**Premier Sihle Zikalala**

While it is difficult to conduct a report card exercise, given the unprecedented challenges the year has thrown at us, the DA’s main reservation about the Premier during this time is that we had to fight for him to release comprehensive Covid-19 stats for specific areas in the province. This while he continued to claim that it was not in the best interests of KZN’s public to have these details. At the same time, he was not as transparent as Premiers from other provinces – all of whom provided this critical information.

The Premier has also failed to properly deal with the endemic corruption related to PPE-procurement in KZN. While we believe that he is protecting certain individuals and using others as scapegoats – this is something we will need to prove in the coming days and months.

While the DA does give him credit for his Sunday media conferences, they turned into more of a PR exercise in the face of his ongoing lack of transparency.

Essentially, Premier Zikalala has failed to handle the Covid-19 crisis in the manner it should have been – by taking the people of our province into his confidence in order to curb the spread of the virus.

**Score D**

**Office of the Speaker Nontembeko Boyce**

The Speaker has clearly broken the past trend of this Office being a dumping ground for underperforming comrades.

She has taken her role extremely seriously and this is clearly manifested in the military-style function of the legislature with staff, under the effective guidance of Secretary Nerusha Naidoo, ensuring that all her commands are carried out, effectively and timeously.

A perfect example of the team work under Speaker Boyce is the extremely effective implementation of virtual meetings of committees and the legislature. KZN was one of the frontrunners in the adoption of virtual meetings and the adoption of the standing rules and orders in order to accommodate both virtual and hybrid meetings.

**Score A**

**Finance MEC Ravi Pillay**

While ever present in portfolio committee meetings, one almost got the feeling that the MEC was not totally committed to the post of Finance.

The MEC was fortunate enough to be backed by a top performing provincial treasury – enough to make any MEC look good.

While there was plenty of hard talk by Pillay during his tenure, the province still managed to underspend its budget by R1.78billion with Transport underspending by a whopping R1.6 billion.

Regrettably, it was also during MEC Pillay’s brief tenure that Treasury HOD Simiso Magagula’s contract was not renewed. While this was ultimately the Premier’s call, as MEC he must have had some input in the matter.

**Score B**

**Education MEC Kwazi Mshengu**

MEC Mshengu would have received a B+ but several matters have lowered his marks.  While the DA appreciates that the lockdown has resulted in a variety of unusual circumstances - which cannot be used to prejudice the MEC’s grades – there are however, lingering issues and new revelations that have resulted in the current assessment.

The Department’s finances remain a mess with massive over-expenditure on the cards. The situation is far worse than last year and the recent adjustment budget will compound the problems.  On a positive note, a permanent Chief Financial Officer (CFO) has been appointed within the Department after remaining in an acting position for far too long.  While this will bring some required stability to the Department, the MEC will need to keep a hawk eye on spending, particularly on grants such as the National Schools Nutrition Programme (NSNP) and infrastructure, as high levels of corruption continue to eat away at funds meant for our children.

Certainly, any attempt at fiscal dumping is not the answer when it comes to areas of under-expenditure. This is particularly relevant within critical areas such as the Maths, Science and Technology grant, which is intended to massively improve these subjects in the province. Throwing millions of rands into just one or two schools will disadvantage the remaining 6 200-odd schools in KZN.

Other areas of concern are the pit latrines that remain in almost 1 100 KZN schools, a situation which will not helped by cuts in infrastructure grants. Then there is the shortage of some five million text books which the MEC has not been able to address and does not even seem to alarmed by. Added to this is the MEC’s school safety initiative – hastily launched with the Premier last year – which has proved to be nothing more than a publicity stunt, with schools now seemingly worse off than ever.

The budget areas that have been cut are a direct result of the pathetic management of the country’s finances by the ANC-led government.  Money taken from education has no doubt contributed to the funds that have disappeared - or the skulduggery involving the Covid-19 fund - and other such matters such as bailing out failed state-owned enterprises. The snow-ball effect is that KZN’s children will suffer more now compared to previous years.

MEC Mshengu has also not been able to get out of the strangle hold of teacher unions and the consequences have been dire with lost learning and teaching time and more recently, allegations of highly irregular appointments to various posts and positions within the Department.  While the DA has alerted the MEC to these, he remains sitting on his hands.

In addition, the MEC, along with the Premier have ignored malfeasance around the procurement of sanitary pads to the tune of some R120million.  The DA has made repeated calls for accountability which includes the suspension of KZN’s Education HOD. To date this has fallen on deaf ears.

The DA first made public the massive Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) expenditure based on ridiculously inflated prices paid by this Department under MEC Mshengu’s watch. The allegations regarding these shady business deals, worth hundreds of millions of rands, remains under investigation by the Special Investigations Unit [SIU].

The matter of expenditure of around R100 000 per month on renting a car also remains an open and active probe by the Office of the Public Protector [PP]. The DA as the complainant continues to interact with this office, with MEC Mshengu due to appear before investigators soon.

On a positive note, there are matters that the MEC responds to almost immediately.  He is empathetic and also shows a genuine interest in resolving concerns raised with him. Regrettably though, his officials’ dalliances in so many instances have let him down and he can no longer fob off the fact that the cauldron of corruption that is KZN’s Department of Education is being stirred even more. He must be seen to act more swiftly from here on.

**Score: C**

**Human Settlements MEC Peggy Nkonyeni**

The DA acknowledges the difficulties faced by MEC Nkonyeni this year due to Covid-19. The lockdown meant that no building work was able to be done for months on end while the deeds offices was also closed, making services delivery by the Department next to impossible. For this reason, it is also understandable that the Department has not come close to reaching any of its targets.

On a positive note, the MEC was visible during the lockdown and did keep the portfolio committee informed of her Departments preparations to deal with the pandemic. Regrettably though, the long-term problems still prevail. The emergency grant for storm damage from 2017 remains unspent while housing projects such as Masinenge in Ugu and in Ward 25 of Pietermaritzburg remain unfinished.

In addition, the Department’s track record for title deeds remains in the same dismal state as it was before lockdown struck.

**Score : C**

**Public Works MEC Peggy Nkonyeni**

While the Public Works Department did have to stop most of its projects during lockdown it was responsible for emergency work at provincial hospitals to prepare for the anticipated influx of Covid-19 patients. In this regard, the quality of work at hospitals including Clairwood must be praised, even if the temporary wards only became fully online after the first wave of the virus had passed. These units remain important though with the threat of second wave.

Regrettably, this year has seen the Department hit by numerous allegations of irregular expenditures, questionable PPE tenders and so forth. This as culminated in the suspension of the Head of Department (HOD), an individual who has had a famously bad relationship with the MEC.

The DA will continue to monitor this issue and others within the Department. The onus is now on MEC Nkonyeni to bring stability to the Department and sort out the rot.

**Score: C**

**Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA)**

**MEC Nomusa Dube-Ncube**

As Covid-19 decimated KZN’s economy, former MEC Dube-Ncube was not only expected - but compelled to drive local economic growth and stability. Quite conversely, she instead took it upon herself to inspect and prosecute local businesses allegedly in breach of lockdown protocol. This with a large media delegation in tow. Simply put, the MEC actively worked against local business during lockdown.

The MEC’s butterfly approach to tackling both the economic crisis and the failing Ezemvelo entity has been a populist one that has failed. She has settled on issues momentarily – and amid great fanfare - before again flying off to settle on another issue. This while her track record of bringing issues to conclusion or resolution has been dismal.

MEC Dube-Ncube also failed to persuade the KZN Cabinet that local procurement of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) would help save the KZN economy - leading to massive spending on imported and ill-fitting Chinese equipment at inflated prices. This is just one of the many instances of local business being side-lined in EDTEA'S unrelenting pursuit to allegedly empower local business. This while tenderpreneurs and importers are the actual beneficiaries.

The final straw this year has been the MEC's lack of accountability and transparency to both EDTEA portfolio committee members and the public. Her clandestine action on the Ezemevelo Board in particular was taken in secret, as were many other critical economic development initiatives.

Added to this already muddled whirlpool of ineffectiveness is MEC Dube-Ncube's silo mentality. She has been unreachable by opposition MPLs for months and has an extremely poor record of attending committee meetings. She seems to have been operating in a hall of mirrors for so long she does not know economic fact from fiction - choosing to regurgitate the same apparent EDTEA projects that have been on the books for years.

Why the ANC and the Premier in particular appointed MEC Dube-Ncube to a position that required a measure of consideration for the people and economy of our province will remain a mystery. Once again, the ANC would have us believe they are the only ones in step, while shooting down viable alternatives from the opposition.

It is clear the MEC has used her portfolio and the media to further her political ambitions and personal profile while KZN’s economy falls by the wayside.

**Score: D**

**Transport MEC Bheki Ntuli**

Unlike some MECs, MEC Ntuli was ‘hands on’ and on the ground during the Covid-19 lockdown. There can be no doubt that he has had his fair share of problems this year though, including his Department’s R14 Billion irregular expenditure along with concerns from the Auditor-General regarding the allocation of tenders for which there has been no consequence management to date. Then there is the ongoing problem of poor performance by insufficiently trained officials.

Added to this are the poor turnaround and lack of fast-tracking of priority projects. Included in this are the access bridges for school children and the surge in truck protests, while engagements and talk shops cannot seem to find solutions. This is a huge hindrance to the trucking industry, an added burden to our provincial economy and this is leading to major job losses.

Meanwhile, the Road Traffic Inspectorate (RTI) problems remain far from resolved, with more than 200 vacant posts still unfilled. This has led to very few visible patrols on KZN’s roads, with not enough RTI officers on each shift which has in turn prevented the use of the 24-hour shift system.

KZN’s road maintenance budget also took a huge knock this year, leaving the Department unable to resolve serious road repair to the M13, Fields Hills, Kwa-Dukuza, Ugu District and various areas in eThekwini. The licence renewal process remains a mess without any serious review on fast-tracking the online service.

**Score: D**

**Community Safety and Liaison MEC Bheki Ntuli**

The MEC was not scared to be on the ground during the Covid-19 lockdown, with his Department also forced to deal with serious criminal elements. Regrettably, this period also saw gender-based violence (GBV) increase to unprecedented levels in KZN while we are yet to see the serious and firm implementation of the Department’s "turn-around strategy".

This year also saw the Inanda and Umlazi SAPS stations again reporting the highest number of rape cases in the entire country with women raped in public places, educational institutions, at bus and taxi ranks and by people they thought they could trust.

This while there has been no improvement in the services offered to victims – both women and children – by SAPS. While police officers are not obligated to be trained on GBV, stations remain under-resourced with insufficient patrol vehicles to respond to complaints and not enough warm bodies to ensure visible policing in hot spot areas.

The Community Policing Forums (CPF’s) that do work remain hamstrung without receiving any financial or other assistance from government. Yet they are expected, by the Department, to comply with the high expectations of reducing criminal activity within their areas.

**Score: D**

**Agriculture and Rural Development MEC Bongiwe Sithole-Moloi**

The Department of Agriculture is spinning in the mud like a tractor bogged down after heavy rains. While the MEC is passionate about her responsibility, this is not translating into practical policy and leadership decisions.

The Department's response to Agricultural transformation in the province is still to throw money at the challenge, with little change in the strategic approach to the work that they do. In addition to this, there has been little progress made getting rid of the internal 'mafia' that has captured the Department for years.

Other issues to note include;

- The Department’s failure to spend its budget once again with close to R100 million unspent

- Continued spending programmes without having proper monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in place.

- A very slow response to the Covid-19 disaster, with support being very selective and

- The failure to implement a number of programmes with Covid-19 used as an excuse. This despite the agricultural sector being permitted to operate during the hard lockdown period.

Then there is the provincial biosecurity report which remains outstanding despite the severe risk associated with biosecurity related disasters such as brucellosis, rabies, fall armyworm, anthrax, and locusts

The Department has also failed to prioritize farm and rural safety, leaving both farmers and farm workers at risk. In addition, no update has been provided on the lifestyle audits promised by the Department. Reports to the portfolio committee are often late or lack the type of detail needed to perform effective oversight and the MEC’s turn-around to written parliamentary questions from the DA was also not in line with the 14-day Legislature prescriptions.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Land Reform has also revealed the complete failure of post-settlement support to land reform farmers as well as a lack of urgency in finalising legislation to speed up land reform and land tenure issues.

**Score: D**

**Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA)**

**MEC Sipho Hlomuka**

The MEC has failed to provide leadership during what has also been one of the worst years for his Department’s overall performance. He did not attend the majority of CoGTA portfolio meetings and mostly provided no reason for his absence. This has resulted in meetings taking place without any opportunity to hold political leadership accountable for the numerous issues arising within his Department.

The lack of fiscal accountability within almost all KZN municipalities continues to be the worst indictment on the leadership of CoGTA. As with last year, little has been done to intervene and the outcome is that there is no turnaround in the huge financial irregularities within our municipalities.

CoGTA’s initial response to Covid-19 was also entirely insufficient and it failed to help municipalities deal with the initial lockdown. Where money was later given to municipalities, there is still no accountability in terms of expenditure.

Instead money has been spent using Covid as an excuse yet there remains nothing to show for how it has combated the spread of the virus.

Lastly, despite the many investigations into municipalities, the MEC is yet to institute any form of consequence management. This speaks volumes.

**Score : D**

**Sports and Recreation/ Arts and Culture MEC Hlengiwe Mavimbela**

While the MEC has done some work within her portfolio’s, she seems to be more interested in her ANC party role as a so-called district champion rather than attending to urgent issues within the Departments she heads up.

While her Departments’ overall performances have been dismal the MEC herself initially failed to adequately come to the assistance of KZN’s artists and sports athletes during the Covid-19 pandemic, only waking up later to their plight.

In terms of Arts and Culture there are several important projects in the province which remain outstanding. These include the monument to mark the arrival of the first Indentured Indian Labourers in the province in 1860 – a landmark which was supposed to have been erected a decade ago. There are the Winston Churchill Theatre in Ladysmith which is still stuck in Phase 1 after many years and the Archive Centre were the project as not started despite the budget having been made available. Added to this is the Richard’s Bay uThungulu Arts Centre which is still incomplete after four years and with R27.5 million having been spent to date.

Regrettably, the MECs attendance at portfolio committees is very poor, which is indicative of her lack of interest. On a more positive note, she has managed to fill some critical vacant posts.

**Score : D**

**Health MEC Nomagugu Simelane-Zulu**

In 2019, the DA gave MEC Simelane-Zulu the benefit of the doubt as she had recently been appointed to her position. We overlooked her complete lack of medical qualifications or health experience in the hope that with her legal background she might be able to instil accountability and bring the rule of law back into the DoH. Regrettably, our high hopes of massive changes have been dashed.

While there can be no doubt that the MEC inherited a Department in complete disarray from human rights delinquent, former MEC Sibongiseni Dhlomo, the reality that MEC Simelane-Zulu has not shown any commitment to fixing the things that matter.

The Department remains plagued by massive staff shortages, medication shortages at clinics and hospitals, long patient waiting times, broken medical equipment and failing infrastructure. This while the Department remains extremely financially strained, despite having one of the province's largest budgets. Audit outcomes remain qualified with very few visible steps taken to proceed to a clean audit.

All signs indicate that KZN has overcome the first surge of Coronavirus. This in spite of MEC Simelane-Zulu rather than due to her efforts and it is indeed fortunate that the province has experts amongst senior officials and experts from the Nelson R Mandela School of Medicine who are assisting the effort.

Despite this, the province still experienced shortages of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) during the pandemic. PPE procurement related corruption also made its appearance in KZN, primarily through over-pricing with the Department in one instance spending between R60 and R90 per N95 masks when Treasury regulations set a R37,50 benchmark.

While Covid-19 continues to dominate the headlines, other medical issues have continued throughout. Problems at the Gale Street, Ladysmith and Pietermaritzburg forensic laboratories persist. Specialist shortages have also resulted in very long surgery waiting times. Despite these desperate conditions, the Department continues to racially profile the employment of specialists. This to the detriment of patients.

On a positive note, MEC Simelane-Zulu continues to attend all health portfolio committee meetings. However, there is a problem with her replying to the DA’s written parliamentary questions, with many going unanswered. In addition, she continues with her unconstitutional instruction to health facilities to refuse individual MPLs from performing oversight visits.

**Score: E**

**KZN Social Development                 MEC Nonhlanhla Khoza**

The Department is completely dysfunctional and at the helm of it all is the MEC herself.  Not only has the Department had three different HOD’s in a matter of a year but all three have faced very serious allegations, yet nothing has come of it to date.

It goes without saying that the MEC is unable, even after a year and a half in the position, to provide any leadership and still swans around the province meeting and greeting and pretending to fulfil the Department’s mandate.

Despite having been embroiled in saga after saga, the MEC has still not been held accountable for the blatant fraud and corruption so rife within her dysfunctional Department – a fact exposed by Covid-19. If the so-called blanket saga was not enough there are also the millions of rands meant for food parcels which simply went ‘missing’. Added to this is the Early Child Development (ECD) grant being used to fund other expenses, despite a high court judgement compelling the Department to pay ECD’s their subsidies.

The MEC is incapable of monitoring her Department and keeping her finger on the pulse.  Finance, along with the administration of this Department do as they please yet despite the DA’s calls for the MEC to be removed from her position, she remains ‘untouchable’.

The MEC and her Department are failing the most vulnerable communities in our province and nothing is being done about it.

**Score:              E**

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