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HLB workers digging trenches in Empumalanga suburb

Council wins fight against floods

A STUTE workmanship by Hwange Local Board (HLB) has seen a section of houses in Empumalanga high density suburb, which was previously susceptible to floods for close to 40 years being spared the calamity this season.

HLB town secretary Pastor Ndumiso Mdlalose said the local authority was leaving no stone unturned in its quest to curb floods within its

locality.

“Through effective utilisation of the funds we were allocated by Zinara (Zimbabwe National Road Administration) we managed to carry out extensive routine maintenance work. We cleared storm drains as well as widening water courses in some areas,” he said.

Last year the local authority was given \$2,2 million by Zinara.

Pastor Mdlalose said HLB would utilise most

of the funds to be allocated to it by Zinara this year towards redesigning and construction of permanent storm water drainages.

HLB town engineer Philip Nguni said residents whose homes are prone to perennial floods have commended the local authority for its sterling work in averting the catastrophe.

“We have been getting positive reports from residents whose houses were previously prone to floods. They are appreciative of the work

managed to do.

“That’s an indication that we managed to curb flooding in the affected area. We classified the affected homes as red zones and came up with a robust approach to curtail the flooding problem,” he said.

The local authority successfully cleared storm drains and widened a water course behind a section of houses in Empumalanga before the onset of the rain season.

HLB also cleared the 1200 millimetre diameter culverts on one of the suburb’s major roads that had been barricading the flow of water for the past few years, subsequently leading to flash floods.

Prior to the exercise, about 10 houses were perennially affected by floods.

“With assistance from casual workers we managed to clear storm water drains, unblock culverts and create water way channels to enable water to follow a defined storm water drainage,” said Eng Nguni.

He said the local authority was still on the look-out for other areas that might be

vulnerable to floods.

“The engineering department is working right round the clock to eradicate flooding challenges. It’s an on-going process. There are still a few household we feel might be prone to floods. We intend to improve our storm water drains as well as resuscitate silted drains,” said Eng Nguni.

He also appealed to residents to refrain from throwing litter onto storm water drains to avoid blockages.

“We are making a passionate plea to resident to desist from throwing garbage onto storm water drains or water courses as this leads to accumulation of litter culminating to culverts and trench blockages. During the clearing exercise we realised that most of the litter was mostly disposable sorghum beer plastic containers,” said Eng Nguni.

One elderly Empumalanga resident, Mr Joseph Hove whose house has over the years been affected by floods heaved a sigh of relief after being spared the disaster despite torrential rains received in Hwange.

“I built this house in 1981 and since then I have been a victim of floods due to poor drainage. Each time when others are rejoicing the torrential rains to me it will be agonising as all my household property will find itself submerged.

“However, this time we received a lot of rains for a couple of days and I was pessimistic if the work I saw being carried out would see us being spared the floods but we didn’t experience any. However, Council officials promised to come up with a lasting solution to this problem,” he said.

The Councillor of the affected area acknowledged that the challenge of floods dates back about 40 years ago.

“The challenge of floods have been there since the 1980s, I vividly remember some of the serious one in that particular section were in 2014 and 2020. It’s really an issue of concern, lives might be lost if adequate measures are not taken to solve the problem,” said ward six Councillor Andrew Mupande.

A few houses in the medium density suburb of Chibondo are also susceptible to floods.

HLB working on property inventory

HWANGE Local Board (HLB) is working on coming up with a comprehensive inventory to enable it to effectively bill all property owners in its area of jurisdiction.

HLB town secretary Pastor Ndumiso Mdlalose said the local authority was working on ensuring that all individuals and corporates allocated land for infrastructural development within its locality are billed.

“Every portion of land within Council, be it a commercial, industrial and residential stand must pay us something. At the moment we are collecting from a very small fraction of what we call Council land,” said he said.

Pastor Mdlalose said the local

authority was working on coming up with a database of all properties and undeveloped stands within its area.

“We intend to come up with an exercise that will create a database showing how much of Council’s land has been allocated and what we are getting from it. Where we are not getting anything we must make sure we come up with an initiative to make sure we get something,” he said.

Pastor Mdlalose further said that individuals and corporates who have not developed their stands beyond the stipulated period would be subjected to paying rates.

“We need to use the policies, which we put in place in which

development conditions state that developers are given time frames to develop, after which they would be charged as though they had developed,” he said.

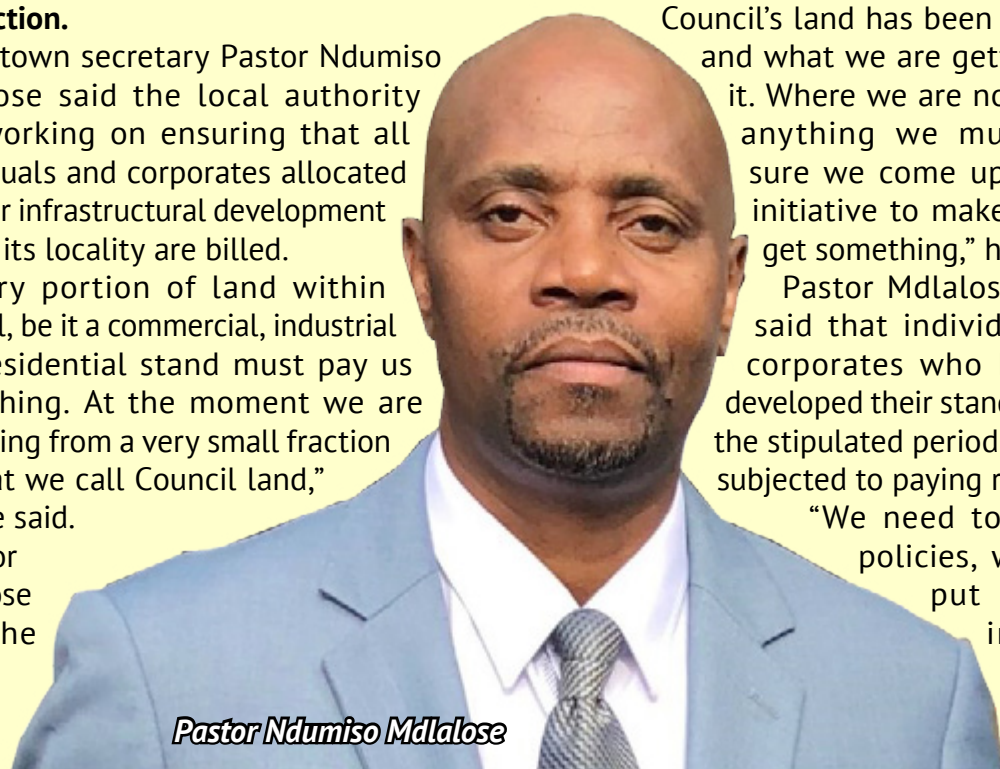
HLB town planner Mr Themba Sibanda said the local authority might have lost large sums in revenue over the years due to unpaid rates by numerous property owners that are not captured in its inventory.

“Council does not have a comprehensive register of all properties within its jurisdiction, meaning some properties have never been billed since their inception, hence Council is losing out on revenue,” he said.

The urban Councils Act Chapter 29:15 section 1 empowers local authorities to collect revenue for services rendered to residents in areas of their jurisdiction.

The main sources of revenue which most towns and municipalities bill on are water, refuse collection, sewerage charges, roads and street lighting, fire levy, supplementary charges and assessment rates, hall hire, plan approval fees, inspection fees among others.

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Pastor Ndumiso Mdlalose

HLB working on property inventory

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“For effective and efficient billing of Council clients, the local authority needs to have in place an accurate and up to date property register for all individual and corporate organisation properties.

“This register is the basis for Council budget as it gives guide on how revenue would be derived from these properties and how much to channel to service provision towards the same properties,” said Mr Sibanda.

He said the property inventory exercise has already uncovered a number of irregularities.

“We want to make sure that all stands owners are known and contactable. This information is very vital because some of stands might be due for repossession and reallocation and we might not be knowing that. Council is losing a lot of revenue because of lack of information in that area,” he said.

The local authority has gathered about 25 percent data on properties in its area of jurisdiction since the exercise started in November last year.

“As a way forward I have prepared a position paper, presented it to the engineering and housing directors with a clear plan of action and required resources,” said Mr Sibanda.

He said upon the completion of the exercise, the local authority would be in position of an up to date register of all properties in its area of jurisdiction.

“However, the challenge comes on stands that were allocated but have not been developed or are partly developed and unoccupied. Gathering accurate information for such properties may be a bit problematic, depending on accessibility and reliability of our secondary data in the housing department,” said Mr Sibanda.

HLB currently oversees administration in three suburbs namely Empumalanga, Chibondo and Baobab.



OK Zimbabwe-Hwange branch manager Mr Tendai Chimhashu (right), Hwange Local Board chairman councillor Nqobile Ocean Mabhena (second from right) and Hwange Local Board vice chairman councillor Admire Munhenga stand close to groceries to be handed out to beneficiaries of the Christmas Mayor’s Cheer fund

OK Zimbabwe commits to Mayor’s Cheer fund

RETAIL supermarket chain group, OK Zimbabwe-Hwange has committed itself to continue supporting the Christmas Mayor’s Cheer fund as part of its efforts to assist the less privileged members of society.

OK Zimbabwe-Hwange branch manager Mr Tendai Chimhashu said the supermarket’s donation towards the Christmas Mayor’s Cheer fund was one of its many ways of giving back to the community from which it operates.

“As OK Zimbabwe we always endeavour to give back to the community which we are doing business in. Without the community there’s no OK to talk about. These people (beneficiaries) are our customers and for OK to be in existence, it’s because of them,” he said.

The retail giant donated groceries to 36 vulnerable families drawn from ward four, five and six with each ward contributing 12 families.

The Christmas Mayor’s Cheer fund is part of Hwange Local Board (HLB)’s initiative aimed at encouraging individuals and corporates to offer a helping hand to the less fortunate members of the community during the festive season.

Mr Chimhashu said the giant supermarket would continue supporting the Christmas

Mayor’s cheer fund’s cause and assisting the needy during the entirety of its operations in Hwange.

“As long as our doors remain open, we will continue helping the community as well as families, which supports us in business,” he said.

OK Zimbabwe also donated disinfectants and detergents to Hwange Prison.

HLB vice chairman Councillor Admire Munhenga applauded OK Zimbabwe for its gesture and called on other corporates to emulate it.

“We are very proud of OK and their gesture is most welcome. We hope it will continue with its good work and hopefully encourage other businesses to follow suit,” he said.

HLB chairman Councillor Nqobile Ocean Mabhena however, expressed dismay at other corporates’ failure to contribute towards the Mayor’s Cheer fund.

“It’s very disheartening to note that virtually all the corporates operating in Hwange have somehow deliberately failed to contribute towards this worth cause. OK Zimbabwe remains the only one to commit itself.

The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing.” – Walt Disney

“Some always pledge to contribute year in year out but they don’t fulfil their promises. It’s therefore boggles the mind if they are really concerned about communities they operate from,” he said.

Cllr Mabhena further noted that the general populace of Hwange should also show appreciation of OK Zimbabwe’s benevolence through continuously supporting its business

to enable it to stay afloat.

He said some of the companies harness resources in Hwange District yet their Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives are invisible.

“We have numerous corporates doing business here, with some even extracting resources but they have hardly given back to communities. One might think they are only here to exploit resources only to leave communities in abject

poverty,” he said.

Hwange is home to a number of coal mining and processing companies, reputable retail (groceries, household property and clothing) firms, parastatals, petroleum players as well as hotel and tourism players.

Wadco identifies projects for ward six

WARD SIX Councillor Andrew Mumpande says his newly constituted Ward Development Committee (Wadco) has identified projects it intends to carry out using its allotted five percent contributed by rate payers to Hwange Local Board (HLB).

Cllr Mumpande said the Wadco intends to utilise five percent of the annual rates collected by the local authority from residents and businesses operating in its area of jurisdiction towards revamping a bus terminus and vegetable market stall as well as setting-up of a community garden.

“I’m in consultation with the Wadco on projects we wish to undertake, but so far we are looking at revamping the bus terminus at DRC section into a modern facility with proper terminal infrastructure.

“As it is, it’s just an open ground since being designated as a terminus 10 years ago. Commuters are being subjected to harsh weather conditions while waiting for transport,” he said.

Cllr Mumpande said plans were also underway to refurbish another bus terminus in Empumalanga, but the local authority has already made an undertaking to temporarily convert it into a vending site.

HLB felt, the Empumalanga bus terminal was no longer serving its intended purpose thus the need to transform the infrastructure for a much viable activity.

“We are also looking at roofing a vegetable market stall whose roof was blown off by the wind three years ago. By roofing the stall we will avoid vegetable vendors a decent and hygienic place to sell their produce,” said Cllr Mumpande.



Councillor Andrew Mumpande

The local authority is also in the process of completing vegetable market stalls located in Empumalanga and Chibondo that were constructed under Government’s Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle project in 2008.

The vegetable market stalls are part of HLB’s efforts to create an enabling environment for traders to operate from as well as improving its revenue collection from the informal sector.

Cllr Mumpande said the Wadco had also considered the setting-up of a community garden as an income generating project for vulnerable families in the ward.

“We are also planning to put up a community garden, which will assist in improving household food security for vulnerable families while also generating income for them. We will facilitate Physical Planning to identify a suitable place

for us to carry out this project,” he said.

Cllr Mumpande said the Wadco would purchase part of the inputs in the form of seeds to kick-start the project but would appeal to well-wishers to assist with provision of other requisite resources.

“We will need assistance to procure a perimeter fence to secure the garden as well as a solar-powered borehole for irrigation purposes,” he said.

HLB is in the process of identifying areas to establish nutritional community gardens in every ward within its area of jurisdiction as part of efforts to improve income and household food security among vulnerable families.

The local authority is also seeking partners to assist it in the operationalization of the community gardens.

Empumalanga clinic attracts more patients

By Wisakile Mwanjali

THE number of patients seeking medical attention at Hwange Local Board (HLB)'s run Empumalanga clinic continues to surge owing to its quality healthcare services and affordability.

Empumalanga clinic sister-in-charge Sindiso Mhlanga said the primary healthcare facility is attracting patients from all corners of Hwange urban and surrounding rural communities.

“We have observed that most people across Hwange township are seeking medical attention at our clinic. We have some patients coming from Hwange Colliery’s concession area as far as Makwika and Madumabisa compounds. We even attend to patients coming from surrounding remote areas such as Chibondo, Champepo, Kasibo and Madumabisa villages,” she said.

Empumalanga clinic was constructed at a cost of US\$ 300 000 and officially opened in 2018. It comprises of two-bedded male and female wards, a two bed post natal ward and a labour ward.

“This clinic attends to many patients



Empumalanga Clinic

compared to other clinics in Hwange urban. We estimated catchment population for our Out Patient Department is 11 331. We attend to an average of 130 patients a week,” said Sister Mhlanga.

The clinic has a staff compliment of 13 which includes one state certified nurse and eight registered general nurses.

Sister Mhlanga said there was a need for

an air conditioner at the clinic’s pharmacy, additional specialised furniture, equipping of ambulance among other ancillary equipment.

The clinic is also in need of more human resources to enable it to operate 24 hours.

The clinic charges a consultation fee of ZWL\$360 adults and ZWL\$160 for children. Maternity and ambulance fees are ZWL\$848 and ZWL\$448 respectively.

Upsurge in shebeens worrying: Sister Mhlanga

By Wisakile Mwanjali

EMPUMALANGA clinic sister-in-charge Sindiso Mhlanga says the upsurge in shebeens in Hwange is likely to exacerbate the spread of the coronavirus (Covid-19).

Sister Mhlanga said the illegal home beer drinking spots popularly known as shebeens are increasingly becoming epicentres for the spread of the respiratory disease.

There has been a tremendous increase in the number of shebeens in Hwange urban notably in Empumalanga and at Hwange Colliery Company Limited and National Railways of Zimbabwe (NRZ) concession areas since March last year.

Unscrupulous residents took advantage of the closure of licensed beer selling outlets owing to Government’s national lock regulations to open illegal drink holes at their homes.



Sister Sindiso Mhlanga

“Crowding in a room as is the case at most shebeens increases the risk of one contracting Covid-19 because there won’t be any form of social distancing. Covid-19 can be transmitted through saliva droplets when one is in close contact with someone with respiratory signs or symptoms,” said Sister Mhlanga.

The health care expert also said drinking from

the same container also increases chances of one infected with the coronavirus.

“Sharing of beer from the same container is discouraged as Covid-19 can be transmitted indirectly through formites in the environment of an infected person and also there’s evidence that the virus has been found in human faeces,” said Sister Mhlanga.

Ward 14 Councillor Albert Vendasi Sibanda reiterated Sister Mhlanga’s sentiments and further hinted that the private binging places can also lead to the spread of other communicable diseases.

“The number of sheebens in my area of jurisdiction is scary despite the fact that it’s a relatively small place and with the advent of Covid-19 lives are at risk.

“Apart from Covid-19 people frequenting these places are at risk of getting infected by other communicable diseases such as TB (tuberculosis),” he said