



Press Release
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TRADITIONAL LEADERS EMPOWERED

Government is pulling every stop to ensure that the delivery of integrated human settlements is realised collectively with the active participation of all stakeholders. This stanza by government is testament to the recently held information session with local traditional leadership at Mbombela, City of Mbombela in Mpumalanga which sought to capacitate traditional leaders on their role and understanding of human settlements delivery in the province. The session was coordinated by both the National and Provincial Department of Human Settlements with the appreciation of the fact most of the delivery of human settlements in the province happens in rural communities.

Opening the session Ms Thoko Mathebula, Director Stakeholder Management and Community Empowerment stated that government wants cordial and sustainable relationship with traditional councils across the province. "It is of paramount importance that good relations between the Department and its stakeholders in particular traditional leaders are fostered especially in Mpumalanga as a rural province". She also urged them to never be shy to approach the Department on issues that concerns human settlements in their areas.

One major concern that was raised with the plea by traditional leaders was around project management that in some phases of projects they are not involved. Thus, a call was made that the Department must involve *Ubukhosi* throughout the project implementation so that challenges that threaten the project can be resolved swiftly. Furthermore, traditional leaders raised concerns about beneficiary management, alleging that process is susceptible to manipulation by ward councillors. The beneficiary management policy is currently under review, will mandate municipalities to establish permanent beneficiary management committees in order to prevent any individual fiddling with processes.

Reacting to the session Princess Sihle Mdluli from Mawewe Traditional Council described the session as an eye opener and informative. "The session was very informative as we learnt new things. Moreover, we did not know our rights as housing consumer, while more light and clarity was shared on our role in human settlements delivery". She added that she will take the knowledge acquired and use it to empower her community.

Closing the session SA Nkosi, Chief of Empakeni appreciated the session and vowed to continue working closely with the Department. The attendees were informed about human settlements programmes, services and policies. The department plans to deliver **6 694** housing units, **5000** service sites, and register **15 000** title deeds which will yield **11 694** housing opportunities during the current financial year.

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