Teaching Moment | Hundreds of desperate teens in Vuwani get new chance at passing matric after lessons cease

KEEPING THE DOORS OPEN: Maligana Secondary pupils in Limpopo tackle the mess in a burnt-out classroom last month, and volunteer Mpho Ragau teaches an extra class for matrics from Vuwani and nearby villages Pictures: KEVIN SUTHERLAND and SIMPHIWE NKWALI

Matric hopes rise from the ashes . . .

JAN BORNMAN

WIDESPREAD hopelessness hangs over Vuwani in Limpopo, as thousands of pupils sit at home watching their chance of a formal education slip further away each day.

But in the midst of this an oasis of hope — in the form of the Vhaswaphanda NGO — is keeping the dream of a matric pass alive for several hundred teens.

Seventy schools were completely shut down and 28 were partially burnt during two weeks of violent protests in the area.

About 2 600 matric pupils are among the more than 52 000 who are no longer able to go to school.

Now more than 500 of them have been thrown a lifeline in the form of classes staffed by 16 volunteers trying to assist pupils with preparation for their final exams.

Some pupils have to travel as far as 50km to attend the makeshift school in Lwamondo, east of Thohoyandou.

Many desperate teens have found temporary accommodation in the area so that they can attend the school every day.

Vhaswaphanda was initially set up to provide extra maths and science classes to Grade 10 to 12 pupils on weekends.

But after the widespread violent protests in the area last month, it expanded to include classes such as life science, geography and English.

Vhaswaphanda's founder, Muhali Mudau, 30, a second-year BSc applied mathematics student at the University of South Africa, has hired a private conference venue, and is charging pupils R20 a week to cover the cost.

"I'm very concerned and saddened by what's been happening in our community," he said. "I wish I could help everyone, but it's not possible."

> I don't know if we're going to be writing, but I am prepared

Eric Mpho Ragau, 23, who graduated with a degree in biochemistry and microbiology last year and has been unable to find a job, said: "I was sitting around at home when I heard there were kids coming here for classes and they were looking for volunteers, so I decided to come help."

Among those attending the classes is Tshireledzo Masindi, 18, who has applied to do an LLB at the University of Venda next year.

He rents a room in Lwamondo for R300 a month so he can attend classes. "My family had to help raise funds," he said. Lessons have been halted at his school, Tshimbupfe Secondary School, because of intimidation.

"We're scared to go back. Maybe if we go back to school, they'll burn it."

Masindi said since the protests almost everything had come to a halt in his village.

"It's a total shutdown. The schools have all been closed. Even the taxis have stopped operating. There are very few services," he said.

Cynthia Muleya, 17, has also been attending the extra classes at Vhaswaphanda and is lodging with a family member in Lwamondo.

She secured an Eskom bursary to study electrical engineering at the University of Johannesburg next year.

"I would be the first person of my family to go to university. It is very stressful not knowing what's going to happen. I don't know if it's going to be possible to go to UJ next year."

She said she believed the extra classes would be enough to prepare her for the final exams. "I don't know if we're going to be writing, but I am prepared," she said.

But for Monica Mukwevho and Edzisani Mabada, both 17, from nearby Mashau, the future is bleak.

They cannot afford the R20 a week for the extra lessons. "I was able to go there for one day. I couldn't afford it," said Mukwevho, explaining that her father is ill and her mother unemployed.

"I try to study by myself," said Mabada. "I also can't afford the extra classes. It will hurt me a lot if I have to repeat the year."

Department of Basic Education spokesman Elijah Mhlanga said the issue of matriculants was being considered seriously.

"We have a catch-up plan which we can implement once the situation becomes stable," he said, adding that schooling would resume once the area was safe.

Limpopo police spokeswoman Colonel Ronel Otto said policing in the area was "complex".

"We are there to prevent further violence and destruction of property. Our team has made almost 40 arrests," she said.

"We are aware of intimidation, but people aren't opening cases. We are even aware of people who have received death threats.

"There are a lot of villages affected and it is a vast area."

bornmanj@sundaytimes.co.za

Comment on this: write to tellus@sundaytimes.co.za or SMS us at 33971

www.sundaytimes.co.za

. . . But for many pupils there is no reprieve

MATTHEW SAVIDES

THE lives of about 2 600 matrics in Vuwani are in limbo after at least 70 schools were forced to close completely by the wave of violent protests in the Limpopo district and nearly 30 others were partly damaged.

The matrics are among the more than 52 000 pupils whose studies have been suspended due to the destruction of schools during the protest campaign.

Education analysts, the Department of Education and the South African Human Rights Commission are unanimous that the matrics will almost certainly have to wait a year before they can write their exams.

It will cost at least R250-million to repair the damage to the schools.

The human rights commission wants harsher punishment for those who damage public facilities.

Speaking after a hearing this week, SA Human Rights commissioner, Lindiwe Mokate, said she was disturbed by what appeared to be a new trend.

"When the protests are over these children will not have schools to go back to. These are very serious issues which are impacting not just on their right to education, but on their futures," she said.

The Sunday Times understands there is a push for the destruction of public facilities to be treated as a human rights violation.

Mokate said the commission "cannot talk about issues of criminalisation", but acknowledged that harsher punishment was needed.

"When they [public facilities] are shut down, people can't access clinics or can't get to school, and those are human rights.

"Preventing people from accessing their rights is interfering with the constitution. We think a lot more should be done," she said.

Mokate said she was worried that the government did not really seem to know how to deal with the challenge, particularly in the context of the Vuwani protests.

"What we listened to and heard over the three days . . . was a sense of hopelessness on the part of the pupils and the teachers, but also, surprisingly, on the part of state organs as well. We did not come across a single department that said they know what needs to be done," she said.

"I'm inclined to think that the matriculants who were supposed to write will likely have to rewrite next year. It's very, very sad," said Mokate.

Elijah Mhlanga, spokesman for the Department of Basic Education, said the situation in Vuwani was "hopeless". "There is a point beyond which recovery will be impossible.

"They will have to repeat the year. All of them."

Education analyst Graeme Bloch said it was "a hopeless case" for the pupils.

"If parents are prepared to sacrifice their kids, so be it. The parents have a lot to answer for."

DREAMS DEFERRED: One of the nearly 100 Vuwani schools that were burnt or shut down Picture: KEVIN SUTHERLAND

World Cup missed economic goals

APHIWE DEKLERK

THE billions invested by South Africa in stadiums for the 2010 Soccer World Cup did not bring long-lasting economic benefits.

That's according to a report by German researchers, who used satellites to measure the light emitted from host cities at night to measure the impact of investments in World Cup infrastructure.

The economists found that in the short term — between 2004 and 2009, during the pre-tournament construction boom — there was a 1.3-percentage-point decrease in the unemployment rate and an increase of $335 (about R5 100 at today's exchange rate) in GDP per capita.

But the growth was short-lived, largely due to the jobs being short term.

The research also concluded that in the absence of "plausible concepts regarding how stadiums could be reused after the actual event, such investments do not seem to pay off".

The findings are supported by South African filmmaker Craig Tanner, whose documentary, *March of the White Elephants*, is part of the Durban International Film Festival, which opened on Thursday.

The film focuses on South Africa and Brazil, where the World Cup was held in 2014, and concludes that "Fifa prowls the globe, pocketing billions and leaving host countries with a legacy of empty stadiums and social distress".

The German researchers found, however, that investments in transport — such as airports, bus rapid transit systems and the Gauteng Freeway Improvement Project — had long-term economic benefits.

"These positive gains are particularly evident in smaller towns," they said. "For example, in Rustenburg . . . we find a very large effect of the World Cup-related infrastructure investment, equivalent to an increase in GDP per capita of around $3 642."

> Such events can benefit regions if public investments are directed at the right infrastructure

Researchers Gregor Pfeifer, Fabian Wahl and Martyna Marczak, of the University of Hohenheim, will present their findings on Thursday at a conference in Italy. Their research used data on "night lights intensity", which had been "recently acknowledged as a suitable proxy for economic development".

Converting the value of World Cup-related investment into dollars at the average 2010 exchange rate, they found that South Africa invested $14-billion, mostly on transport ($11.5-billion). Stadium construction accounted for $2.5-billion. Six stadiums were built and four got facelifts. Millions were spent upgrading training venues.

Out of 127 investment projects identified, they narrowed their list to 72 directly linked to the World Cup.

"[Results of the research] suggest that such events can distinctly benefit the affected regions if public investments are directed on improving the 'right' infrastructure," they said. "This seems to be the transport sector, where we observe persistent treatment effects still evident years after the tournament."

City of Johannesburg spokesman Nthatisi Modingoane said the World Cup had enhanced the metro's status as a city that could punch at a global level.

"The World Cup . . . has given Johannesburg access to both expertise and platforms where direct investment in Johannesburg is being promoted."

The city's bus rapid transit system, Rea Vaya, formed the backbone of a project called Corridors of Freedom, which aimed to reverse apartheid spatial planning, he said.

The City of Cape Town is struggling to find ways to make Cape Town Stadium pay for itself, but mayoral committee member for transport Brett Herron said transport-related investments had been necessary regardless of the World Cup.

"Parts of the planned improvements were fast-tracked . . . so as to provide a public transport service to and from the airport and also to and from the Cape Town Stadium."

Neil Brandt, producer of *March of the White Elephants*, said the World Cup could be amazing. "But the way local elites get into bed with Fifa creates a process where an enormous amount money is spent in the incorrect way."

King Shaka to rise again, more manly this time

MATTHEW SAVIDES

SIX years, R6.7-million and a royal stamp of approval later, a larger-than-life statue of Zulu monarch Shaka kaSenzangakhona will finally see the light of day.

The 5m bronze sculpture will be erected at Durban's King Shaka International Airport on September 17, royal household spokesman Prince Thulani Zulu said this week.

Zulu declined to give details of the statue, but said it was modelled on the only recognised portrait of Shaka in existence — an 1880s drawing that shows him standing proudly upright, with a spear in his right hand and a massive shield in his left.

The statue has yet to be fully assembled, but is nearing completion. This week, Sunday Times saw parts of it, including the legs, at the Goodwin Foundry in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands. The arms will be about 1.7m.

The statue — by South African artist Peter Hall — is said to cost R3.5-million.

This is the second statue of the monarch to be installed at the airport. The first, which cost R3.2-million and was crafted by Andries Botha, was pulled down in June 2010 — just three weeks after it had been unveiled — after complaints that it made Shaka look more like a herd boy than a fierce warrior.

At the official unveiling, King Goodwill Zwelithini grimaced at the Botha statue.

Hall, who was hired to sculpt the second statue, and foundry owner Kim Goodwin were working on the pieces this week.

Both declined to discuss the project, which they said was under the auspices of the office of KwaZulu-Natal premier Willies Mchunu.

Vusi Shongwe, who is managing the project, also said he was not authorised to comment until the statue was installed.

Botha said his rejected artwork — which cost taxpayers more than R11 000 to pull down — was last seen in a basement at the Dube Trade Port complex.

Botha has vowed to protect the artistic integrity of his statue, which included several cattle.

He maintains that although he was paid for the work, it may not be interfered with. At the moment the cattle part of the work are still on display at the airport.

Zulu said King Zwelithini was happy with the new version. "He was part of it. He went there [to the artist], he saw how it was started, saw models and so on.

"We are happy with it. It's about to be finished and it's going to be [unveiled] on September 17," he said.

Zulu said that in the first statue, Shaka appeared to have been modelled on actor Henry Cele, who was famed for his portrayal of the monarch in the TV series *Shaka Zulu*.

HERD INSTINCT: Left, the 'herd boy' Shaka that was scrapped. Right, an arm of the new statue by Peter Hall based on an old drawing, far right

'Virginity bursary' mayor sticks to her guns

BONGANI MTHETHWA

SHE is in charge of a lesser-known KwaZulu-Natal municipality and on a collision course with the law, but the uThukela district mayor refuses to back down on her crusade to advance the cause of virginity.

In January this year, Dudu Mazibuko unleashed a storm of controversy when she awarded 16 "virginity bursaries" to young women who could prove they were not sexually active. Gender and human rights activists howled in disapproval, lashing out at her Mayoral Matric Excellence Awards.

On Friday, the Commission for Gender Equality released a report castigating the bursaries as unconstitutional and recommended the mayor be sent on a remedial course.

But Mazibuko, who has the blessing of King Goodwill Zwelithini, says the commission can take a hike.

"Virginity testing is a culture that can't be interpreted and reduced to the actual testing itself. We're challenging [the report] because it borders on cultural prejudice."

VIRGINITY ADVOCATE: Mayor Dudu Mazibuko

She has the support of the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities, whose chairwoman, Thoko Mkhwanazi-Xaluva, supports the virgin bursaries.

The gender commission said it welcomed initiatives that encouraged abstinence, but the bursaries were discriminatory, unconstitutional and promoted patriarchy and inequality.

"It goes against the ethos of the constitutional provisions in relation to dignity, equality and discrimination. It . . . violates regional and international commitments to promote gender equality and eradicate harmful traditional practices," the commission's report read.

It recommended the bursary be removed as a category for funding and the municipality's policy be amended. It also wants Mazibuko and councillors to undergo gender training on HIV/Aids, behavioural issues, gender discrimination and gender-based violence.

But Mazibuko said they had consulted extensively.

"I've thrown down the gauntlet to other mayors . . . to do something about preserving young girls and carving out their future paths. This bursary is part of that."

Last week, she received a maiden mayoral award from King Zwelithini for her role in promoting virginity testing.

And it seems that the students and their parents agree.

Nompilo Sikhakhane, 21, a law student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, said she did not agree with the commission because "the mayor wanted to groom us for the future".

Fakazile Madondo, 66, grandmother of Nokwanda Madondo, an education student at the University of the Free State, said: "We're grateful for this. No one is forced to be a virgin."