here at the Thusong Service Centre. I can email, use Google to find vacancies and apply for jobs online. It is expensive to access the Internet at the Internet café. The Thusong Service Centre is so helpful to us. We might never be satisfied with other service delivery issues but I can definitely say that I'm thankful to government for providing us with the Siyathemba Thusong Service Centre. It has brought us hope."

## **Changing lives for the better**

Vusumuzi Sibeko (46) lives alone and has never had an identity document (ID) in his life. The Community Development Worker (CDW), Thapelo Sekabate accompanied him to the Siyathemba Thusong Service Centre to help him to get



an identity document. Siyathemba Thusong houses the following departments:

- Department of Labour
- Department of Home Affairs (DHA)
- South African Revenue Services
- Government Communication and Information System
- Community Development Workers
- Small Enterprise Development Agency
- South African Social Security Agency (Sassa)
- Legal Aid South Africa
- Computer Centre
- Dipaleseng Unemployed Peoples' Organisation.

Sekabate introduced Mr Sibeko to the centre manager, Mr Tsietsi Mokoena. During their interview it transpired that Mr Sibeko does not only require an ID, but goes to bed for days without food. He was first accompanied to the DHA offices where he applied for an ID. The centre manager paid for his ID photos and the application was processed and successfully completed. The South African Police Service (SAPS) played an important role by certifying his documents and he quickly moved on to the Sassa office where he applied for food aid. DHA issued his ID within 60 days.

At the Sassa offices he applied for groceries to enable him to survive while he was waiting for his ID. The food parcel was meant to sustain him for only one month, however since he was staying alone, he managed to make it last for close to six weeks.

“I could not believe, that within an hour of being at Thusong I was so grateful. Sassa, DHA, SAPS and the Thusong, really extended a helping hand,” said Mr Sibeko with tears in his eyes. He further added, “Ningibongele ku baba uZuma.”

As if that was not enough the centre manager spoke to individuals who could offer him a job. As he could show his ID to prospective employers, he quickly found employment by washing cars. All the cars he washes belong to private and he is now able to sustain himself with the income he is earning.



Now that Mr Sibeko has an ID, he has been included in the housing waiting list.



Mr Sibeko receiving his ID.



Mr Sibeko's house.



## **VIEW ON GOVERNMENT SERVICES WHILE CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF FREEDOM, FOCUSING ON THE SIYATHEMBA THUSONG SERVICE CENTRE.**

Attesting to gains of democracy where government ensures that every South African citizen has access to information and government programmes that benefit them, Mr Manzana, a director of INCRECORP, a truck-body builder and trailer manufacturer, tells his good story, “I am very grateful about the information that government has offered and assisted me with. It afforded me the opportunity of setting up a warehouse. Now I am one of the directors of the first black company in Balfour producing truck-bodies and manufacturing trailers.”

Mr Manzana first visited Mr Mokoena, the Thusong Service Centre manager, in 2010 with the idea of starting the truck-body manufacturing business. The scope/proposal that he had was too broad so Mr Mokoena organised meetings with the Seda and MEGA to help Mr Manzana pursue his dream. Mr Mokoena further facilitated the application processes for funding and followed up on the process.

The funding was approved late in 2010 and that was the beginning of INCRECORP. “We started operating in May 2011 as a team of four in the company (three directors and one employee). At present we have 15 employees in the company. We manufacture 12 truck bodies in a month. So far the business is sustained through a major contract that we received from Eskom.

“Previously, we produced truck-bodies and trailers for Nissan, TATA and Toyota but the deals were not consistent. In 2012, we also manufactured mobile clinics for Ekurhuleni, which is one of the mobiles supporting Thusong Service Centre mobile outreach,” said Mr Manzana.

“The efficiency of government information through the Seda has made the success of this business possible. I have also acquired knowledge on using the accounting system, website and branding through the support of government information. I am grateful for the information and knowledge that government afforded me to start my business,” said Mr Manzana. “My plea to



the government is to develop and support other provinces and give business to black-owned companies like INCRECORP," he added.

Mr Mokena proudly said, "With all the projects that are happening at the Thusong Service Centre and those that developed because of the knowledge, information and assistance by the Thusong Service Centre, I am proud to say that by supporting the 12 outcomes of government, we have created employment for women through the food garden; assisted with creating employment in a formal sector through Mr Manzana's company; developed skills in the computer centre, and promoted communication with the community."

## **INCRECORP**

Before the truck body was finished.



After the truck body was completed.





## 5. LERETHLABETSE THUSONG SERVICE CENTRE – NORTH WEST

### **All people in South Africa are protected and feeling safe.**

In 2002, the UN funded the Bojanala District Substance Abuse Project with R81 000 to create awareness and teach children about the dangers of drug and substance abuse.

The DSD then went to Lerethlabetse Thusong Service Centre in Lebotloane village to seek 13 volunteers who would work on the Bojanala District Substance Abuse Project. After the volunteers were found, the DSD provided them with an office to work from, within the Thusong Service Centre.

In 2003, the DSD trained the 13 volunteers in different fields such as:

- how to present topics on substance abuse
- strategy development when it comes to working with substance abuse
- how to handle children during presentations
- the presenters' dress code.

After five days' training, the theory was then put into practice. The volunteers had to do outreach campaigns at schools, teaching and presenting to children. The volunteers were not receiving any form of a stipend even though they were expected to service four schools in a week and there was also no transportation fee, meaning they had to find the means to reach their designated areas around the Bojanala District.





It was only in 2004 that a small compensation of R500 came through for each member and although it was not much, it was encouraging as it enabled the volunteers to cover costs when carrying out their outreach programmes.

The compensation phase was short-lived though, as in 2005 and 2006, the situation went back to working without a stipend. However, the volunteers did not give up because they were driven by the need to help their community and the fight against drug abuse. This challenge did not drain their energy as they continued to volunteer despite not receiving any form of compensation while still performing their duties.

In 2008, a business plan was developed and service level agreements were signed. The DSD approved R476 000 to run the project. The R500 stipend then came back to life but because there were lots of activities and campaigns that the project wanted to cover, the funding proved to be insufficient to carry out all the tasks that the committee wanted to implement.

Because of its determination, love and passion for fighting drug and substance abuse among the communities of the Bojanala District, the committee resolved to come up with creative ways of making extra money to complement the funding, keep people busy with other activities and to help them develop new skills that would help them stay away from the consumption of drugs and other substances. These efforts gave birth to a bead-making project in 2009.

“We had five people who volunteered to be part of the bead-making project. They were taken to the Warmbaths Beads Centre for a one-day workshop on how to make different products using beads. The project has been going well even though the main focus is on staying away from substance abuse,” said Lena Manne, the project leader.

“Access to our beneficiaries has been made easier after the DSD gave us a car in 2012 as that made it possible for us to reach out to all communities. We are now celebrating 20 Years of Freedom making an impact on our communities, fighting substance and drug abuse by organising school camps for the children





where lessons on the dangers of drugs are given and we receive maximum participation.

"There are other programmes that we have developed such as: sporting tournaments; teenage groups where we encourage talks on the dangers of substance abuse and how to prevent it, and early learning centres in the crèches. At the end of the day we provide the participants with certificates of participation and small rewards to encourage the youth to keep their focus on positive activities.

"The Bojanala District Substance and Drug Abuse committee has never looked back when it comes to fighting substance abuse in the community. They think of every way possible to expand their projects because they have a dream that one day they will have their own centre like the Thusong Service Centre where they will run different activities such as: a rehabilitation centre, sports activities, skills development projects, music and drama groups as well as establishing new branches aimed at fighting drug and substance abuse in the district," she continued.

The group has been growing its economic status by different ways of adding income to the project. They now have a photocopying machine and they charge R1,50 per page for photocopying and R5 per page for lamination.



Ready-packaged food parcels to be distributed.



“These are all the *Vuk’uzenzele* initiatives we are making to meet the Government halfway instead of always wanting to be spoon-fed. We also need to think of other ways for us to grow and see the project at another level instead of depending on the Government. We are very proud, confident and grateful for the opportunity that the Government has brought to us through the DSD because we are now able to stand on our own today and help protect our communities and develop new ideas. We will keep on ploughing back into the community, all the skills we have acquired throughout the Substance Abuse Project and we would like to see the whole community equipped with every necessary skill to fight unemployment, poverty as well as fighting substance and drug abuse in our households,” she concluded.



## 6. MAPODILE THUSONG SERVICE CENTRE: BREAKING THE POVERTY CYCLE AND BRIDGING THE SKILLS GAP – LIMPOPO

### Helping Hand Food Bank

It was back in 2012 at the age of 28 when she was still training as an Instrument Technician in the mine, that Ouma Nkosi realised the need to break the poverty cycle in the community of Tukakgomo and the areas around it.

“On my way to the mine every day, I passed by an HIV and AIDS centre that was providing a meal to children and I would always ask myself what happens to these children after receiving this meal and had to go back to their respective households,” said Nkosi.

Inspired by her passion and willingness to help others, Nkosi conducted her own research and found that the meal that the children were receiving from the centre was the only meal they had every day. On July 2012, the Helping Hand Food Bank idea was born.

In her quest for putting the idea into a concept, Nkosi recruited eight people to work with her on an idea to start an NGO. The team consisted of four unemployed females and five males aged between 23 and 42. Proper deliberations were made by the group to further execute the project and a database of the children who were affected by the situation was collected from the centre, and house-to-house visits were made. After collecting all the information, the group approached Pick ‘n Pay in Steelpoort for food parcels. Pick ‘n Pay advised them to first register as an NGO so they could have a back-up on their system.





In January 2013, the Helping Hand Food Bank was successfully registered and they were granted a confirmation letter to start operations. Having received the letter they went back to Pick 'n Pay and they were successful because Pick 'n Pay came on board.

Now that everything was finalised and sealed, the project was launched on 8 February 2013. At the time the group was still operating in Tukakgomo Village, sharing the venue with the HIV and AIDS centre. Nkosi, the project leader, engaged with the Department of Economic and Local Development for a space they had requested at Mapodile Thusong Service Centre.

“We only operated for two months in Tukakgomo village and with the help of the GCIS, we shared office space with them from April to May until we were granted our own office space by the Thusong Service Centre in May 2013,” Nkosi said.



Ouma Nkosi and her co-owner ready to distribute food parcels.



The GCIS became an active participant with this enthusiastic team of youngsters who were so determined to make their dream come true. The GCIS engaged the municipality in getting office furniture for the Helping Hand Food Bank – but it didn't stop there. They went on and booked a slot on Thobela FM to help the NGO create awareness and popularise their project with the intention of bringing other stakeholders and sponsors on board.

As a result of the Thobela FM publicity, the group met potential donors such as Percy of Vision 2013 who sponsored them with a computer to help them perform their day-to-day administration in an organised and professional manner.

The Helping Hand Food Bank further engaged stakeholders such as Ikobeleng Community Development, a group of home-based carers who are interacting directly with the community to identify their needs. This was to enable them to get the information of those families who needed to be provided with food parcels.

“We then started providing for 40 families with the help of Ikobeng to identify those families, they received packaged food parcels from February until July 2013. The number of the families went up from 40 to 125 families. The food items ranged from perishable to non-perishable,” she continued.

The NGO, just like the Government, is intent on eradicating poverty and starvation. It is linked to the three Sekhukhune Thusong Service Centres which are, Mapodile, Kgautswane and Leboeng. So far, more than 6 000 people have benefitted from the project and more and more people continue to get food aid from the NGO. Although these youths are not getting any financial backing or income from any institution, they benevolently continue to serve the less privileged with a smile.

“Others joined us but left because they did not understand the idea of helping others. Today's youth is so blind – since we are in remote areas or mines, we do not see other opportunities except working in the mines. People do not want to be involved if there is no remuneration. There are lots of experiences that you can never buy like helping another soul without expecting anything in return. Think of an idea and execute it without expecting government to come



to your doorstep and provide everything on a silver platter. We have a lot of possibilities here such as starting to farm after two years of this community service. We need to empower the community so that they are able to look after themselves. Right now if we keep on providing them with food parcels they will never be able to do anything for themselves, hence the idea of farming where people will learn and equip themselves with skills to be able to provide for their families without relying on someone else's help. The community must now learn how to go about catching the fish without having to receive the caught fish. In this way if this NGO helps 125 families, from these 125 they must be able to also plough back into the community and help double the number so that the poverty cycle chain in our community can be broken," she continued.

Nkosi further said that there were lots of other projects they would like to be involved in such as sanitary projects to help girls not to miss school as some of the girls could not go to school for about a week because of the lack of necessary products to use to take care of themselves. She said with all these additional project ideas they envisaged their NGO doing its own audits so that they really see the impact assessment done by the project.

"We love our job so much that we are here as early as 8:00 in the morning and we sometimes leave this place at 21:00 at night because we are so determined to take care of the community and alleviate poverty in the area of Tubatse Municipality in Greater Sekhukhune.

"The future of South Africa is in the youths' hands. Vuk'uzenzele, think of an idea, dream it and live it. For you to be something in life you need to start somewhere. It does not all start big. It starts with an idea. Then the idea expands to a lot of different activities. I am an engineering person and I never thought of anything outside engineering, look at me today. I am proud to say I am growing and developing in the social-support side of service delivery. We just appeal to funders to come forward to help us to help the community of Tubatse. The municipality should make the land available to us to start the farming project.

**(This is the story of a 30-year-old Ouma Nkosi and her co-workers. If they did it, so can you. The future is in your hands.)**



## PASSPORT TO FUTURE LEARNING

Upon the implementation of the Oliphant's River project, the GCIS official based at Mapodile Thusong Service Centre, Doctor Marebane, approached Basil Read, Aurecon Ndodana Joint Venture and the Trans-Caledon Tunnel Authority (TCTA) who are contractors and engineers appointed to build the De Hoop Dam in the Sekhukhune area. The idea behind engaging these three companies was to establish ways of bridging the skills and information gap in the community focusing mainly on the youth. Marebane highlighted a number of issues facing the youth such as unemployment, lack of skills and information, which would be the passport to their future if they were to be exposed to such skills.

Responding to the call by Marebane, the team of contractors, together with their coordinator, did a bit of background research in the Sekhukhune area and found that most people do not have economic opportunities and about 44% of the youth are unemployed. The contractors used the Mapodile Thusong Service Centre as the venue to assist in the Youth Development Initiative.

The project was introduced in November 2012 and all logistical arrangements were put in place such as an advertisement through local municipalities; selection criteria; getting the furniture for the classroom; transport arrangements; appointment of facilitators, and preparing the learning material. The main areas that were given priority are the ones where the pipeline project passes across and other areas around Sekhukhune.

The call for skills development was well received by the community and the response was very positive as 500 applications were received. The screening of applications was done as per the criteria set by the companies to help them identify the kind of training programmes that were needed to pilot the project

On 9 April 2014, the project was officially launched to run for nine months in three phases, with an intake of 100 youths. The training entailed the following programmes, each running for three months, and started on 24 April 2014:

- Microsoft packages
- career guidance



- curriculum vitae preparation
- preparation for the workplace
- project management skills.

“Having noticed that the area of Sekhukhune is booming with economic opportunities, the local youth are still unemployable, therefore we are engaging different companies. Upon the completion of this roll-out pilot phase, the students can be placed in the workplace environment because it does not help to only offer the programme and at the end of the day the beneficiaries are not exposed to the practical part of what they have learned,” said Jessica, one of the project coordinators from the three contractors sponsoring the project.

Another key focus around this project was that one of the mines in the area should carry on with the legacy of this project to ensure and salute 20 Years of Freedom; achievements, gains and milestones that have been made between society, government and the business sector.

Attesting to the gains of democracy, one of the beneficiaries, Jeffrey Sebulela said: “The course came at the right time and it will open some job opportunities for me as it is accredited by recognised institutions.”





## **7. KGOMOTSEGO THUSONG: A PLATFORM FOR FUTURE SOUTH AFRICAN LEADERS – NORTHERN CAPE**

In 2009, Kgomotsego Thusong Service Centre was launched. Previously people from Vanzylsrus had to travel 190 km to Kuruman for basic services, but the opening of the Thusong Service Centre brought relief and hope to the community. The Kgomotsego Library was also opened and the learners of Vanzylsrus were empowered with skills and education.

The Department of Arts and Culture in the Northern Cape, supporting Outcome 1: Improving the quality of Basic Education, launched the Premier’s Reading Competition in 2011. The competition was aimed at encouraging learners to use the library, read books and equip themselves with information. The project takes place every year from June to July.

Kgomotsego Thusong Library registers the names of learners who come to the library to borrow books. The library submits the names to the provincial office at the end of the competition.

The three prizes are Pep Stores vouchers where the winners are encouraged to buy school supplies and uniforms. To qualify for the first prize, a learner must read 50 books or more and then write a summary of what he/she has read about. The learners submit the summaries to the library where records are compiled into a report and submitted to the provincial office for evaluation. For the second prize a learner must read at least 40 books and for the third prize a learner must read at least 30 books.

The aim of this project is to encourage students to learn more about the different aspects of life and their curriculum to understand the tasks that they are given in school, better. The Pep Stores vouchers also help the families to buy school uniforms for the children, which is a challenge in some families. Since the project started two years ago, there have been six beneficiaries from Vanzylsrus Intermediate School between grades five to nine. “Although we have been coming to the library before the project started in 2011, we were very motivated when we realised the potential of the project and the benefits



we could reap from it. The information that we get from reading helps a lot when preparing essays,” said Junita Bock, a Grade eight learner and one of the first prize winners.

Another learner, Maureen Gootsenwe said, “From the books that I have read there is a specific one that has changed my life. It is about a poor girl who did not have family or any other support. Things were hard for her but she was determined to pursue her dreams and achieve them. Through perseverance and believing in herself, she managed to achieve her goals in life and attained her dream. It gave me courage and strength to say: no matter what I’m faced with – if I believe, dream and work hard I can also achieve success. It motivated me so much. I know that my dreams will be a reality one day if I push hard.”

“I look forward to come to the library every day to select my books. I am determined to follow in the footsteps of those who have won previously. However, winning is not the only benefit I get from this. I also gain knowledge that will enable me to achieve my goal of becoming a nurse so that I help my community with healthcare needs,” said Georika Daymane, a grade nine learner who hopes to win the prize this year.

Sharing the same sentiments is Thato, a Grade six learner: “Every week I take about five books to read and my aim is to reach 50 or more books for the first prize. If I win the prize I’m definitely going to buy school material for next year.

“We are grateful to the Kgomotsego Thusong Library for the opportunity they brought to our community. I would love to become a teacher so that I can share the knowledge with the next generation. They should realise the importance of reading. It expands your reading skills and enhances your knowledge to share with the community to help them grow,” she said.



Participants from the Vanzlyrsus Intermediate School.



## **8. NAMAHAADI THUSONG SERVICE CENTRE IMPROVES LIVES OF SMALL, MEDIUM AND MICRO-ENTERPRISE (SMME) OWNERS – FREE STATE**

In November 2000, a fully-fledged Thusong Service Centre was launched to provide basic services to the community of Qwa-Qwa and its surrounding areas in the Free State. Besides offering basic services from the DHA, the Sassa, the GCIS and the Office of the Premier, the centre also provided the opportunity for SMMEs that did not have a place to work from, to share their space.

Zama Ubuhle Kitchens is one of the businesses in Qwa-Qwa that used the opportunity to work from the Namahadi Thusong Service Centre. It is a carpentry business that empowered the community of Qwa-Qwa with knowledge and skills and created jobs for the youth.

“I used to visit the Thusong Service Centre to access government services, then one day I meet with the Thusong Service Centre manager, Mr Mthimkhulu, and requested permission to operate from the Thusong Service Centre since it was accessible to the community,” said Mr Tetete, the proud owner of the business.

In July 2012, Zama Ubuhle Kitchens relocated to Namahadi Thusong Service Centre and the GCIS official introduced them to the Seda to register their small business and develop a business plan. The project started with 12 workers but now they have employed 20 permanent youths and 15 casual workers.

“Seda helped us to market our products and gave us training on basic business skills. As a young entrepreneur I am very motivated because the business skills imparted to us by Seda is now helping us to grow our business. Our proximity since we relocated to the Thusong Service Centre enabled us to and attract more customers,” added Mr Tetete.

The business sells its products in Qwa-Qwa and nearby towns such as Harrismith, Kestel and even further places such as Welkom. Zama Ubuhle Kitchens assisted in the reduction of the youth unemployment rate in



Qwa-Qwa. The business also offers woodwork skills to interested people such as making cupboards.

Mr Tetete thanked government for introducing the Thusong Service Centre programme because not only did it assist him as an individual but also helped the youth of Qwa-Qwa who might have fallen into the trap of drug abuse, crime and poverty. He indicated that now the employed youth is empowered and is able to feed their families and send their children to school.

Within the Thusong Service Centre there are also other small businesses operating such as a beauty salon, driving school, a tannery and a lawnmower repair shop. All of these projects employ many youths.

Mr Tetete showed us his stock and what he specialises in. The wooden cupboards are in the background.



Zama Ubuhle employees in their workshop cutting the wood that will be used.





## 9. LAINGSBURG THUSONG SERVICE CENTRE: CREATING REAL JOBS AND PROVIDING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR THE LESS FORTUNATE

### Western Cape Upholstery Project

Laingsburg Thusong Service Centre in the Central Karoo provides skills and economic-development opportunities through an affordable low-cost upholstery project to the less fortunate in a poverty-stricken area of the Central Karoo.

This upholstery project started off in 2012. The Association for Disabled People (ADP) in Beaufort West formally trained five community members in the upholstery field. When Global Funding provided the necessary funds, four permanent job opportunities were created for a project coordinator and three other staff members.

The project provides upholstery services at a low cost to many underprivileged community members who can't afford to buy new furniture, surrounding towns and farms as well as tourists to the Central Karoo.

The project came in very handy to those in need of this unique and rare service to have their old furniture refurbished at a low cost or buy low-cost furniture directly from the Thusong Service Centre.

Ms Elizabeth Louw said: "I was unemployed and had no means of income but through this opportunity I managed to get training and gained skills. I now have a job to support my family. We receive a monthly stipend and this is enough to sustain my family. I love working at the project and learn a lot every day. I see myself as a proud owner of my small business within the next two years. I hope that this project will expand so that it can create more job opportunities for the community of Laingsburg. I wish the Government would support it with funding to enable it to be sustainable and to expand further."



“We thank government for creating platforms such as Thusong Service Centres where we are able to receive skills development and run projects that support the Government’s priorities. Today we are proud and are always looking forward to go to work. Through our business we change the lives of the community by providing affordable services and renewing their furniture,” said Johannes Abraham and Gurshin Linders.

The project is monitored and evaluated by the Laingsburg Thusong Service Centre and it is one of the small steps to a brighter future for the community of Laingsburg and surrounding areas to learn how to start businesses that can also create jobs and offer skills in order to move South Africa forward.

End product.



Some of the material used for upholstery.





## 10. THUSONG SERVICE CENTRE: A PLACE OF HELP AND OPPORTUNITIES

### Tombo and Cofimvaba Thusong Service Centres – Eastern Cape

The first Thusong Service Centre in the country was Tombo, which was launched in 1999 in the Port St Johns Municipality in the Eastern Cape. Tombo has contributed vastly in changing people's lives for the better. In 2001, the Tombo Enterprise Development presented the Youth Entrepreneur Society training programme at the Thusong Service Centre. It focused on young people, including learners that were aspiring to become entrepreneurs. The training programme also included a nation-wide entrepreneurship idea competition.

Mr Maliziwe Mhlathu of Port St Johns who participated in the programme while in Grade 11 won the regional and national competitions. He went on to complete his National Diploma in Building. After graduating he worked for experiential training at a construction company. He decided to branch out on his own, but found that it was not easy. In 2011, he decided to go back to school and completed his B-Tech Degree.

Mr Mhlathu now has his own construction company, Abathembu Construction and Projects. His company is involved in local development in the Tombo area, doing upgrading and construction on roads in the area. When he started his business he negotiated with the Tombo Thusong Service Centre manager to have his office in the Thusong Service Centre until he could afford to rent business premises elsewhere.

The Thusong Service Centre has developed a successful public-private partnership with Wiphold that provides banking services through the Green Shop, a partnership between Old Mutual, Mutual and Federal and Nedbank. The Tombo community has the opportunity to plan for a better future through this partnership and has access to services such as:

- short and long-term investments
- funeral plans
- personal loans



- savings
- open bank accounts
- affinity group solutions
- domestic workers' funeral cover, retirement and savings packages
- money planning
- family support services
- livestock short-term insurance
- home and household short-term insurance
- car insurance.

The Tombo Thusong Service Centre has since increased to 10 Thusong Service Centres in the province. One of them is the Cofimvaba Thusong Service Centre, which was established in 2002. It contributes hugely in the development of the local rural community in terms of employment, access to services and providing integrated government information.

Thusong Service Centres bring government closer to the people. They promote access to opportunities to better the lives of communities and speed up service delivery.

Every month the GCIS coordinates open days and mobilise other departments to provide the information that the community requires. The DoL visits the Thusong Service Centre every month focusing on, among other things, public employment services and work seeker registration for the skilled and unskilled.

Mobile units from the DoL to register work seekers.







Community members capturing information on the DoL's database.



Cofimvaba Thusong Service Centre has contributed in many ways to change the lives of people in the area. One of them is Thandiwe Mlondeni who said, "I have been working in the Thusong Service Centre on a contract as a cleaner since 2002. I'm very thankful to the Municipality of Intsika Yethu for appointing me as a permanent employee. I now see a bright future for me and my family as I do not have to worry about where my next salary is coming from anymore."

Thandiwe Mlondeni an employee at the Cofimvaba Thusong Service Centre.







## **BEST-PRACTICE MODEL FOR INTEGRATED GOVERNMENT SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE SHOPPING MALL CONTEXT**

### **Maponya Mall Thusong Service Centre**

In June 2003, the Foreign Affairs ministers of India, Brazil, and South Africa met in Brazil on 6 June 2003, establishing the Trilateral Joint Commission India, Brazil, and South Africa (IBSA), to examine themes on the international agenda and those of mutual interest. The ministers identified that trilateral cooperation was an important tool for achieving the promotion of social and economic development and emphasised their intention to give greater emphasis to cooperation between their countries.

Between 10 and 15 October 2004, the then Minister for the Public Service and Administration led a delegation of South African government officials to Brazil to identify areas of common interest in the field of public service reform as well as specific projects on which they could collaborate, either on a trilateral basis, bilaterally. The intention was that the countries sign a Memorandum of Understanding that will provide a framework within which joint projects will be undertaken. The visit was also a follow-up to an exploratory visit to Brazil that was conducted during August 2003.

The South African delegation represented various government institutions including: the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA); the Office of the Public Service Commission; the State Information Technology Agency; the South African Management Development Institute; the Government Communications and Information System (GCIS); the Centre for Public Service Innovation; the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research; the provincial government of the Free State, and the City of Cape Town.

The visit was focusing on the four key performance areas, namely:

- a) e-government
- b) service delivery improvement



- c) human-resource improvement
- d) anti-corruption and monitoring and evaluation

Besides bilateral meetings at ministerial level, the delegation also visited a number of institutions at federal government and state levels, one of them being the Citizen Assistance Service Centres. The Citizen Assistance Service Centres became the cornerstone of how the Urban Mall Thusong Service Centre concept was developed in South Africa.

In 2008 the DPSA took the initiative and allocated funding for the establishment of the first ever Thusong Service Centre to operate in a shopping mall setting. The aim was to cater to the needs of the higher LSM communities. The project was a joint venture between the lead DPSA, the GCIS as the national programme coordinator and other key stakeholders who provided their advice on how to make provision for their departments to operate effectively within the urban mall setting. The steering committee was established and task-teams set up to focus on delegated responsibilities, which assisted in expediting the establishment process. These responsibilities varied from information and communications technology, communications, security and branding.

On 1 February 2011, Maponya Mall Thusong Service Centre opened its doors to service the community of Soweto and surrounding areas. The communities appreciated the opening of the centre and statistics show that the centre renders government services to approximately 61 000 beneficiaries every quarter. Operating six days a week (Monday to Saturday) and rendering a range of services the following service providers currently occupy the centre;

- Department of Home Affairs
- Department of Labour
- Department of Transport
- Gauteng Job Centre
- Gauteng Enterprise Propeller
- Gauteng Department of Finance
- National Youth Development Agency (NYDA)
- Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA)



As a pilot project, it was first tested in terms of how effective and efficient it could be. Some challenges had to be ironed out and sustainable interventions had to be put in place. On 31 August 2014 the Deputy, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa supported by the Minister of Public Service and Administration, Mr Collins Chabane, the Deputy Minister of Public Service and Administration, Ms Ayanda Dlodlo, Gauteng Premier Mr David Makhura, the Executive Mayor of the City of Johannesburg, Councillor Parks Tau and senior officials from various government departments officially launched the centre.

“Citizens have a legitimate expectation that services will be provided in a timely manner and close to where they live. Where payment is required, these services should be affordable,” said the Deputy President.

“We need to revitalise the Batho Pele programme. We need to go back to the basics. We need to put our people first. Public servants should not ask for bribes for work they are paid to do,” further he added.

Public Service Month, aligned to the theme “Reinventing the way Public Servants Work – Batho Pele” was launched during the event. Maponya Mall Thusong Service Centre was a true demonstration of how government can operate effectively in an integrated fashion. The integration means creating easy access for the people to acquire services, thus saving them time and money.

The much-awaited launch of Maponya Mall Thusong Service Centre came at the right time as South Africa celebrates the 20 years of Freedom and the 15-year anniversary and final year of the implementation of the 2014 second-generation Thusong Business Plan. Since the inception of the Thusong programme, 183 centres were operationalised across the nine provinces. These centres are creating access to services to an estimated 3, 5 million citizens every year.



