



The PH team during the PH forum in East London on 20 July 2018

PH role needs awareness to heighten its efficiency

By Samson Mabunda

In emerged in the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) coordinated Presidential Hotline (PH) forum in East London on 19-20 July 2018 that the public should be made aware about the role of the PH to increase its efficiency.

Callers often raise private, legal and human resource issues which it will be difficult for the PH to handle. It would be prejudice for example, to deal with labour relations matters which the Commission for Conciliation Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) is still dealing with. Furthermore, the PH can neither overturn a court ruling. Then the PH might be seen as unhelpful if citizens were unaware that legal issues or court cases fell outside the scope of the call centre, participants highlighted.

The PH should be used to deal with service delivery issues like RDP houses, electrification, water and sanitation, roads and infrastructure and others. However, issues like corruption are relevant since they affect service delivery.

The public was discouraged to overlook local offices with which they could communicate directly since they were closer to them. Departments should through walk-ins, roadshows and other means create awareness to the public about the PH. "The Presidential Hotline should be used when all [the citizen's] attempts to get assistance from a government department, province, municipality or state agency have failed. It is not only a complaints line. You can call to share your views or provide solutions to the challenges in your community," this preamble of Government call centres and help lines was emphasised.

Government help lines and call centres helped the public to

- get information about services and programmes
- report problems or make complaints
- provide tip-offs to authorities about fraudulent or criminal activities.

Provinces shared best practices on how they respond to public queries about service delivery raised through the PH. Gauteng was found to be doing well through its Ntirhisano war room. This is a system wherein experts meet and share how best specific service delivery issues could be dealt with. Both Eastern Cape Premier and Provincial Hotline Manager, Ms Brehnela Pather said it was [touching] to hear callers enquiring about a basic service delivery issue. It was important to share experiences so that the public is helped well.

“If you are able to solve one problem for example, an RDP house challenge, you will have built a home for a family,” she remarked.