



COGTA *Newsletter*

JANUARY 2026

“The Booklet serves as a critical tool to strengthen governance, promote ethical leadership and ensure consistent, responsive service delivery,” said MEC Williams



MEC Williams filling a pot hole in the town of Sterkspruit

EDITORIAL COMMENT



Editor: Ms Thando Sonjica

Good Governance Must Become A Non-Negotiable for Both Political and Administrative leadership to Create a better Life for All

The launch of the Booklet on Non-Negotiables (BoNNs) in Sterkspruit on 30 January 2026 was more than a symbolic event. It was a call to action for municipalities across the Eastern Cape, where governance failures have too often translated into poor service delivery and eroded public trust.

MEC Zolile Williams was clear that the BoNNs is not another policy document destined for the office shelves, rather “a practical guide, that sets out minimum standards and clarify what municipalities must do and cannot be compromised.” By ordering accountability and ethical leadership, the booklet aims to reset expectations and restore public confidence in local government.

Executive Mayor of Joe Gqabi DM Councillor Nomvuyo Mposelwa rightly stressed that the BoNNs demands the commitment of both the political and administrative leadership of municipalities. Without that dual buy-in, reforms risk becoming rhetoric.

The BoNNs strength lies in its insistence that governance is not negotiable, and that service delivery must be consistent, responsive, and measurable.

The timing for launch could not have been more urgent. Communities across the province are weary of potholes, sewer spillages, and refuse left unattended and not collected for days on end. These are major daily irritations, and reminders of municipalities failing in their most basic duties to serve their communities better.

The choice now lies with municipal leaders and administrators. The booklet provides the framework, but its success will depend on relentless implementation, uncompromising monitoring, and real consequences for non-compliance. Citizens will judge the BoNNs not by speeches, but by whether their streets are cleaner, their services reliable, and their municipalities accountable.

Launching the initiative in Sterkspruit, a rural town signalled that reform must reach every corner of the province, especially where governance failures are felt most acutely.

The BoNN is a bold step, which if embraced with seriousness, could mark a turning point to create better communities for all the people of our province. If allowed to falter, it will become yet another missed opportunity.

Local government is the frontline of service delivery hence our communities deserve more than promises, and good governance, as the BoNNs reminds us, is not optional. It is a non-negotiable.

Contents

- 3. Sterkspruit schools benefit from floods and fire prevention awareness campaigns**
- 4. Reconciliation day geared for a cohesive, non-racial and inclusive future for South Africans**
- 5. Booklet on non-negotiables to support better Municipal Governance**
- 6. Back-to-School programme supports learners across Joe Gqabi district**

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This is a monthly newsletter published by the Directorate: Communication Management of the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs

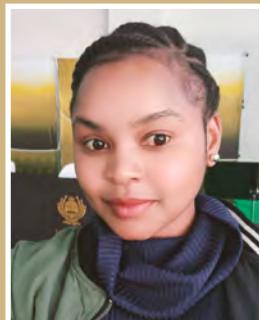
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STERKSPRUIT SCHOOLS BENEFIT FROM FLOODS AND FIRE PREVENTION AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

By Vuyani Sibene



Chief Director for Disaster Management Ms Chuleza Jama and District Director for Joe Gqabi District Support Centre Ms Fezeka Ntlemeza

As part of the build-up to the launch of the Booklet on Non-Negotiables (BoNNs), the Executive Mayor of Joe Gqabi District Municipality, Councillor Nomvuyo Mposelwa together with senior officials from the department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (Cogta) , assembled at the Sterkspruit Senior Secondary and Primary Schools for an awareness campaign on flood and fire prevention demonstration.

The awareness campaign was aligned to service delivery commitments under the non-negotiable's initiative, to empower municipalities to deliver better, faster and more reliable services, ultimately improving the quality of life for all residents in the Province of the Eastern Cape.

The launch is because of the observation over time made by CoGTA MEC Zolile Williams of persistent governance failures, poor service delivery, weak accountability, and ongoing non-compliance with legislative prescripts in several Eastern Cape municipalities. These challenges have continued to undermine the ability of local government to respond effectively to the needs of communities.

In response, Cogta developed clear guidelines that define the minimum standards required to stabilize and improve municipal performance. These guidelines are aimed at marshalling all stakeholders to work more efficiently and decisively in restoring functionality within municipalities.

Addressing the learners and teachers, Councillor Mposelwa said: "We are here to raise awareness about disaster risks and how communities can respond to disasters that frequently occur in our province, ahead of the launch of the Booklet by MEC Williams."

Councillor Mposelwa added that the non-negotiables initiative underscores government's commitment to enforce accountability, improve compliance, and ensure that municipalities are capacitated to deliver sustainable and reliable services to communities.



Fire fighting demonstration

RECONCILIATION DAY GEARED FOR A COHESIVE, NON-RACIAL AND INCLUSIVE FUTURE FOR SOUTH AFRICANS

By Sabo Dlelengana



MEC Williams with Mr Dada of SABC ready for an interview

Every year on 16 December, South Africans pause to commemorate the Day of Reconciliation, a day that calls on the nation to reflect on its painful past while recommitting itself to unity, healing and social cohesion. In 2025, the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) joined the community of Komani to commemorate the day at the Thobi Khula Indoor Sports Centre in Mlungisi Township, in the Enoch Mgijima Local Municipality.

The programme commenced with a Walk for Peace and Reconciliation, a symbolic act that transformed the idea of peace from a passive hope to a visible and collective statement. By marching through the streets of Mlungisi Township, community members, government representatives and stakeholders created a living symbol of harmony and solidarity.

Speaking on behalf of the Eastern Cape Premier, MEC for COGTA, Zolile Williams emphasised the significance of the day in national calendar in that “The Day of Reconciliation reminds all citizens of the importance of national unity, forgiveness and healing from the deep divisions of the apartheid era. We need to

confront historical injustices, embrace the spirit and lessons of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), and work collectively towards building a cohesive, non-racial and inclusive future,” said MEC.

MEC Williams added that the Eastern Cape Province, aptly known as the “Home of Legends,” occupies a profound place in South Africa’s history. “For a long period, it was both a theatre of conflict and a bedrock of the struggle for national liberation. The 2025 Reconciliation Day commemoration also served as a moment of remembrance for other massacres that occurred in this region between 1921 and 1993 from the Bulhoek Massacre in Komani to the Northcrest Massacre in Mthatha. In total, twelve recorded massacres took place during this tragic period, resulting in the loss of countless lives, as well as livestock that was forcefully seized from African, Khoi, San and Coloured communities by colonial invaders and settlers,” he added.

As part of its mandate to take government services closer to the people, COGTA provided exhibition information services and support on key issues, including anti-corruption initiatives, safe customary male initiation practices, citizens' rights and responsibilities, and the implementation of the Customary Initiation Act. This initiative highlighted government's commitment to responsive, accessible and people centered service delivery.

MEC Williams added that as the country continues its journey towards reconciliation, events such as these reaffirm the importance of remembering the past while actively shaping a more just and united future.

Through its participation in the 2025 Reconciliation Day celebrations in Komani, COGTA demonstrated its ongoing commitment to peace-building, social cohesion and meaningful engagement with communities across the Eastern Cape, he said.



Cogta Graphic Designer, Mr Sabelo Gqwetha at the exhibition stall



Community of Komani at the Reconciliation Day Event

DID YOU KNOW ?

National Fraud Hotline 0800 701 701

BOOKLET ON NON-NEGOTIABLES TO SUPPORT BETTER MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE

Ms Sabo Dlelengana



L-R: Chairperson of the Standing committee for Cogta in the Provincial Legislature in Bhisho, MPL Nomasakihi Khonza, Mayor of Senqu Municipality Cllr Velile Stokhwe and HOD for Cogta Mr Vuyo Mlokothi

On 30 January 2025, in Bensonvale College in Sterkspruit, in Senqu Local Municipality, the area became the focal point of a renewed drive to stabilise and strengthen local government in the Eastern Cape, writes Ms Sabo Dlelengana.

The occasion marked the official launch of the BoNN, led by the MEC for COGTA, Mr Zolile Williams. The launch comes at a critical time, as many municipalities across the province continue to grapple with governance instability, weak accountability, and poor service delivery, challenges that have eroded public confidence and resulted in legislative non-compliance, said MEC Williams.

Against this backdrop, Booklet has been introduced as an intervention to reset standards and expectations within municipal operations, he said.

In her opening address, Executive Mayor of the Joe Gqabi District Municipality, Councilor Nomvuyo Mposelwa, said the launch was not merely ceremonial.

“This initiative is about formally introducing the Booklet on Non-Negotiables, clarify expectations on governance, accountability

and service delivery, and securing both political and administrative commitment to its implementation. Importantly, the booklet is positioned as a practical and dynamic tool designed to drive measurable improvements in municipal performance,” said Councillor Mposelwa.

In his address, MEC Williams described the Booklet “as a practical guide that clearly outlines the core principles and minimum standards applicable to municipalities.” He added that the Booklet is intended to promote and reinforce accountability among both political and administrative leadership.

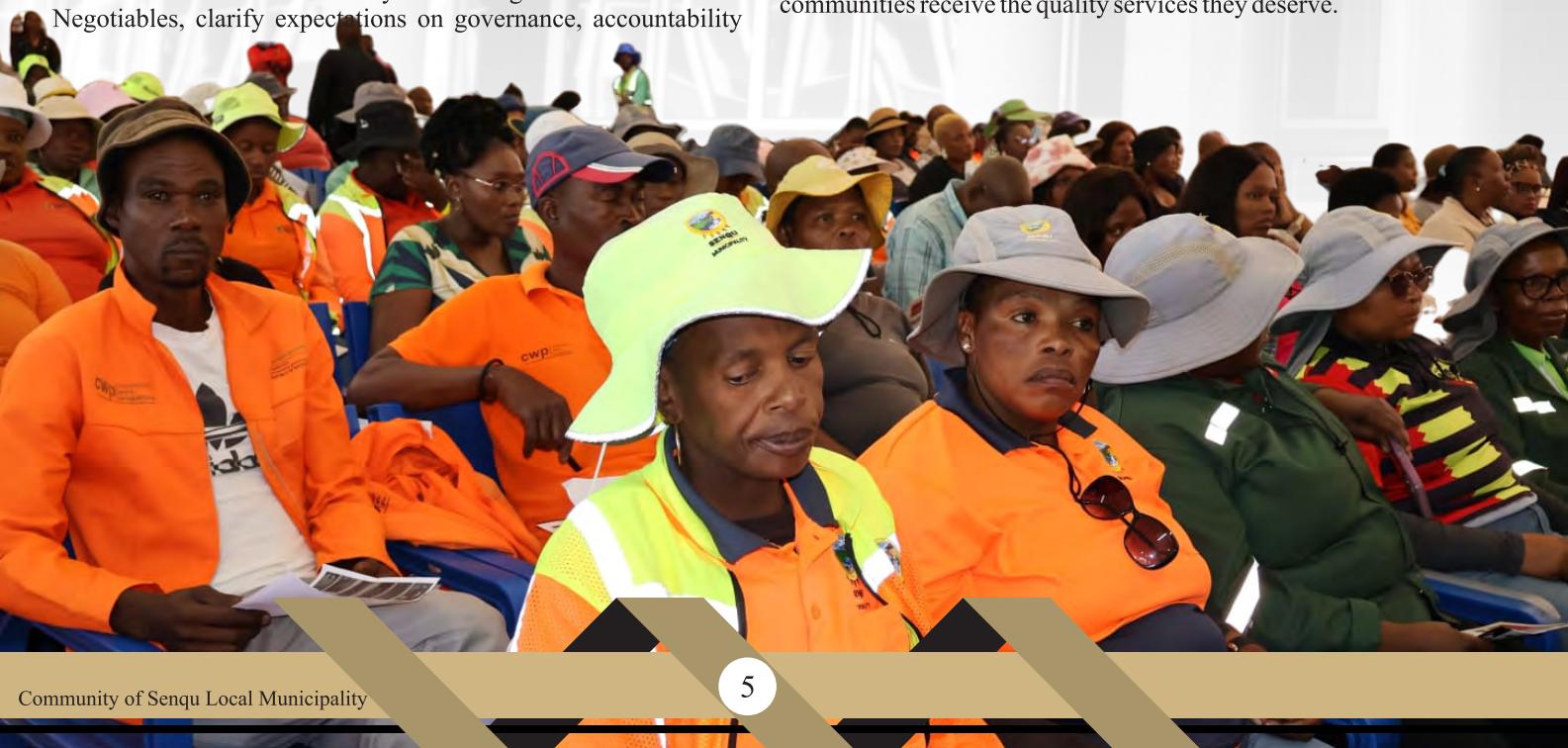
“The Booklet serves as a critical tool to strengthen governance, promote ethical leadership and ensure consistent, responsive service delivery,” said MEC Williams.

He added that the department has, over time, observed repeated operational failures that continue to undermine municipal performance and public trust in local government.

“The Standard Operating Procedures in the Booklet, set out minimum standards required for municipalities to function effectively, providing clarity on what must be done—and what cannot be compromised,” explained MEC.

The launch event was complemented by a practical rollout of monitoring and support measures led by COGTA, aimed particularly at rural and small-town municipalities. These interventions included the fixing of potholes, addressing sewer spillages, and improving refuse collection, demonstrating a direct link between governance reform and tangible service delivery improvements.

MEC Williams said ultimately, the launch of the Booklet marked the beginning of a decisive and coordinated intervention to capacitate municipalities, reinforce accountability among political and administrative leadership, and mobilise all stakeholders towards a shared goal, improve municipal performance so that communities receive the quality services they deserve.



BACK-TO-SCHOOL PROGRAMME SUPPORTS LEARNERS ACROSS JOE GQABI DISTRICT

Ms Sabo Dlelengana



MEC Williams at Alhiet Van Der Merwe Primary School



Learners of Alhiet Van Der Merwe Primary School

In a pivotal moment for local government collaboration, the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) took part in the provincial Back-to-School Programme from 14 to 16 January 2026, reports Ms Sabo Dlelengana

The programme took place in the Joe Gqabi District Municipality area, reaffirming the government's commitment to placing education at the centre of service delivery and social development, said Cogta MEC Zolile Williams who led it. The MEC was accompanied by Head of Department, Mr Vuyo Mlokothi, Joe Gqabi District Director Ms Ntlemeza, and other stakeholders to promote collective and integrated approach by all spheres of government towards start of the 2026 academic year.

The campaign commenced at AL Hiet Van D Merwe Primary School in the Walter Sisulu Local Municipality, to welcome back learners with messages of encouragement and support. It then proceeded to Mehlomakhulu Senior Secondary School in the Senqu Local Municipality, before concluding at Mzimkhulu Primary School, thus ensure a broad and inclusive reach across the district.

MEC Williams congratulated the principal of Mehlomakhulu SSS and the entire school community for becoming the top achiever in the province. He attributes this achievement to the dedication and hard work of educators, learners, and partnerships between government, schools, and communities.

“In the 1980s, Lady Grey catered for learners up to Standard Six. After Grade Six, learners could proceed to either Mehlomakhulu or Malcomass SSS, both of which were regarded highly due to their good standards and strong reputation. Currently, we are facing a crisis of teenage pregnancy, which disrupts and delays young people's life trajectories. Children as young as 13 are already parents, and the province ranks second nationally in terms of teenage pregnancy. Working together, let us ensure a safe, disciplined, and supportive learning environment where every child can succeed,” said MEC Williams.

At Mzimkhulu Primary School, Joe Gqabi District Municipality Executive Mayor Councilor Nomvuyo Mposelwa said, “The Back-to-School Programme is an important reminder that education remains the foundation of our communities. We call on learners to commit themselves to their studies, parents to support and guide their children, and educators to continue shaping young minds with dedication and passion,” said Councillor Mposelwa.

As part of the programme, learners at Mehlomakhulu SSS received 126 pairs of school shoes, 106 school bags and 50 sanitary towel packs. These contributions are aimed at easing the burden on families and ensuring that learners are adequately equipped to focus on their education, said MEC Williams.

To further enhance learner wellbeing, the Department of Agriculture contributed seedlings and fertiliser to support the school nutrition programme, promote food security and healthier learning environments.

MEC Williams said government remains steadfast in its commitment to support schools so that no child goes to school on an empty stomach.

“Education is a key pillar of our government, and that challenges related to water provision, infrastructure development and social welfare will continue to be prioritised and addressed through coordinated government interventions,” he added.

He emphasized the importance of parental involvement in the education of their children's education.

“This involvement includes checking school homeworks, developing a positive relationship with children, and support learning at home throughout the school year. By being involved, parents help their children develop into confident and successful young adults who can contribute to the growth and development of the country,” said MEC Williams.