

Government: Private sector should help clear housing backlog

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Human Settlements Minister, Tokyo Sexwale, has admitted the weight of SA's housing backlog, involving more than 12-million people, is too much for government to bear alone, and has appealed for assistance from the private sector.

Sexwale launched the Each One Settle One campaign at the Johannesburg Securities Exchange (JSE), this morning aimed at encouraging the Top200 JSE-listed companies, private sector institutions, donor agencies and ordinary citizens to assist the Department in reducing the backlog of human settlements.

"It's a bold step this one. This is not a small game, but then the problem is not a mini one in this country," stated Sexwale.

In a statement the Department said the current backlog would take about 10 years to clear.

The housing budget currently stands at R122bn, R22bn under direct control of the Department of Human Settlements, with the remaining R1bn spread across other departments such as energy and water, which is insufficient to clear the backlog according to the Minister.

The budget allocated to different departments is to ensure service deliveries to new housing developments.

"Under my watch the housing backlog has grown from 2,1-million houses to 2,3-million, but we've been building houses at a rate 200000 per annum. So what's going wrong?"

Sexwale pointed to the fact that when a house is handed over to a family unit, some members of the family would then want their own house, especially youths living with their parents, "So when you think you've done it, the backlog grows by 200% on the day you hand the house over because their children want their own homes."

According to the Minister, the number of slums has increased from 800 in the early 1990s to more than 2500, most situated on the outskirts of industrialised areas.

"I believe that every South African can come aboard to assist a fellow South African to find a home."

Both Anglo American Platinum and Impala Platinum issued statements supporting the campaign.

"The campaign, aimed at private sector participation in addressing the housing needs of the communities where they operate, is aimed not only at tackling the country's huge housing backlog, but will also provide immeasurable socio-economic benefits for communities around the country," stated Impala.

Impala aims to construct 1500 freestanding 2 and 3 bedroom units over a three year period with AngloPlat aiming to build 20000 houses for its employees over the next decade.

-  VIDEO: Human Settlements Minister launches campaign for private sector to assist in clearing housing backlog