



PROJECT “KHA RI UNDE” TAKES CENTRE STAGE

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Maintenance, which is governed by the Maintenance Act 99 of 1998, came into operation in November 1999 and introduced various improved mechanisms aimed at establishing a fair and equitable maintenance system accessible to all citizens in need. The system has, however, been inundated

with escalating challenges which necessitated the department to devise a new strategy, building on previous successes in improving maintenance services. As part of strengthening the maintenance system, the department has taken a conscious decision and introduced Project “Kha Ri Unde”, a Tshivenda word meaning “let

us pay maintenance". The project aims to establish an efficient maintenance services and ensures that matters are finalised quickly.

"The department identified an urgent need for a more comprehensive, all embracing and long-term initiative aimed at addressing the current systemic inefficiencies that delay service delivery in maintenance," said Advocate Mable Khoza, Legal Administration Officer responsible for Maintenance in the Promotion of the Rights of Vulnerable Groups (PRVG) Unit.

"Kha Ri Unde" now intends to reduce the turnaround time in the management of maintenance matters."

The project seeks to improve service delivery at various service points in the current maintenance system, starting from the application for maintenance to the awarding of the maintenance order.

In the past few years, the department dealt with maintenance through Operation Isondlo, which focused on changing the negative public perceptions about the maintenance system by introducing interventions that were plaguing the system's effectiveness.

"Kha Ri Unde" now intends to reduce the turnaround time in the management of maintenance matters. In realising these goals, Advocate Khoza said; "All service points in the maintenance management chain have been carefully explored to identify operational challenges. Lessons learnt from Operation Isondlo successes have provided a need to increase momentum in realising the objectives of the Maintenance Act".

In reducing the turnaround time in the payment of maintenance money to clients, the project has so far introduced the decentralised Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) payment system to 301 courts.

"This has reduced the payment of maintenance money to within 48 hours after allocation by the courts", said Mr Nico Van Harmelen, Director responsible for Third Party Funds (TPF) Management, adding that the system will also be rolled out to other remaining courts.

Another arrangement proposed is the payment of maintenance monies directly to the client's account by employers after an order has been granted by a court. In this way, according to Advocate Khoza, the client can only approach the court to lodge a complaint when there is a default, in which case a warrant of arrest can be issued or property attached.

Kha Ri Unde seeks to provide relief by introducing some of the following intervention actions:

MANAGEMENT OF QUEUES BY LINE MANAGERS

Line managers are expected to periodically monitor these queues, in-between their normal duties to ensure that they are properly managed. They will also be provided with specialised service etiquette course, which will be linked to maintenance norms and standards.

APPLICATION DESK

A maintenance clerk issues application forms and assists with the completion of the form where necessary. The application will then be referred to a maintenance officer for final screening who also receives online applications.

INVESTIGATION DESK

Maintenance investigators will do the tracing to determine the whereabouts of the respondent, they also do in-depth investigations which include technical and financial aspects of the case.

PROCESS DESK

In order to further reduce queues in court, the project seeks to develop a mechanism to allow e-Filing Registration of Maintenance Applications for all clients who have access to internet. The process of applying online will not only assist in reducing physical queues in courts, but also increase speed in the finalisation of maintenance matters. The applicant will complete the e-Form on the Maintenance web-page in the Department's website.

As soon as a clerk is satisfied that the matter brought by the client is indeed a maintenance matter, a clerk commences with the registration of the application through the Integrated Case Management System (ICMS).

MEDIATION DESK

Maintenance mediators facilitate the mediation process to clarify issues between the parties in dispute and assist parties to reach agreement. If agreement is reached, it is reduced to writing and signed by both parties. If no agreement is reached, the matter is referred to court for a formal enquiry.

The scope of "Kha Ri Unde" project, which is currently being piloted in nine (9) courts, will be extended over for the period of three (3) years. It will be subject to review after its life cycle to determine lessons learnt and benchmarking for possible roll out in all courts across the country. ■

