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## **INTERVIEW WITH MMAMODIKE LYDIA NTSALA**

### **START OF AHP\_RAM\_NtsalaMmamodikeLydia\_20070726b**

**Dale McKinley (DM):** How does the community see you as an ABET teacher? How do you experience being an ABET teacher in the community?

**Mmamodike Ntsala (MN):** Before, people used to think that ABET teachers are not getting anything. Those people who attend enjoy going to ABET school. The problem is those teachers who are the ones who criticise the ABET school teachers.

**Ahmed Veriava (AV):** What kind of criticisms do they have, what do they say?

**MN:** They don't include us in many decisions as teachers, they just exclude us.

**DM:** Do you think a lot of it is because of what you earn?

**MN:** Yes, I think so. Some of them don't even allow us in their classes while there are some who understand the meaning of ABET and eventually gave us their classes. On the other hand some just don't cooperate and they leave stuff like files and when they get lost ABET people are to be blamed. Sometimes they write on the chalkboard 'PDNE' – 'Please Do Not Erase' - therefore we are not allowed to write on the board and we will do nothing on that particular day.

**AV:** When the public sector workers got an increase after the strike this year did ABET workers also get an increase?

**MN:** They only have increased the salary by R5 per hour. I've never seen an increase of more than R5 since I started.

**AV:** How much do you get paid?

**MN:** R137.00.

**AV:** That's nowhere near 6%

**MN:** The biggest stumbling block is our officials who know that we suffer and they are aware that we get less money. Even if you are sick and you cannot go to work that day your are marked absent and you won't get paid for that ... even if you have lost a family member ... even your own child, they will mark you absent and your money will be

deducted. In the meetings there is some money which was meant for ABET educators but the officials will take that money back to the government instead of giving it to us for the things we need to do.

**DM:** How is your relationship with the officials in the department who are running the ABET programme?

**MN:** I will say they are both good and bad. Normally though, when they come to us they just threaten us and put us under pressure while they demand a job well done.

**AV:** I want to ask a question which will take us a little bit back out of the ABET stuff. You went around and applied for a lot of jobs. Why do you think you didn't receive a teaching post considering that there's massive overcrowding of schools and a shortage of teachers?

**MN:** They are unfair. You might find that they have invited five candidates to the interview and they are just doing that for the formalities because they already know the person whom they want for the job. Therefore the remaining four are just accompanying the other interviewee.

**DM:** At the high schools it is the principals who are the ones that decide?

**MN:** Yes, the principal and the SGBs (School Governing Bodies).

**DM:** So .... you are saying that this is just unfair, that they have already decided?

**MN:** Yes.

**AV:** In terms of what you have seen change, because you have been in Rammolutsi from 1984. For you, what have been the biggest changes in Rammolutsi since 1994?

**MN:** For my side, I have never seen changes because they have promised us that they will build houses, and good sewerage. They are not yet delivered and we eventually built our own houses. As you have seen we don't even have good roads. We also wrote a letter to the provincial government complaining about the sewage, but no changes took place. The only thing that has brought change since 1994 is free education ... the fact that our children attend schools for free ... that is the only change.

**AV:** Who wrote the letter?

**MN:** I did.

**AV:** What did you say when you wrote them the letter?

**MN:** I asked them to tell us where are our toilets and sewerage, cause they promised us they would put them in for us ... but they jumped us in the process of building toilets and went to other sections. They must explain to us as to where do we belong as members of the Rammolutsi community.

**DM:** Did they respond to you?

**MN:** The ward councillor - Mr Mokoena - came to my house and said I've isolated them, as my letter was asking about the promised toilets. He promised to bring the answer but even today there is no answer.

**DM:** When was this?

**MN:** This year.

**DM:** Why did you write to the provincial government as opposed to the municipality?

**MN:** We started here at the local government but they did not help us. So we took things to the province..

**DM:** .In the time that you have been teaching, have the provincial or national department of education come to visit Rammolutsi? Have any of the officials come here

**MN:** Yes.

**DM:** What happened when they came?

**MN:** They just demanded the files and portfolios of the students. When we asked about salaries and our job security they didn't answer us and no one has ever briefed us on that. Also, most of the officials who come here are academics.

**DM:** Do you think that ABET programme that you are involved in is having a positive impact on the community?

**MN:** Yes.

**DM:** What have some of the skills ... for example the reading and writing that you are teaching the older people ... Have they come back and told you what they've been able to do with that ... ?

**MN:** Those that I have taught are happy cause they can even manage to make their own signatures, where they used to just touch their fingers to get the money. They know how to read and count their monies and the change they are supposed to get ... they are able to do their own groceries and are able to withdraw money from the banks without the assistance of their kids.

**DM:** Just a .couple of last questions ... As a long time resident of Rammolutsi, as a teacher as well ... what would you like to see happening in this community in the near future, in the next four or five years? What kinds of things do you think need to happen in this community?

**MN:** I would like to see proper roads. The government must hire people to reduce the rate of crime and deploy many policemen so we can be safe. The people who are living in the informal settlements must get their own sites to make a home for their family.

**DM:** One very last thing. Is there anything that you would like to say? We have asked many questions but maybe we have not asked you something that you think people might want to hear about this community or about yourself. Is there anything else that you would like to say?

**MN:** I want God to help me find a good job. The government must make a building for ABET, for an ABET school, so that people who attend ABET can have enough time to learn ... I want to say to the government - we have not yet received our RDP house, and we have to build my mum's own RDP house, so with the little that I get I am unable to

finish my house. So they should give us the money from RDP so that we can be able to finish our house, because my salary manages to cover the costs for food only. So I suggest they give us RDP house money to enable us to finish our already built house.

**DM:** Thank you so much for talking to us.

**MN:** Thanks

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