

## PATALA ROLLS INTO TOWN

27 February 2013



PAY UP: A crowd gathered to hear about Operation Patala and its mission to encourage Residents to pay their municipal bills at Mafube

Operation Patala, an awareness initiative to encourage communities to pay for service delivery in their towns, was launched in the Free State's Mafube local municipality at the weekend.

The programme, which is being driven by Zandile Management Services, whose head is Fikile Bili, has had successes in other provinces in convincing non-payers to pay for their services. The Mafube municipality consists of Frankfort, Villiers and Cornelia.

Operation Patala is the brainchild of Free State Premier Ace Magashule, who also attended the event on Saturday at the Namahadi Zomba Stadium in Frankfort. The event attracted hundreds of community members.

Bili said Zandile's principles were to educate the communities about the values of paying their municipal accounts so to afford the municipalities to deliver services as per the Municipal Systems Act.

In order to draw the crowds, the project brought local TV celebrities to the town such as Themba Nofemele (Ranthumeng) from Muvhango, Mandla Gaduka (Choppa), Thami Mngqolo (Senzo) and Thato Molamu (Nicholas) from Generations.

Magashule, who was joined by the mayor of Mafube and other councillors, praised the municipality for their efforts to encourage the community to pay their current and outstanding municipal fees.

"Mafube is one of the poor municipalities in the Free State and they have started this campaign to urge members of the community to pay their rates and taxes. The municipality desperately needs to raise its revenue-generating capacity in order to meet its service delivery obligation," he said.

Bili said Zandile was a debt recovery services company that developed a unique way to collect outstanding payments for services on behalf of municipalities that had been struggling to get the money into their coffers.

“We started out with this programme by trying to understand the minds of township residents. I am also aware of the frustrations with poor service delivery, political tension and violent protest actions.

“However, I have done some research into how municipalities are collecting debt from residents who have failed to pay up,” he said.

Bili said he found that most people wanted to pay for their services but needed some gentle nudging.

“I worked out several strategies and went back to the community to test their feelings about the approach,” he said.

“The secret is in our approach. We are not aggressive but persuasive.

“We act as a go-between between municipalities and the communities.”

[Source: [www.thenewage.co.za](http://www.thenewage.co.za)]