Debate on Vote 33: Human Settlements (S12A)

Honourable Princess S.A. Buthelezi (speaker Honourable M.D. Hlengwa)

Honourable Chairperson,

Section 26 of our country’s Constitution states that everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing. However, 26 years after the Constitution was adopted, the government’s attempt at managing South Africa’s human settlement in an orderly and efficient manner has failed. One does not have to search far to visualise this failure, as informal settlements encamp towns, cities, mines and most centres of economic activity.

A home is a fundamental requirement for family life and for social stability. Many South Africans living in informal settlements hold on to the Department’s sugar-coated promises without timelines of permanent settlement in future housing projects. However, in reality, they are stuck on an ever-growing housing list. As the country’s housing programme falls further and further behind, the onus is often on municipalities to provide temporary emergency accommodation.

The portfolio committee on human settlements has rightly pointed out that the current disconnect between the three spheres of government is preventing housing or human settlements programmes to function concurrently - which in turn has a direct impact on South African citizens.

The purpose of this budget is to facilitate the creation of sustainable human settlements and the improvement of household quality of life. 67.4% of this department’s total budget is allocated to Programme 2, which is responsible for the management and transfer of conditional grants to provinces and municipalities for the implementation of housing and human settlements programmes yet more than 5 million South Africans live in informal settlements.

In the April 2022 floods, more than 14 thousand people were displaced with 4 thousand left totally homeless, with the district municipalities of Ugu, King Cetshwayo, uMgungundlovu, KwaDukuza, Msunduzi, Ilembe and the eThekwini municipalities being worst hit. Consequently, hundreds of families had to live in community halls, for an indefinite period of time, as the department did not have adequate disaster relief measures in place. This speaks to the reactive nature of this department.

This leads me to the issue of land redistribution. The Department of Public Works and Infrastructure has recently announced the approved release of 2.8 hectares of land to the Housing Development Agency in the Msunduzi municipality, in KwaZulu-Natal, for human settlements development and the formalisation of an existing settlement. While the IFP welcomes this development, we need to question how funds in this budget will be allocated to ensure this project reaches completion. Unfortunately, like most Departments under this current government, corruption and the mismanagement of funds always have a way of infiltrating.

In consideration of the concerns raised, the IFP accept the budget.

Thank you.