

The Report of the Portfolio Committee on Housing oversight visit to Alfred Nzo District Municipality on the 8 - 11 October 2006.

Background

The committee undertook oversight visits to nine provinces in 2003, what came critically in their findings was the lack of capacity to deliver houses in some of the municipalities. Bearing in mind the fact that housing delivery is the national and provincial competencies. The committee then decided to visit same municipalities they visited in 2003 to check the progress that might have been done by municipalities.

Delegation

A multiparty delegation to the Eastern Cape was led by Mr. G Schneeman; the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Housing Ms Z Kota led a delegation of the same kind to Northern Cape. The Eastern Cape delegation comprised of four members and two support staff. Members who attended were Mr DCM Mabena, Ms N Ngele and Ms M Sigcau and the support staff was Ms. P Nyamza - Committee Secretary and Ms K Pasiya - Committee Assistant. The committee was privileged to be joined by the Provincial Portfolio Committee on Housing which was led by Ms Husain who stood in for Mr D Neer who is the Chairperson of the committee. Other members were Ms V Mtongana and Mr Z Luyenge, the support staff was Ms N Vili and the researcher attached to the committee in the province.

Purpose of the Visit

The committee visited Mount Ayliff District Municipality to check the progress done by the province after the visit by the Portfolio Committee on Housing, interact on challenges and successes of the municipality and the enhancement of the relationship of parliament with the municipalities. The focus was specifically on rural development.

Summary of the proceedings

The delegation visited Mount Ayliff District Municipality which is unique from other municipalities because it consists of two local municipalities that is Umzimvubu Municipality and Matitiele Municipality. The district municipality is predominantly rural and has a population of 400 000. It does not have the resources to generate its revenue and because of that the development is very slow. The mayor in his briefing touched the challenges that are faced by both local municipalities that falls under his jurisdiction because of their similarities. The main challenges are the invasion of land intended for development by the municipality, unsettled land claims, late approvals of projects application and the location of project manager who seemed to be located in Bisho whilst running projects in Alfred Nzo. On the blocked projects, the mayor informed the meeting that he received R15m from DBSA to complete the projects but the money has not yet been utilised because the municipality has not yet been accredited and the MIG has a structure without basic services. The provincial department appointed an investigation unit to investigate on matters of mismanagement that caused the projects to be blocked in 2002 and the municipality had to wait the investigative unit completed its work.

The project manager who was part of the meeting together with the team from land claims commission attached to the provincial department of housing tried to explain issues around the land claims but because they were not accounting officers they were not taken seriously and members expected to be briefed at least by Mr Mzamo who is a general manager in the department of housing. The project manager who happened to be based in Kokstad informed members that the department has entered into an agreement with Thubelitsha and National Housing Board Reconstruction Council to complete the blocked projects. He further informed the meeting of the Cuban engineers appointed to assist in quality control.

This information raised some concerns because since the breaking new grounds concept was introduced by the National Minister of Housing Dr L Sisulu Thubelitsha and NHBRC had an agreement with government to check the quality of houses built and monitor the developers. Other challenges faced by the municipality are the expansion of wards and yet are given minimum budget for delivery of houses. Other contributing factor to the delays in housing delivery is the environmental regulation which also delays accreditation of municipalities who have capacity to build houses.

Houses that are said to be built by Thubelitsha is 172 Houses in Mount Ayliff and Matatiele seemed to have an alarming development and people who were affected by the disaster are staying in tents not emergency houses that were constructed for them. Their focus is not only on Peoples Housing Plan they focused on middle housing as well.

Discussions

Land Claims

A meeting was held with land claim commission as a mechanism to monitor the progress in land claim. This meeting was as a result of delays in land claims which compromised the housing delivery. The commission promised to come back to give direction and the municipality felt that the commission was behind the resistance of people on the identified land that has been intended for development.

Minimum funds to municipalities

Before the demarcation it was 5 wards and now there are 24 wards after this new municipal demarcation and transitional fund given to them, they are still using the old fund allocations

Municipalities, for an example in Matatiele has 24 wards and the funds allocated to them was the same as the funds which were allocated were still 5 wards. This area has been challenged by veld fires in July 2002. Each affected household was compensated with R3500.00. There were some areas which were also affected and no compensation was granted to them and they are Caba, Sijoko and Mehloloaneng. Other affected areas challenged by fires in 2004/05 were Qhoboshianeng and Mapuleng and the details about this could be solicited from Alfred Nzo disaster management office. Funds that were budged for the development were suspended and the applications for housing projects which were submitted in Bisho 2002 were received unattended and no explanation was given to the women delegation that went to sleep over in Bisho. The areas intended for the development was Maebane and

Mafare. The area of George Moshoeshe was attacked by floods and only 9000.00 house units were built.

Maluti Housing Projects

This local municipality needed a housing programme despite the invasion of land. Temporary IDP's has the programme in Maluti. The illegal occupants to houses were problematic in that relocation of farm workers was explored. The other concern is the infrastructure tender which seemed not to be enough because small housing and communities required more funds than usual. Unclear role of both councillors and traditional leaders remains the concerns because it create confusion when it comes to delivery.

Site Visits

The team visited Umzimvubu where houses were abandoned because of their bad structure. These houses are built and not completed and some areas do not have infrastructure, water and sanitation.

In Matatiele subsidy houses were built and again no infrastructure was done and all these areas poses threats of diseases among the communities. In Hary Gwala at least a taxi rank, community hall and 500 units have been built. The delegation could not proceed to the disaster areas where people are living in tent due to inaccessibility of the roads towards that area

Findings of the committee

- Lack of communication between the province and municipality came out very sharply

- Traditional leaders not taken on board when the municipality or the department envisaged to make a development on a particular piece of land.
- Unfounded accusations to the land claim commission by councillors.
- Lack of capacity to transfer skills to emerging contractors
- Housing structure that would be able to coordinate the programmes and the development in each municipality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Out of the engagements by the Department of Housing officials, politicians, mayors and councillors the committee recommended the following:

- MEC should oversee all the blocked projects from 1994 and the current ones and time frames to set.
- He/she should work hand in hand with the National Department of Housing and National Housing Builders
- The MEC should be accountable to the Minister of National Department of Housing
- All the PHP in Mount Ayliff was a disaster and the disgrace to the populace who have voted for this government yearning for better life and equality for all be demolished for a better meaning to get a contractor that will deliver at pace in building better houses for that will accommodate proper infrastructure by means of electricity, water borne sewerage, water, peptic tanks and proper roads. The new development should cater social amenities e.g. parks, halls, library etc.

- The development should be a mixture walk ups structures should be accommodated to save land as we are experiencing land shortage.
- ~~The MEC must ensure that all traditional leaders~~ are taken on board to avoid consultation, this excessise will enhance smooth delivery of houses
- Land claims processes should be speed up and time frames be put in place for that effect