

Informal settlements remain major challenge for Gauteng municipalities

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Informal settlements remain a major challenge for Gauteng municipalities to manage because of in-migration of people to the province.

Presenting Gauteng's local government performance review for 2005 to 2011 at the Parktonian Hotel in Braamfontein on 10 May, Premier Nomvula Mokonyane said 85 informal settlements had been formalised by August 2008 and 36 were eradicated by 2009.

In Johannesburg, 49 out of 182 informal settlements have been formalised.

"Informal settlements remain a major challenge for municipalities to manage due to in-migration of people to the province. The plan is either to upgrade those which are suitable or to relocate," she said.

However, the province has made big strides in providing basic services. Its municipalities delivered sanitation to 167 014 households and provided potable water to 228 046.

During the period under review, municipalities spent 100 percent of the Municipal Infrastructure Grant funds on key programmes. The total infrastructure budget spent exceeded R5-billion.

In the formalised townships, municipalities prioritised roads and transport infrastructure and constructed 1 026 kilometres of roads supported by 88 storm-water projects and eight taxi ranks.

"The maintenance of infrastructure keeps our towns and cities running efficiently and remains a critical service for all municipalities to provide. Repairs and maintenance cost 10 percent of the total expenditure. The amount spent on repairs and maintenance improved from 5,2 percent in 2006/07 to 8 percent in 2009/10," she said.

Health care

Primary health care is a priority, and 24 clinics were opened through the infrastructure programme. Municipalities also continued to complement these through various community outreach programmes as well as through setting up additional sites to increase access to antiretroviral treatment.

Regarding solid waste management, Gauteng municipalities focused on improved waste management, which included waste recycling and solid waste removal. A total of 44 projects on landfill management were implemented.

The human settlement plan Breaking New Ground had accelerated and radically transformed the patterns of housing delivery in Gauteng municipalities since its inception in 2004, Mokonyane said.

Three metros – Johannesburg, Tshwane and Ekurhuleni – built a total of 110 501 low cost houses. Housing projects included Cosmo City, Lufhereng, Chief Mogale Luthuli Olievenhoutbosch and Nellmapius.

Touching on energy and electricity provision, Mokonyane said municipalities in Gauteng continued to provide free basic electricity ranging from 50kWh to 100kWh per month. In the areas supplied by Eskom, 98 percent of poverty-stricken households were receiving free basic electricity, with the remaining 2 percent still to be delivered.

A total of 570 762 new electricity connections were made in Gauteng metropolitan municipalities. The province had developed the Gauteng Integrated Energy Strategy, which would promote the use of alternative energy and recyclable materials.

Clean audit

The creation of viable and sustainable municipalities had been taken to higher levels with the introduction of policies and strategies by municipalities that were aimed at increasing their revenue base, said Mokonyane. The percentage of municipalities who received clean audits had increased to 73 percent.

Electricity in most households

During the period under review, programmes were implemented to enhance municipalities' capacity to deliver services on a sustainable basis:

- Operation Clean Audit, which resulted in 11 municipalities out of 15 achieving clean audits.
- Local Government Turnaround Strategy, with all Gauteng municipalities adopting specific turnaround strategies to strengthen their capacity to deliver services on a sustainable basis.

Mokonyane said: "Through the above programmes, we have been able to make sure that a number of programmes directed at critical and scarce skills are developed, including, programmes to ensure retention of competent staff in our municipalities."

She touched on the opening of the Gautrain as well as Joburg's Rea Vaya Bus Rapid Transit system, which demonstrated the effectiveness and the efficiency of the road and transportation systems in the province.

In conclusion, Mokonyane said the guiding principle and strategic objective of local government was to eradicate the legacy of apartheid planning. The 2006 local government priorities were crafted with this in mind.

The review provided an assessment of the progress made in implementing the strategic agenda of local government in Gauteng.