



human settlements

MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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REVERSING SKEWED SPATIAL PLANNING

Effective settling of people demands a particular focus on rural development and coherent planning that is pro-poor and biased towards vulnerable communities. This is amongst the critical strategic direction adopted at the two-day Mpumalanga Department of Human Settlements' Strategic Planning Session held at Hazyview, City of Mbombela. This is to ease the pressures of urbanisation in the cities and promote integrated human settlements. In attendance were human settlements technocrats from all spheres of government as well as representatives from the Department's agencies, such as the Housing Development Agency (HAD) and National Housing Builders Registration Council (NHBRC), amongst others.

The session noted with concern the obdurate challenge of bulk infrastructure and resolved that there needs to be constant reporting on the implementation of bulk. Notwithstanding the municipalities' competency in providing bulk infrastructure, the Department must continue with and ensure effective utilisation of the bulk infrastructure 30% budget allocation. Speaking during the session, Accounting Officer Ms Hazel Zitha announced that the department would receive additional funding of R230 million to unlock blocked projects and expedite the provision of bulk.

"The imminent additional funding from the national Department of Human Settlements will go a long way in addressing ever-increasing housing backlog and bulk infrastructure deficit at the municipalities' level", charged Zitha. She added that none of this would be realised if there were a lack of financial management prudence, risk management, internal controls and record keeping. The department must have a working tracking system for housing needs intervention requests that come to the MEC's office conduit to the HOD's office. This is to ensure responsiveness as dictated by the government's value systems.

The session also looked at issues of rapid land releases, which need greater attention from the management. This is against the MinMec resolution that the department should service more sites instead of constructing top structures. The strategic programme on issuing stands must be developed and benchmarked with other provinces that already have the programme running.

On the front of special programmes, the department remains committed to eradicating asbestos and mud houses and providing relief to disaster-hit areas. There are over 20 000 houses that require the replacement of asbestos throughout the province. To this end, processes to appoint contractors have already started. Concerning mud houses, 136 mud houses have been identified, with 91 being part of the 2022/23 financial year. Meanwhile, local councillors from the City of Mbombela have registered 493 storm-damaged homes from a recent storm in Hazyview and its surroundings. The session reviews the current financial year's performance plans for the ensuing year.

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