

■ SPEECH

Advancing quest for spatial integration

In the fight against poverty, the Human Settlements Department has brought new life to thousands of people

NELISWA PEGGY NKONYENI

HUMAN Settlements does not merely build houses. We are establishing new towns and cities where all our people live, work, pray and play together. We are providing tangible evidence of social cohesion in our developments. A summary of our delivery in the last financial year includes 5 806 serviced sites, 15 516 units; 4 386 work opportunities; and 4 469 title deed handovers.

The presentation of the 2020-2021 budget for Human Settlements comes in the wake of Covid-19, which has left society reeling at a community and global level. Our commitment to unity, socio-economic renewal and nation-building has not been infected by Covid-19. Our commitments have in fact been amplified.

To address apartheid spatial planning that has continued to exist since 1994, the province's programme of action is directed at the very epicentre of poverty and spatial imbalances. Spatial integration, sustainable human settlements and the alleviation of asset poverty are key national priorities.

In forging forward with a new wave of thinking, we are not losing sight of the basic services required by our people and are working with available resources.

Human Settlements consistently meets its targets and has yet again spent its budget for the 2019/20 financial year. We are indeed proud to announce that the department is working toward a clean audit for the third successive year on the Housing Fund and an unqualified audit for the vote. We are pleased to share with fellow citizens that R3.9 billion has been allocated to the department for the 2020/21 financial year.

Our aim is to derive maximum benefit for our citizens by aligning all our programmes to achieve settlements where compact design, integrated networks of walkable streets, mixed land use, green infrastructure and smart technologies are among the considerations.

Radical socio-economic transformation is a priority of our government.



KWAZULU-NATAL MEC for Human Settlements and Public Works Peggy Nkonyeni, left, during an event in the Ilembe District Municipality, where she is the district champion for the area. Human Settlements has led the sanitisation of informal settlements throughout KZN in the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak.

The department uses various tools to give effect to this. We will continue to utilise local labour and material supplied by SMMEs and co-operatives without compromising the quality of the building material.

Human Settlements is working with the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, community education training centres and other stakeholders to facilitate supplier capacitation and access to the market.

These SMMEs and co-operatives including those owned by youth, women, the disabled and military veterans, would have acquired accredited construction skills through the EPWP Skills Development Programme.

Through the Siyakha Incubation Programme, we have actioned the incubation of 100 CIDB Level 1 construction companies drawn from all

districts in the province.

This is achieved through the provision of training and business skills development programmes, as well as the allocation of construction work on human settlements projects.

Good governance is a key principle at every level of our work. We are reviewing the accreditation of municipalities according to their capacity to perform in housing development.

The withdrawal of developer status of municipalities will be in a phased approach.

The department has received adverse audit findings in the past financial years largely due to the failure of municipalities to account for procurement processes.

Through the District Development Model, the department works closely with all municipalities. It is significant to point out that eThekweni Metro

receives its annual budget of R1.8bn for the Urban Settlements Development Grant directly from the National Department of Human Settlements for the installation of services such as water and sanitation in informal settlements and other urban projects.

In addition to that the metro receives R1bn from the province for the construction of top structures from the Human Settlements Development Grant.

eThekweni Metro receives in excess of a R3bn allocation while the department shares the remaining R2bn among the other 10 district municipalities in the province.

The allocation per district is influenced by population demographics, project planning readiness and increasing availability of bulk services.

This also includes the Informal Settlements Upgrade, Expanded Public

Works and Title Deeds Restoration programme grants.

In the last budget vote, we committed to providing access to well located and desirable land and the upgrading of informal settlements.

The department has since acquired 174 hectares of land for housing development.

Compounding the challenges of eradicating informal settlements are beneficiaries who, after being permanently relocated to formal houses, often call their relatives to occupy their informal dwellings.

We have identified 745 informal settlements for upgrading across the province with the majority in eThekweni Metro (524).

Eighty-one informal settlements in six districts, namely Harry Gwala, Ilembe, Zululand, Ugu, uMgungundlovu and uThukela, are currently receiving attention.

The eradication of transit camps in eThekweni remains a priority. This requires a collaborative effort from the government and civil society.

As a short-term intervention, a number of infill sites have been identified to relocate some of the families in transit camps.

These are in areas such as Quarry Heights, Kingsburgh and Craigieburn.

The necessary studies are being undertaken in these areas to allow for the design and construction of houses.

The enforcement of by-laws will play a critical role in ensuring that where we have relocated people to permanent houses, the transit camps will be demolished to avoid them being invaded by new occupants.

The Human Settlements terrain is a challenging one, but we are confident that we have the right policy frameworks and expertise to advance the service delivery we are tasked with.

Nkonyeni is the KwaZulu-Natal MEC for human settlements and public works in KwaZulu-Natal. This is an edited excerpt of the Human Settlements Budget Speech presented to the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Legislature yesterday.