



human settlements

MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
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RELOCATION OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENT DWELLERS ON THE CARDS

Government must take a proactive approach to prevent calamities in informal settlements during flood seasons and wildfires. This as Mpumalanga MEC for Human Settlements, MR Speed Mashilo plans to have the community of Coronation and Likazi informal settlements in eMalahleni Local Municipality be relocated to a much more habitable place. The two settlements are located in an un-rehabilitated old mining area with a sinkhole, thus exposing them to the perils of flooding and perpetual lack of services. Lack of bulk infrastructure, basic services, unhygienic living conditions and high crime rate are issues that bedevil these settlements.

MEC Mashilo recently visited the two settlements and has characterized the situation as a disaster waiting to happen if not addressed immediately. "In these two areas, there are about 5000 people residing there with solid families. The area is not designated and suitable for human habitation as it lacks services and is susceptible to flooding and other disasters. Thus, it is a disaster waiting to happen and we must prevent it", explained Mashilo. He further reiterated that the department is steadfast in battling the housing and land needs to prevent the mushrooming of such settlements.

Consequently, the Department and the municipality have resolved that the two communities ought to be relocated to the Siyanqoba Phase 2 integrated human settlements project within the jurisdiction of eMalahleni. Now that the number of people are being verified, a task team comprising of the department, municipality, the locals and the police will undertake a planning to develop a clear relocation plan. The idea of a steering committees has proven effective in stakeholder relations as it gets everyone involved with the processes and mitigates discontent which might spark unwarranted protests – thus rejecting the process.

Having had an appreciation of the living conditions of these communities, Mashilo also took time to condemn regressive decisions by some who rent out their government-subsidized houses and go on to live in such areas. "The province has over 270 000 housing backlog, yet you have people that have benefited from our programmes and rent out their houses. They go on to live in informal settlements, effectively exacerbating the crisis", charged Mashilo. Member of the Mayoral Committee (MMC) for Development Planning, Cllr. Vusi Nhlapho echoed the sentiments and welcomed Mashilo's visit. "We are going to support this move and rally behind the MEC's programme", he charged.

The move by government has been well received by community members and they are hopeful of a fair and transparent process. "We welcome the relocation as we look forward to a transparent and fair process", appreciated Petronella Molobane from Coronation. As part of upgrading informal settlements, the Department is servicing over 2000 sites in eMalahleni Local municipality during the 2023/24 financial year.

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