

SMART METERING PILOT PROJECT IN PHUTHADITJHABA



Figure 1: Maluti-a-Phofung Municipality Building

Grinpal Energy Management (Pty) Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of Palace Group, has been awarded a contract by the Maluti-a-Phofung Municipality to pilot the company's smart meters in Phuthaditjhaba. The smart meters have in the past proved to be advantageous and valuable to both the municipalities and the end-users.

Maluti-a-Phofung Municipality background

The Maluti - a- Phofung Local Municipality is one of the five local municipalities within the Thabo Mofutsanyane District Municipality in the Free State Province. The municipality was established on the 5th December 2000 and constitutes four former *TLC* Local Authorities namely Qwaqwa Rural, Phuthaditjhaba, Harrismith and Kestell.

The municipality's vision is that by 2020, Maluti-a-Phofung will be technologically advanced. Maluti-a-Phofung aims to have unlocked the indigenous entrepreneurial spirit of all citizens within an equitable, sustainable, healthy, crime -free and moral society.

Through its Smart Metering System, Grinpal can certainly assist the municipality to fulfil this vision.

Current challenges faced by Maluti-a-Phofung Municipality

Like many other municipalities, Maluti- a- Phofung currently faces critical challenges in electricity supply and control, these are challenges common to many other municipalities nationwide. The primary challenges that Maluti-a-Phofung is currently encountering include Revenue Collection and Control.

The current metering system is not technologically advanced; as a result minimal effort is needed in tampering or even bypassing the meter. Conventional meter readings are not conducted on a monthly basis; such factors affect the billing process which on many occasions does not match the financial system. Cut-offs can only be done manually, if done at all, as the customers tend to deny the municipal workers entrance to their homes to conduct the meter readings. Conversion from the Conventional post paid to Prepaid system has proved cumbersome as it requires a new meter installation.

Consumers also find themselves highly inconvenienced by the current metering system which compels them to spend prolonged hours queuing to purchase electricity or to resolve any electricity related queries. The consumers are required to manually load the payment at home (premises,) as a result they run the risk of mislaying the receipt which (if found) can be loaded on any other meter.



Figure 2,3 & 4: Overview for target areas for installation

Grinpal's pilot project

Approximately ten thousand smart meters are to be installed in the greater parts of Phuthaditjhaba for both residential and commercial users. The identified areas are as follows:

Targeted Residential Areas included:

- Deweld;
- Elite;
- Berute
- Region between Harrismith and Phuthaditjhaba

Targeted Commercial/ Business Areas include;

- Qwaqwa
- Kestell

The pilot project will run for a period of three months, commencing in April and will be concluded in June. Success of the pilot project is strongly dependent on communication and support between the Municipal workers; the Grinpal support team and cooperation from the general public.

***“We need to make sure that this process causes minimal inconvenience to all stakeholders, therefore thorough communication with all stakeholders is crucial.”
Jonathan Ramulondi, Chief Financial Officer for Maluti-a-Phofung municipality.***

Grinpal partnered with three other organisations within Qwaqwa to ensure that the service offering is relevant and well received by the region:

- Maluti a Phofung Municipality
- TIS- The company responsible for project management and to serve as the consultant on behalf of the Municipality
- Nkanyezi cc-The local company assigned to provide necessary human resources

“I am gratified to be part of this team which explores new technologies in providing electricity and I look forward to a long lasting and fruitful relationship with Grinpal” Stix Miya Managing Director of Nkanyezi cc.

Grinpal’s past customers i.e. Johannesburg City Power and Thabazimbi municipality amongst many others have declared that revenue collection had increased and they experienced better control of the system as it was onerous to bypass or tamper with the meter.

Feel free to visit Grinpal’s direct website: www.grinpal.co.za or Email: info@grinpal.co.za



Figure 5: complete installation at Phuthaditjhaba



Figure 6: Grinpal Staff installing at Phuthaditjhaba