"Putting Our People First"

The Update

Metsimaholo Municipality

Volume 9

April to June 2025

FROM DROPS OF FRUSTRATION TO STREAMS OF HOPE: Zamdela Ward 9's Water Revolution Begins

For years, the residents of Ward 9 in Zamdela have endured a daily struggle that many in other communities take for granted: a steady and reliable water supply. Buckets filled the night before, long walks with heavy containers, and weak drips from taps were the norm. Leaking, rusted galvanized pipes silently robbed the community of one of life's most necessary resources. But now, the tide is turning, and it's not just water that's flowing, it's hope.

A transformative 12-month water infrastructure project has officially commenced in Ward 9, and its impact is already being felt across the community. Old, corroded water pipes are being torn from the ground and replaced with modern, high-quality PVC pipelines designed to last and deliver. It's a long-overdue investment, but one that signals a new chapter, a chapter defined by dignity, progress, and faith restored in local government.

The once weary streets, marked by recurring pipe bursts and the quiet desperation of households struggling to access clean water, are now bustling with energy and purpose. Trenches line the sidewalks. Machinery hums as teams of workers, most of them local residents, carefully install the arteries of a renewed water network. The change is more than physical. It's emotional. It's symbolic.

"This is not just an infrastructure project; it's a turning point," says Ward Councillor Sox Mqhwathi, his eyes scanning a site where workers are laying new pipes with precision and care. "For the first time in years, our people can see and feel real, tangible change. It's no longer promises on paper, it's pipes in the ground, water in the taps, and smiles on faces."

Councillor Mqhwathi has been a constant presence on site, ensuring progress remains steady and that community concerns are swiftly addressed. While challenges, such as noise and temporary road closures, have naturally arisen, the feedback from residents has been overwhelmingly positive. He notes, "We've had almost no serious complaints. That speaks volumes about the efficiency of the contractor and the patience of our people."

The contractor, sourced from within the municipal area, has prioritized community participation by hiring local workers and suppliers. This approach is doing more than fixing pipes; it's stimulating the local economy and fostering a sense of ownership among Ward 9 residents.

A resident, a mother of three living in the heart of the ward, shares her story with a smile. "My children no longer wake up to find no water in the taps. We no longer must fill buckets before bed. And the young men working on this project? I know some of them, they're our sons, our neighbours. It makes me proud."

Yet, the journey is far from over. Over the next 12 months, the project will continue to progress through the ward, street by street, pipe by pipe. There will be more dust, more noise, and more temporary detours. But there will also be more joy, more trust, and more water, clean, strong, and reliable. The old pipes once carried water. The new ones? They carry hope.

Metsimaholo Unveils Bold "Operation Patala" – A 50% Municipal Debt Discount That Brings Hope, Relief, and Renewed Trust

A new dawn of financial relief, accountability, and community empowerment has risen in Metsimaholo. On the morning of 3 June 2025, the Metsimaholo Local Municipality made history by launching the groundbreaking "Operation Patala 50% Discount" initiative at the Harry Gwala Multipurpose Centre in Zamdela. This bold and visionary program promises not only to ease the financial burdens of struggling residents but also to rebuild trust between the municipality and its communities.

In a launch event filled with high anticipation, Executive Mayor Cllr Jack Malindi delivered a message of hope and progress. His presence and address underscored the municipality's unwavering commitment to inclusive governance, service delivery, and empowering residents to play an active role in local development. Council Whip, Cllr Fikile Mosokweni, opened the proceedings with a heartfelt speech emphasizing unity, financial responsibility, and shared commitment to building a financially stable municipality.

The event drew a large and enthusiastic crowd of community members, municipal officials, and local leaders. Residents, many of whom have long struggled with mounting municipal debt, welcomed the initiative with open arms and open hearts. The launch was not just a ceremonial event; it was a moment of collective relief and renewed hope, as applause filled the hall in response to the announcement of the long-awaited debt reprieve.

About Operation Patala: A People-Centered Innovation

"Operation Patala" is a strategic incentive program introduced by the Metsimaholo Municipal Council for the 2024–2025 financial year. It is aimed squarely at reducing the ballooning municipal debt owed by households and businesses while instilling a culture of financial discipline and accountability.

The essence of the program is simple yet powerful: qualifying municipal account holders, those with arrears as of 30 June 2024, are offered a 50% discount on their outstanding debts. This gives consumers a chance to pay only half of what they owe. To benefit, residents can either:

- Pay the discounted amount in full, or
- Pay 50% upfront and enter a structured 12-month payment arrangement for the remaining balance accumulated from July 2024 onward.

However, the incentive comes with a clear condition; failure to honour the agreement will result in the forfeiture of the discount. This accountability clause ensures that residents who take up the offer follow through with commitment and responsibility.

Goals That Go Beyond Debt Recovery

Operation Patala is more than a financial strategy—it's a comprehensive social and economic intervention.

Executive Mayor and Speaker Engage with Taxi Association Amid Increasing Service Delivery Needs

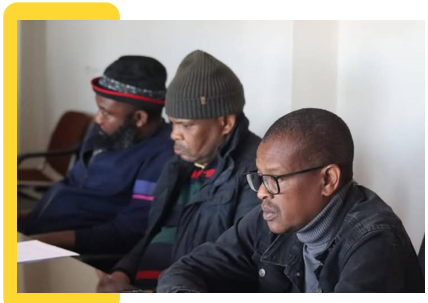
In a compelling show of responsive leadership and grassroots engagement, the Executive Mayor of Metsimaholo Local Municipality, Cllr Jack Malindi, together with the Speaker of Council, Cllr Lucas Fisher, met face-to-face with the Metsimaholo Taxi Association on the morning of 23 June 2025. The high-stakes engagement, held in the 6th Floor Boardroom of the Civic Centre in Sasolburg, marked a pivotal turning point in the municipality's efforts to rebuild public trust and confront urgent service delivery challenges.

The meeting followed a formal Memorandum of Demands submitted by the Taxi Association on 12 May 2025, a document that echoed the frustrations of drivers, commuters, and residents alike. The grievances were clear and pressing: crumbling roads, neglected gravel routes, unreliable water supply, dangerously unmarked potholes, and the absence of adequate speed control measures.

These concerns are not just technical; they strike at the heart of everyday life in Metsimaholo, impacting the safety of schoolchildren, the livelihoods of taxi drivers, and the dignity of residents navigating neglected infrastructure. The municipality acknowledged the urgency and responded with tangible updates, outlining a phased action plan that includes road resealing in Refengkgotso and Naledi (Vaalpark), the regraveling of critical routes in Themba Kubeka, and intensified pothole repair operations throughout the municipal area.

Further, the municipality assured the association that the installation of shallow speed bumps, a crucial intervention for pedestrian safety, is underway, guided by the principle of balancing safety with efficient traffic flow, especially in densely populated communities.

The water supply issue, flagged as a top priority, was not sidelined. Instead, it was situated within the municipality's broader infrastructure expansion strategy, signalling a long-term commitment to service equity and sustainable delivery.



While the discussions were robust and at times heated, a reflection of the depth of frustration in the sector, they remained constructive. Both parties recognized the importance of collaboration in resolving systemic issues. The Taxi Association emerged from the meeting with a renewed sense of partnership, while the municipal leadership reiterated its pledge to lead with transparency, accountability, and urgency.

This dialogue stands as a meaningful milestone, not just in addressing potholes and pipes but in bridging the gap between government and community stakeholders. The wheels of change have begun to turn, slowly but decisively, on the very roads that sustain the local economy.

SCHOOL SAFETY LAUNCH: A UNITED FRONT TO PROTECT OUR FUTURE

The morning of Saturday, 28 June 2025, ushered in more than just a community gathering; it sparked a movement. The hall of Sakubutjha Secondary School in Zamdela pulsed with purpose as educators, learners, parents, and government officials convened for the long-anticipated School Safety Launch, a bold initiative to confront the escalating wave of school-based violence, bullying, vandalism, substance abuse, and mental health crises plaguing the Fezile Dabi District.

The event began with a stirring address by the Executive Mayor of Metsimaholo Local Municipality, Cllr Jack Malindi, whose words set the tone for the day: *A safe school is the foundation of a strong society. We must all rise to the occasion, parents, educators, government, and communities."* His call for collective accountability ignited a flame of shared responsibility that resonated throughout the room.

Adding significant weight to the occasion was Dr. V. Chuta, Fezile Dabi District Education Director, whose address laid bare the realities faced by schools across the district. *"Safety is not a luxury; it is a prerequisite for learning. Learners cannot thrive in fear, and teachers cannot perform under threat. Our collective action must be louder than the silence that allows danger to linger,"* Dr. Chuta stated passionately, urging stakeholders to act decisively.

The initiative also drew robust support from leading teacher unions, SADTU and NAPTOSA, both of which emphasized the importance of holistic interventions. Their calls echoed through the hall—safety is not just about fences and cameras, but about mental health support, respect for teachers, discipline in classrooms, and partnership with families and communities.

As the event closed, one message rang clear: Zamdela is not waiting for change, it is leading it. From this historic gathering, a new movement has emerged, one that does not simply demand safe schools but actively builds them. A movement where safety is not outsourced but owned by all. A movement that sees every child as worth protecting and every teacher as worth empowering.

The School Safety Launch has laid a solid foundation; now it's time to build on it, together.

"A Fire That Will Never Die: Metsimaholo Honours Two Legends of Courage and Service"

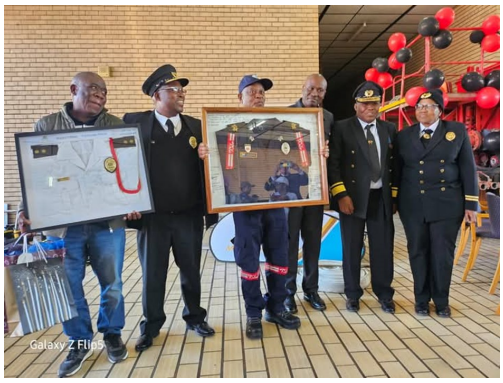
In a rare and deeply moving moment of reflection and reverence, the Metsimaholo Local Municipality paused on Friday, 30 June 2025, to pay tribute to two extraordinary public servants whose legacies are forever woven into the safety net of the community: Firefighter Bafana Mthethwa and Station Officer Simon Tshabangu. These are not ordinary men. They are builders of trust, quiet warriors of resilience, and symbols of unyielding courage whose selfless service has kept the fires of hope burning even in the darkest of days.

Firefighter Bafana Mthethwa: The Relentless Climb of a Humble Hero

His story begins not in the firehouse but among the flowerbeds and fields of the Parks Division, where a young Bafana Mthethwa started his journey with the municipality in 1995. But his dreams reached higher, into the realm of emergencies, flashing sirens, and lives on the line. That dream led him to transition into Emergency Medical Services in 2002 as an Ambulance Assistant, where he saw the raw fragility of human life and felt the weight of compassion-driven service.

Mthethwa climbed the ranks to become a Learner Firefighter and eventually earned the coveted title of Firefighter, a role he fulfilled with unwavering excellence until the day of his retirement. To the community, he was a guardian. To the families he helped, he was a miracle. His legacy is not only in the emergencies he answered but, in the dignity, integrity, and quiet bravery with which he carried the uniform.

Station Officer Simon Tshabangu: The Architect of Leadership and Legacy



If Mthethwa was the heartbeat, Simon Tshabangu was the spine of Metsimaholo Fire and Rescue. His journey began in 1981, not as a rescuer, but as a Security Guard, watching over gates, never knowing that one day he would open the gates to a future far greater than any he could have imagined. With relentless dedication and an unshakable vision, he rose through the ranks: Ambulance Assistant, Learner Firefighter, Firefighter, and ultimately, Station Officer, a title he would redefine through his excellence.

An Eternal Flame of Gratitude

As both men retire from active duty, Metsimaholo does not simply say farewell; he says *thank you*.

Their names, Bafana Mthethwa and Simon Tshabangu, will live on, not just in the plaques or service records, but in the stories told in fire stations, in the confidence of recruits, in the peace of residents who rest easy because of men like them.

Drawing the Line Together: Metsimaholo Residents Step Up in Historic Ward Delimitation Dialogue

In a powerful demonstration of democracy in action, the community of Metsimaholo gathered at the Harry Gwala Multipurpose Sports Centre in Sasolburg to take part in a critical civic moment, the public consultation on the first draft of electoral ward boundaries. This engagement, held per Section 157(4)(a) of the Constitution and Schedule 1 of the Municipal Structures Act (Act No. 117 of 1998), underscores the commitment of the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) to transparency, fairness, and participatory governance in the shaping of the new term of municipal councils.

The session followed a series of technical consultations, including one held at Metsimaholo Local Municipality on 6 March 2025, during which the MDB promised to return with a clear schedule for community involvement. That promise was honoured with today's session, a platform where residents, councillors, and civic leaders came together not just to be informed, but to be heard.

Among those present were the Speaker of Council, Cllr Lucas Fisher, Council Whip, Cllr Fikile Mosokweni, local councillors, municipal officials, and a cross-section of engaged residents. Their presence symbolized a shared vision: that ward delimitation is not a process done *to* the people, but *with* them.

At the heart of the event was a critical message: public participation is not a formality, It is a foundation. Ward delimitation affects how communities are represented, how resources are distributed, and how services are delivered. When people are excluded from this process, it risks alienation, inequality, and weakened accountability. But when they are involved, it builds trust, transparency, and a shared ownership of local governance.

The MDB, in collaboration with the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC), provided clarity on how boundaries are drawn based on population figures, spatial realities, and representational equity. Yet, it was the community's questions, insights, and concerns that truly shaped the atmosphere. From ward identity to service accessibility, residents voiced the realities they live in, and in doing so, ensured that the final decisions reflect not just numbers on a map, but the lives behind those numbers.

Metsimaholo Local Municipality encourages all residents to remain engaged as the ward delimitation process continues. Your presence, your voice, and your insight are not only welcome, but they are also essential. This is your municipality. This is your future. Let's build it together, ward by ward, voice by voice.

Left Out in Our Backyard": Metsimaholo Stands Up to SASOL Over Labour Injustices

On 15 May 2025, the walls of the Solomon Mahlangu Boardroom at the Civic Centre in Sasolburg echoed with powerful cries for justice and inclusion, as the community of Metsimaholo rose with a unified voice against deep-rooted labour injustices allegedly perpetrated by one of the country's industrial giants, SASOL.

In a charged and emotionally raw meeting led by Executive Mayor Cllr Jack Malindi and Municipal Manager Mr Basi Motloung, representatives from local Labour Forums, Business Forums, and SASOL convened in what has become a pivotal turning point in the fight for equitable employment practices. The central grievance? The systematic exclusion of Metsimaholo residents from employment opportunities in their municipality.

At the heart of the protest was the controversial use of labour brokers, intermediaries accused of unfair recruitment processes that consistently sideline local job seekers in favour of outsiders. Community leaders did not mince words, calling out what they described as a "silent economic apartheid" that allows the towers and flames of SASOL to dominate the skyline while local homes remain dark with unemployment.

Speaker after speaker added weight to the moment, mothers with unemployed graduates at home, skilled workers overlooked for years, and youth who've never had the chance to step inside the gates of an industry built on the resources and resilience of their soil.

The Executive Mayor, Cllr Jack Malindi, echoed the frustrations of the people, stating firmly: "This municipality will not sit idle while our people are robbed of their right to economic participation."

In response to the mounting pressure, calls were made for SASOL to urgently review and restructure its labour and procurement policies to prioritize local employment, ensure transparency in recruitment, and dismantle the labour broker networks that operate without accountability.

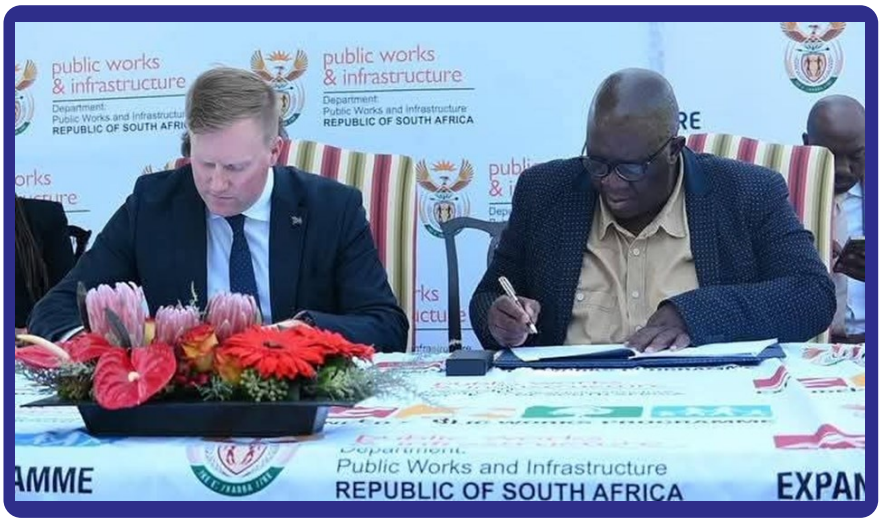
But beyond the policies and technicalities, today's gathering was about dignity. It was a bold declaration from the people of Metsimaholo that they refuse to be invisible in the very space they call home. It was not just a meeting — it was the spark of a movement, a collective voice declaring: "We matter. We belong. We demand inclusion."

As the dust settles, one thing is clear: Metsimaholo will no longer accept being left out in their backyard. The community has drawn a line, and now the challenge lies with SASOL and all other stakeholders to step up, engage honestly, and walk the road toward economic justice and social accountability.

Metsimaholo Sets the Pace: Pioneering Infrastructure Renewal Through Strategic Vision and Accountability

In a momentous stride toward sustainable development and transformative service delivery, Metsimaholo Local Municipality has solidified its place as a trailblazer in South African local governance on Monday, 09 May 2025, at Sasolburg. With its formal inclusion in the national 'Adopt-a-Municipality' initiative, Metsimaholo is boldly leading a new era of infrastructure renewal grounded in accountability, innovation, and partnership.

At the heart of this landmark development was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Minister of Public Works & Infrastructure, Dean Macpherson, and Executive Mayor Cllr Jack Malindi. The ceremony, attended by senior officials including the Member of the Mayoral Committee for Technical and Infrastructural Services, Mosiou Poho, marked the beginning of a strategic collaboration designed to fast-track infrastructure delivery, eliminate red tape, and introduce a culture of results-driven project implementation.



Facilitated by Infrastructure South Africa (ISA), this initiative is not just about brick and mortar; it's about restoring dignity, delivering basic rights, and building a better tomorrow. With Metsimaholo selected as one of the flagship municipalities for this bold national programme, the country is watching a local government break the mould and rewrite the narrative of what effective, ethical governance looks like.

Metsimaholo didn't stumble into the spotlight; it earned it. Known for financial discipline and clean governance, the municipality proudly maintains a debt-free record with both Eskom and Rand Water, a feat few others can claim. Its improved audit outcomes reflect a leadership team committed not to self-interest, but to serving the people with transparency and integrity.

In his 2024 State of the Municipal Address, Mayor Malindi painted a clear picture of what a people-centred municipality looks like. Under his leadership, Metsimaholo has already made impressive strides:

- Over R500,000 invested in tertiary education funding, benefitting more than 100 young students.
- 7,429 indigent households receiving free basic services, bringing relief and dignity to the most vulnerable.
- Major upgrades in electricity, water systems, sanitation, and roads, laying the groundwork for long-term community upliftment.

Yet, the municipality is not resting on its laurels. Through the 'Adopt-a-Municipality' partnership, Metsimaholo is now set to:

- Accelerate infrastructure roll-out with greater oversight and efficiency.
- Implement robust monitoring frameworks to keep every project accountable and on track.

Strengthen public-private partnerships to leverage innovation and investment in public infrastructure. This is not just about Metsimaholo, it's about setting a national benchmark. It's about proving that municipalities can be beacons of excellence, even in the face of limited resources and complex challenges. Metsimaholo's vision is clear: to build with purpose, govern with transparency, and lead with integrity.

As the community celebrates this milestone, the message is unmistakable: When leadership is aligned with accountability, and partnerships are rooted in trust, transformation is not only possible, but also inevitable.

Metsimaholo has not only adopted innovation, but it has also become its embodiment.

Metsimaholo Municipality

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