

**REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON WOMEN, YOUTH, CHILDREN AND
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES HELD ON 22 MARCH 2016**

(DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM)

1. INTRODUCTION

The Mpumalanga Legislature is duly vested with a mandate to maintain oversight of provincial executive authority and any organ of state and all provincial executive authority including provincial organs of state are accountable to it in compliance with section 114 of the constitution. The legislature is independent and performs its functions impartially without prejudice enshrining the rule of law.

In terms of Standing Rules and Orders of the Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature 2013, the **Select Committee on Women, Youth, Children, and People with Disabilities** (the committee), is established in terms of Rule 135 (h) and has powers to conduct oversight on transversal issues affecting designated groups. The Committee is composed of a multiparty representation and is empowered to develop mechanisms to conduct oversight over provincial departments and public institutions.

The select committee is vested with the power to monitor, investigate and enquire into and make recommendations concerning any organ of state or constitutional body regarding transversal and transformation matters to ensure a province free from gender discrimination and inequalities in the promotion of the Bill Of Rights.

The committee in accordance with Rule 119 may summon any person to appear before it to give evidence on oath/ affirmation, or to produce documents and permit oral evidence. The committee may compel an institution or a person to comply with summon subject to the rules and orders or a provincial legislation.

The Legislature seeks to establish whether provincial government delivers services effectively and efficiently within the respective local municipality areas.

2. PURPOSE OF THE OVERSIGHT VISIT

The objectives were:

- i) To determine the impact made by the department on the improvement status of woman

- ii) To assess the implementation of policies by the departments that seeks to improve quality of life to woman.

3. METHOD OF WORK

The Committee invited and met the Department of Economic Development as per the programme of the Legislature and quarterly target of the committee to an oversight visit conducted 22 March 2016.

4. PRESENTATION MADE BY THE SONQOBA APPAREL MANUFACTURE PRIMARY COOPERATIVE

The Chairperson of Sonqoba Apparel took the committee through the project and its products. In her presentation, she indicated that Sonqoba Apparel Manufactures is situated at Nelspruit CBD in the Mbombela Local Municipality, Ehlanzeni District Municipality area.

Sonqoba Apparel Manufacture is supported by the Department of Economic Development and Tourism on skills and workshops and has managed to mainstream gender issues in to the economy. During the committee deliberations on the 9th of February 2016 with Department of Economic Development and Tourism, Sonqoba Apparel was presented as one of the Women driven Cooperatives supported by the department in the province.

The department of Economic Development and Tourism support the projects with skills thought skills training and relevant workshops. During the presentation the committee noted that cooperatives was initiated by unemployed women in Mbombela with an aim to create job opportunities, empowering women from the Local and surrounding community who have had very little or no opportunity to find formal employment and empower them with sewing skills and CMT (cutting, make & Trim).

Each employee is a shareholder, and thereof, collectively has a 100% controlling share in their clothing manufacturing business as of today the factory is capable of producing 15 000 high quality shirts a month.

According to Sonqoba, in 2003 they managed to expand from 71 members to 114 members, and the target was 150 women in 2015, however due to financial constrains they were unable to meet that target.

In 2016 they received 21 students, including deaf students from (SAGDA) for practical training in the hope that some may qualify and be able to join the cooperative. This in turn

enables the cooperative to generate more income by boosting output, and in so doing the cooperative will go a long way in creating more work for other women in the community.

Currently Sonqoba have RUGGEDWEAR as their major customer. RUGGEDWEAR is a clothing company that design cloths and sends material to women cooperatives for cutting, make and trims (CMT).

The Cooperative raised the following challenges:

- a) **Training & Skills availability:** Due to the fact that Mbombela and immediate surrounding areas are not ordinarily known to the clothing industry as clothing manufacturers, skilled sewing machinists are not readily available compared to other areas that were historically known as clothing manufacturing hubs.
- b) **Aging Equipment:** the current machines are more than 10 years old, and run continuously on daily basis. The cost of the maintenance has become excessive due to the fact that these machines are imported and exposed to foreign exchange fluctuations. Many of these machines now need to be replaced.
- c) **Manufacturing capacity currently caters for members' salaries; cost of sales i.e. sewing threads, Utility bills; rental and items such as spares for machine maintenance and other operating consumables are barely covered which makes it difficult for the Cooperative to provide the required service to the customers.**

5.1 FINDINGS

1. It was also noted that the cooperative had to stop the manufacturing of other clothing and only concentrate only on manufacturing shirts due to lack of funding.
2. The cooperative is doing well in terms of management and production.
3. The cooperative machines are old and the maintenance is expensive.
4. The Committee noted with appreciation the role played by the department in skilling and reskilling the group.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The committee recommended that the Department should visit the cooperative and intervene with funding.
2. The Committee encouraged the cooperative to also transfer skills to other young women cooperatives, and enhance the export market so that they grow.

3. The department must be more involved in funding this type of cooperatives for growth, sustainability, maintenance and empowerment of women.
4. Expand the sewing and manufacturing skills to other regions in order to increase the number of young people especially in this field, for the creation of quality jobs and the reduction of unemployment.

5. CONCLUSION

The Chairperson extended her appreciation to Members of the Committee, the Songoba Apparel; support staff of the Legislature for their participation during the deliberations.

The Committee tables this report to the House for adoption with its recommendations and progress to be provided to the committee.



HON SJ MANZINI (MPL)

**CHAIRPERSON: SELECT COMMITTEE ON WOMEN,
YOUTH, CHILDREN, AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

04 / 05 / 16
DATE