



# PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

“FOUR YEARS OF THE PRESIDENTIAL HOTLINE”

2009 - 2013



THE PRESIDENCY  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA





PRESIDENTIAL  
HOTLINE 17737  
*president@po.gov.za*



# PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

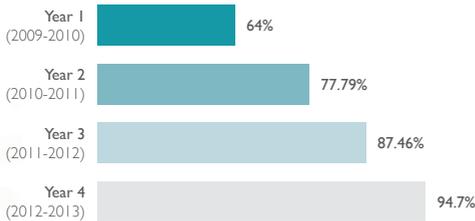
In his first State of the Nation Address in June 2009, President Jacob Zuma emphasised the need to promote a government that was responsive, interactive and effective. As head of government, he would take the lead, he said. In September 2009, he established what is now known as the Presidential Hotline, a service for members of the public to raise their concerns about the service they were receiving from government departments and agencies.

The Presidential Hotline contributes to the National Development Plan, enabling the realisation of a developmental, capable and ethical state that treats citizens with dignity. Weak systems of managing complaints, and inadequate resolution, posed a risk to the building of trust between citizens and government, hence the establishment of the Presidential Hotline.

The Presidential Hotline strives to be a model for responsive and accountable complaints systems. Within its first year of operation 75 873 valid complaints and enquiries were logged. After four years the number of complaints and enquiries received via the call centre as well as via letters and emails has reached 183 445.

## CASES RESOLVED IN THE LAST FOUR YEARS

The number of complaints and queries logged increased from 75 873 to 183 445. The resolution rate improved from 64.03% to 94.7% - an improvement of 22% for national departments and agencies and 66% for provinces, including municipalities within the provinces.



“ This administration will insist on putting people first in service delivery. We will ensure courteous and efficient service from front-counter staff in provision of services in all government departments. In this era of renewal, we will move towards a more interactive government. To lead by example, work has begun on establishment of a public liaison capacity in The Presidency. In addition to receiving letters and emails from the public, we will also establish a Hotline for easier access. Staff will handle each public inquiry as if it was the only one, following it through all the channels until it receives the attention it deserves.”

*President Jacob Zuma, June 2009*





# HOW THE PRESIDENTIAL HOTLINE WORKS

## HOW DO COMPLAINTS AND ENQUIRIES REACH THE HOTLINE?

About 80% of cases reach the Hotline through the call centre, a free call to 17737 (or 1 PRES). Fifteen call agents are on duty between 06h00 and 22h00 from Mondays to Fridays, and callers are able to communicate in a South African language of their choice.

Other complaints and queries reach the Hotline via:

The Presidency, Private Bag x1000, Pretoria, 0001  
President@po.gov.za  
086 681 0987

## WHAT HAPPENS TO THE COMPLAINT ONCE IT IS RECEIVED?

If the complaint or query is related to government service delivery and government business, it will be logged on an automated information system and a reference number will be provided.

If it is an enquiry, information may be provided immediately and the case will be closed. An example would be the address or contact details of a department or information on how to apply for an identity document or licence. Each complaint is assigned to a specific government department or agency (national and provincial) to investigate and resolve. If a complaint relates to a province or municipality, it is assigned to the Office of the Premier who must provide oversight to ensure the complaint is investigated and resolved.

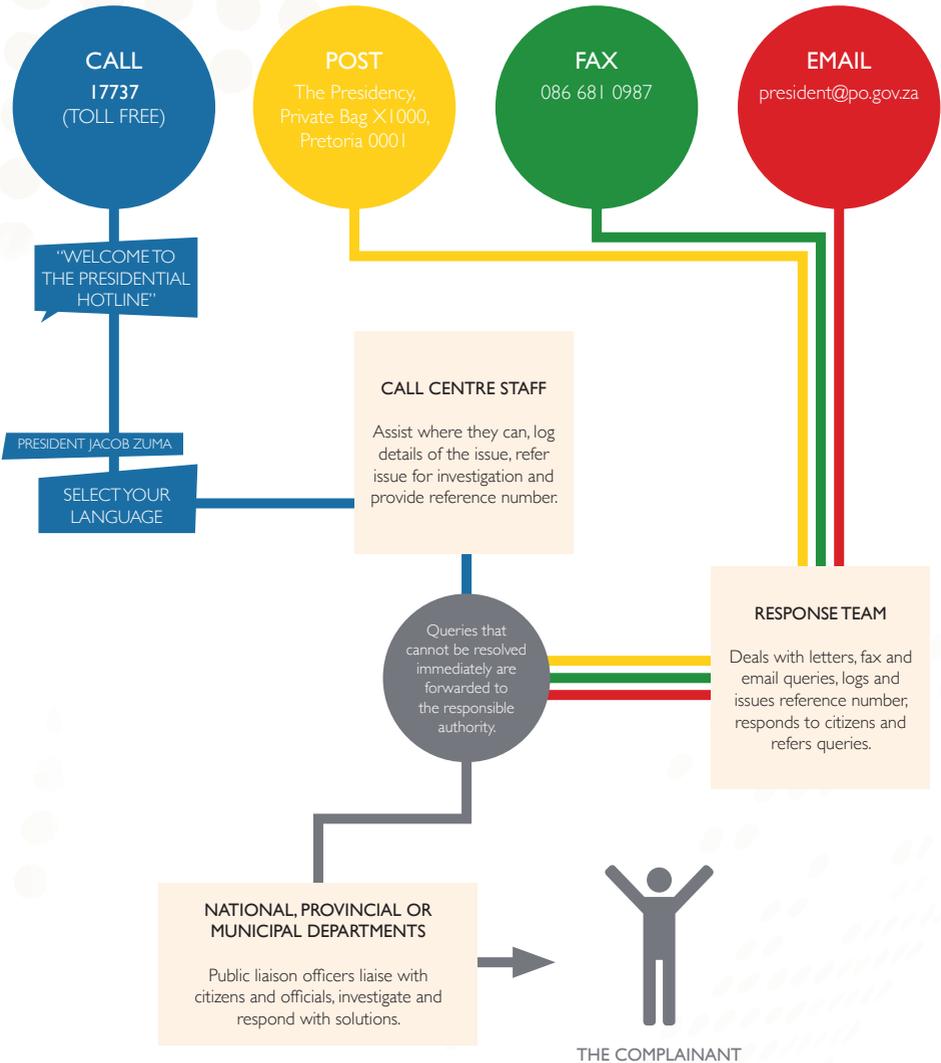
All departments and provinces have live access to the call logging and reporting system and can view the complaints they have been assigned. Every department and province is expected to review its hotline cases daily and to record the outcome of the investigation against each case.

## HOW CAN PROGRESS BE TRACKED?

Members of the public can contact the call centre to ask about progress with investigating their complaint. However, departments to which the complaint has been assigned should communicate with the complainant regularly to provide updates on progress.

## HOW DOES THE HOTLINE STAY IN CONTACT?

When complaints or queries are captured, callers are asked for their contact details. Often citizens will change their contact details and do not inform the hotline. When this happens hotline staff members or public officials are not able to contact the complainant





## WHO DECIDES WHEN A COMPLAINT IS RESOLVED?

Each department uses the reporting system to record how it addressed the complaint and whether it has been closed. The Presidency conducts satisfaction surveys asking citizens if they are satisfied with the resolution. If there is reasonable cause the complaint may be reopened for further attention.

## HOW DOES THE PRESIDENCY ENSURE THAT DEPARTMENTS ATTEND TO THE COMPLAINTS AND QUERIES?

The Presidency has set a benchmark of 80% for resolving complaints. Every month a scorecard is produced assessing the performance of each department and province. These scorecards are submitted to Cabinet and to the senior management of departments. This approach of presenting regular performance information has contributed to ensuring that in the fourth year of the Hotline most departments and provinces are performing at 80% and above.

## IMPROVING PERFORMANCE

The first objective of establishing the Presidential Hotline was to provide citizens with a way to lodge complaints and queries where they felt they had not received the attention they deserved from other complaints mechanisms. The second objective was to use the Hotline to elevate the importance of complaints management in government as a whole, to ensure that complaints management is recognised as a strategic issue.

Cabinet manages the performance of the Hotline as a strategic project. Regular reports on the performance of each department and province are discussed. Cabinet takes decisions on interventions to ensure that performance is maintained. This has ensured a steady improvement in the resolution of the complaints. In 2009 the resolution rate was 64% and by October 2013 this had improved to 94.79%.

Complaints management is not just about increasing the number of complaints resolved. Of equal importance is the quality of the resolution. This is a much more complex issue. Every citizen has their own expectations about the speed with which they want their complaint resolved and the outcomes that would make them feel satisfied. Although good results have been achieved in terms of the percentage of complaints resolved, satisfaction surveys also need to be conducted regularly to assess the quality and impact of the service. The information that follows provides more details on the number and types of cases received and resolved as well as the outcomes of satisfaction surveys conducted.



## MORE ABOUT COMPLAINTS AND QUERIES

In general, there are four types of queries and complaints.

### 1. **Queries that can be resolved immediately by the call agents**

These are mainly requests for information. Some citizens call the Presidential Hotline seeking information on government services, for example, how to acquire an identity document, apply for a social grant, or requesting information on available services in an area. Call agents resolve these cases immediately by providing information.

### 2. **Complaints assigned to departments and provinces for investigation**

In cases that require resolution by specific departments, or where detailed information is required, the call is allocated to the responsible department. Examples include:

- **Land issues:** These typically include complaints about rights to occupy land, complaints about illegal occupation of private land or disputes between different community groups that were beneficiaries of the land reform process. These types of cases are often complex, and may already have been the subject of legal proceedings. They therefore take time to investigate and address.
- **Housing issues:** These include complaints about unfair application processes, wrongful occupation of houses and poor quality of houses. In some cases complaints are about conflicts between family members regarding ownership of houses where the Presidential Hotline is asked to intervene. For private disputes, citizens may be referred to legal or dispute resolution services.
- **Alleged corruption and labour-related cases:** These often prove to be complicated to resolve and callers are not always satisfied with the action taken.
- **Quality of service complaints:** Complaints about service received at government facilities.

### 3. **Issues that require special attention by the Presidential Hotline team**

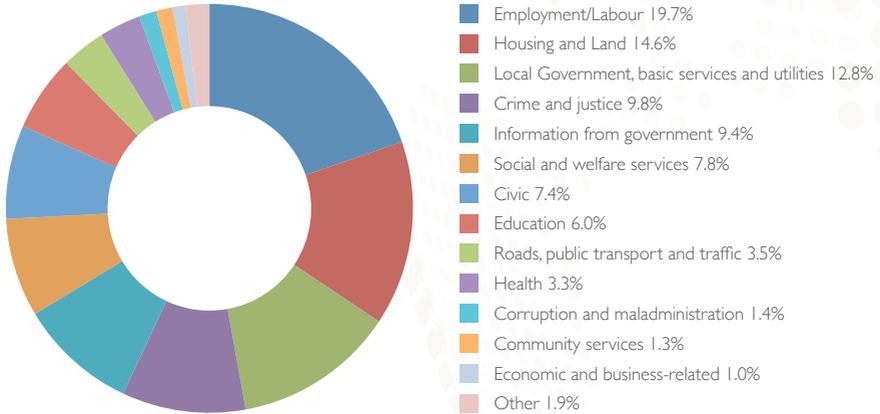
The Hotline team provides facilitation and coordination support where issues involve more than one department. The team also assists in resolving special cases that require urgent attention.

### 4. **Cases that cannot be resolved by the Presidential Hotline**

There are certain instances where the Presidential Hotline is not able to resolve issues. These include unhappiness with the outcomes of legal proceedings, in the courts and the outcomes of disciplinary and dismissal proceeding. In these cases it is not possible to satisfy the callers, as The Presidency cannot overrule the decisions of the courts. The Hotline also cannot assist with funding requests for studies and for requests for employment, but will provide information on the appropriate structures for bursaries and employment.



Categories of complaints received through the Presidential Hotline (of the 161 000 complaints received from September 2009 to March 2013)



## NATIONAL DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

By 31 December 2013, a total of 183 445 complaints and queries had been logged, of which 46 932 related to 50 national departments and agencies. Of these, 93% were reported as resolved, with 3 512 cases remaining unresolved.

The 10 departments with the highest number of complaints and queries are Home Affairs, Labour, Human Settlements, the South African Police Services, Justice and Constitutional Development, Rural Development and Land Reform, the South African Social Security Agency, Correctional Services, Public Enterprises and Basic Education.

The reasons for these departments receiving a higher number of complaints may be due to a number of factors, one being the large number of citizens who are affected by their services.

## HIGHEST RESOLUTION RATE

Public Enterprises	99.90%
Labour	99.82%
Human Settlements	99.62%
Basic Education	97.69%
Correctional Services	96.43%
South African Police Services	93.21%
Justice and Constitutional Development	92.63%
Home Affairs	89.21%
Rural Development and Land Reform	85.91%
South African Social Services Agency	84.13%



## HIGHEST NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS

Home Affairs	10 356
Labour	6 756
Human Settlements	6 381
South African Police Services	4 830
Justice and Constitutional Development	4 286
Rural Development and Land Reform	1 639
South African Social Services Agency	1 594
Correctional Services	1 231
Public Enterprises	1 064
Basic Education	995

## UNRESOLVED CASES

Home Affairs	1 117
South African Police Services	328
Justice and Constitutional Development	316
South African Social Services Agency	253
Rural Development and Land Reform	231
Correctional Services	44
Human Settlements	24
Basic Education	23
Labour	12
Public Enterprises	1

## PROVINCIAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

In the first year, the resolution rate of provinces (including the municipalities within those provinces) was at a very low 20.27%, which has improved steadily each year to reach 86% in year four. This is above the minimum benchmark of 80%. The Eastern Cape with 77.64% and North West with 75.8% are the only two provinces, which remain below the 80% benchmark and must intensify their efforts to resolve outstanding cases.

The time taken to resolve complaints is measured in government business hours. This requires attention from all provinces to ensure that complaints are resolved faster. Provinces and municipalities are also urged to improve public information about the provincial and municipal complaint systems and the responsiveness of those systems, so that citizens can build their trust in local complaint mechanisms.



## HIGHEST NUMBER OF CASES BY PROVINCE IN 2013

KwaZulu-Natal	11 953
Gauteng	9 487
Eastern Cape	6 431
Limpopo	4 693
Mpumalanga	4 480
North West	3 549
Free State	2 311
Western Cape	1 280
Northern Cape	799

## HIGHEST RESOLUTION BY PROVINCE

Northern Cape	100%
Limpopo	100%
Western Cape	99.30%
Free State	96.02%
KwaZulu-Natal	86.91%
Gauteng	84.69%
Mpumalanga	83.53%
Eastern Cape	77.64%
North West	75.80%

## UNRESOLVED CASES

KwaZulu-Natal	1 565
Gauteng	1 452
Eastern Cape	1 438
North West	859
Mpumalanga	738
Free State	92
Western Cape	9
Limpopo	0
Northern Cape	0



## MEASURING CITIZEN SATISFACTION

In 2012 The Presidency introduced satisfaction surveys, which involve a telephonic survey of citizens whose complaints are recorded as resolved. They were asked to rate the service they received from the Presidential Hotline.

By 31 December 2013, more than 30 000 citizens were selected as eligible for the survey. Of these 11 626 were contactable and agreed to participate in the telephonic survey. The average response was 65% rating the service as “good to fair” and 35% as “poor”.

## KEY LESSONS FOR GOVERNMENT

In addressing and resolving complaints equal attention needs to be given to two issues. The first is to provide quick and appropriate redress for the citizen using existing policy as a guide. The second, equally important, is to address the institutional problem and systems failures that resulted in the complaint arising.

In the four years of the Hotline’s existence, valuable lessons have been learnt on how to improve responsiveness to complaints. Some lessons are:

- Complaints management should be treated as a strategic issue requiring high-level oversight and monitoring by the management of a department. An effective, efficient and responsive complaints management system is often an indicator of a department that is functioning well overall.
- The quality of resolving complaints (speed, communication and relevance of the response) is as important as the number of complaints resolved. The weakness within government complaint systems often lies in poor communication during the investigation and in the depth of investigation.
- More use needs to be made of complaints information as source evidence in planning and budgeting for service delivery improvements. Complaints information should be regularly analysed by departments, provinces and municipalities, and the data should be used to influence planning and implementation.

Satisfaction rates with Presidential Hotline complaint resolution relating to a few specific departments showed that citizens gave good satisfaction ratings of 70% and above for complaints resolved by Home Affairs, SASSA and Social Development and poor satisfaction ratings of 50% to 60% for complaints resolved by Human Settlements, SAPS, North West province and Rural Development. These satisfaction surveys are continuing as they provide useful information to departments and provinces about how citizens are experiencing their complaints handling and provides a basis for monitoring improvements.

- Public information about how to complain and how to escalate complaints must be communicated regularly to the public.

The Presidential Hotline regularly challenges government to strive to respond positively to the following questions, all indicators of responsive and accountable complaints management:



- Do you have performance standards in place for complaints management?
- Do you monitor adherence to these performance standards and report on this monitoring in your executive management meetings?
- Do citizens know how to access and use your complaints systems and what service they can expect (minimum standards) when they complain?
- Do citizens know what the escalation mechanisms are should they not receive good service from the complaints mechanisms?
- Does your department regularly analyse complaints data and use the information as an input into improvement plans?

## THE IMPACT OF THE PRESIDENTIAL HOTLINE

The intended outcome of the Presidential Hotline is to impact positively on the lives of citizens. Below follows stories from citizens who have received a service from the Hotline.



**NELISIWÉ GUMEDE**  
CAROLINA, MPUMALANGA

"My grandmother applied for an RDP house in Carolina in 1999. In 2004 we went to the Department of Housing and we were told that she was still on the waiting list. In 2004 they brought her a title deed but she refused to sign it as she didn't have her house at that time. It took very long to build the house. In 2010 we lodged a complaint with the Presidential Hotline. We explained that my grandmother doesn't have a house and it's been 10 years since she applied. In early 2011 she received her house and even then the Presidential Hotline kept on calling for progress of our case."

Her grandmother, Elsie Mkhonza says, "I am really thankful for the help that I received from the President. I don't have the words to explain how thankful I am now that I stay in my own house."



**GODFREY MOENG**  
THABANCHU, FREE STATE

"I had a problem in June 2012. The streetlights were not working for three weeks. Crime was increasing. There was rape and robbery, and four murders. I contacted the municipality and provincial office and I was sent from pillar to post. Then I called the Presidential Hotline and within a day or two I was helped. Street lights were working and my issue was resolved."

With the help of the provincial public liaison officer, the streetlights are working once more in Godfrey Moeng's neighbourhood.



**NOZIPHO GLORIA KHAMBULE**  
INANDA, KWAZULU-NATAL

Losing her birth certificate caused a serious problem for Nozipho Khambule, when she tried to apply for an identity document. The local Home Affairs office informed her that without a birth certificate she could not be assisted. Nozipho called the Presidential Hotline, where the team contacted the provincial public liaison officers. After an investigation, Ms Khambule was issued with an ID book.

"Thanks to the Hotline, I can now look for employment and help to support my parents," she said. With an ID book, Nozipho Khambule can now look for a job and help assist her ailing parents.



**THAMSANQA RASMENI**  
FREEDOM SQUARE, BLOEMFONTEIN, FREE STATE

"I had a problem with sewage. I called the municipality and they came to fix it. After sometime the same problem re-emerged and they came back again. They installed new pipes but the problem was worse than it was before. Sewage started flooding the yard. I called the municipality again but they took a long time to respond. That's when I lodged a complaint with the Presidential Hotline using the email. I explained my sewage problem and they called me back to confirm my complaint. After sometime a person came to fix the drain. They called later to find out if the drain was fixed. I am thankful that I was assisted, as well as my neighbours whose yards were also flooded with sewage. I am so grateful."



**JESSICA MAROBANE**  
BURGERSFORT, LIMPOPO

Fulfilling her dream of becoming a pilot, Jessica Marobane recently completed a private pilot licence and is currently working toward a commercial pilot licence at Blue Chip Flight School at Wonderboom Airport.

Initially, her parents financed her studies, but as the demand grew she needed to source funding to continue her flight studies. She approached many organisations and government departments in Limpopo, before contacting the Presidential Hotline.

She was referred to the Department of Higher Education and Training, which facilitated her funding application, confirming that she met all the requirements to be funded under the National Skills Fund, and under the Transport Education and Training Authority.





With a broad smile on her face, she expressed her gratitude that all her outstanding study fees were settled. She thanked the Presidential Hotline and government in general for the chance that she has been given to complete her pilot's training.

Jessica Marobane is flying high after the Hotline helped her secure funding to complete her pilot training.

### **NOSIPHO MAPHUMULO** PINETOWN, KWAZULU-NATAL

Having a birth certificate is important to accessing government services. Ms Nosipho Maphumulo applied to the local Home Affairs office for her daughter's certificate and months later was still waiting. She turned to the Presidential Hotline, which referred the matter to provincial public liaison officers. To her delight, Ms Maphumulo received the birth certificate within seven days of her initial call. She thanked the Hotline for helping to resolve the problem.

A delighted Ms Maphumulo and her daughter with her long-awaited birth certificate.

### **WINNIE MABINDA** MEADOWLANDS, SOWETO

Low water pressure has been a persistent problem for Mrs Winnie Mabinda, who lives in Zone 4 in Meadowlands. During times of low water pressure, she has been unable to serve relatives visiting her home with drinking water; or to have water available for bathing. This problem affected her neighbours too.

After trying for three years to get help from various authorities in Johannesburg, she contacted the Presidential Hotline and the water pressure problem was attended to.

Soweto resident Winnie Mabinda is very pleased that after three years her water pressure problem has been fixed.





## WINNIE MAGAGULA

KAMSOGWABA VILLAGE, MBOMBELA, MPUMALANGA

"My husband and I applied for the RDP House in 2005. Whenever we went to check with the municipality we were told that we are on the waiting list. We were worried because we did not have money to build a house, although we had a stand. We built a shack, which gave us problems because it leaked when it was raining. We waited until 2011. One day when I was watching TV, I saw the Presidential Hotline number. We called the Presidential Hotline. They called back and told us they were liaising with the province to find out where the problem was. One day I found a note saying I must be home the following day. It had a number to call. When I called the number they said they were coming to build a house. I was really happy. I wish the Presidential Hotline could continue to help and also address other service delivery issues, not only on housing-related matters."

Mrs Winne Magagula now has a house she and her husband can be proud of after coordinated action by all three spheres of government.



## PREM BACHAN

UMZINTO, KWAZULU-NATAL

After 35 years of teaching, Prem Bachan took early retirement from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. However, her application for her pension seemed not to be receiving attention, and she contacted the Presidential Hotline. The matter was referred to public liaison officers dealing with the government pensions, who discovered that there were some outstanding documents needed. Once Mrs Bachan supplied these, she received her pension payout.

With her pension payout, former teacher Prem Bachan can now assist her husband in supporting the family.



## OBED MARUBYANE

RATSIEPANE VILLAGE, HAMMANSKRAAL, GAUTENG

Frustrated by the lack of a decent road in the area, Mr Marubane turned to the Presidential Hotline. He reported that people in the community had to walk long distances, because the poor condition of the road prevented taxis, privately owned cars and other vehicles from accessing the village. Although the Morelete Municipality had informed the community that a road would be built, after two years this had failed to happen.





With the assistance of the Presidential Hotline, a new road has been constructed. Mr Marubyane commended the Hotline team for their courtesy, constant communication and feedback on progress. When a government team visited the area to see the new road, heavy rainfall had caused flooding which previously would have cut off access to the area. Now, local disaster management officials and traffic police could direct residents to safety.

Contacting the Hotline speeded up the construction of a much-needed road in the Hammanskraal area, says resident Obed Marubyane.

### **STELLA SEGAOLE**

RUSTENBERG, NORTH WEST PROVINCE

As the coordinator of the Bofaganang Women's Swimming Project, Ms Stella Segaole applied for funds from the National Lottery to develop sports facilities. The funds were approved and were paid out to the local municipality. After trying unsuccessfully to get the municipality to release the funds, Ms Segaole contacted the Presidential Hotline for assistance. The Hotline worked with municipal officials to facilitate the release of the grant to the NGO. The funds were used to develop sports and other facilities at the Rantlaka Middle School in Tweelaagte, Rustenburg. This included a court for tennis, netball and basketball, an ablution block, perimeter fencing and a borehole.

Sports facilities and a new ablution block have been built at a local school following a call to the Presidential Hotline by Rustenburg resident Stella Segaole.

### **SHARON ADAMS**

Ms Sharon Adams called the Presidential Hotline on the 11 November 2011. She had been trying previously to apply for a Tax Clearance Certificate from her local South African Revenue (SARS) office but there were eminent delays due to technicalities.

During the interview Sharon indicated that she and some of her employees were once working for a certain business in Cape Town where they were retrenched due to business liquidation. She and a friend then started their own manufacturing business from the savings they had put aside. They had to go through the initial fluctuating times of business but managed to sail through the difficult times.

She then narrated a story when she had an opportunity to tender for business at the University of Cape Town. In her tender application one of the requirements was the current business Tax Clearance and when he tried to get it from SARS she was sent from pillar to post with no





assistance whatsoever. She eventually found out about the Presidential Hotline which sorted her predicament within days. To address the complaint, the Presidential Hotline worked jointly with SARS Provincial Public Liaison Officers.

Sharon also took the PH team to her company, to show them the assembly line of her furniture manufacturing business. She reiterated that she has also recommended and will continue to recommend the PH to all who need help with government service delivery related issues.

### **UPPINGTON SPHILIBANA KHOKA** CENTANE EASTERN CAPE

"My name is Uppington Sphilibana Khoka. I am from Mcothama village under Mquma Municipality. I got injured whilst in the fields with my father at the age of 12 and was disabled. I then grew up disabled, sitting still in one place because I could not use my legs to move. Later on when we phased in to democracy I went to the hospital Thafalofefe and i got a wheel chair. From the onset I realised that the wheelchair was small but I accepted it although it was uncomfortable small and I could not fit in. I went back to the hospital several times and they kept on promising to come and do measurements for a better fitting wheelchair.

The white woman who was assisting left the hospital and after that no one took my concern seriously. I heard of a place that could provide me assistance in East London and i called for enquiry but nothing came out of it. One day I saw a Presidential Hotline number on TV and I decided to give it a try. I called and was given the reference number. At first I was skeptical because of my previous disappointment with the hospital but I was later called by the Hotline to be informed that my wheelchair was ready and was even given a delivery date, indeed it happened like that. I then realised that I have approached my "President" a leader. When I was asked if I would mind appearing on TV, I said yes - because I would like other disabled people to get assistance as it happened to me, I don't mind. I like how my case was handled".







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