

## South Africa: Three NCOP Eastern Cape Delegations Present Their Findings

24 July 2015

On the last day of the NCOP Provincial Week, all three groupings that visited municipalities, mayors and identified projects met at the Eastern Cape Provincial Legislature. In this session, the three delegations that went to Alfred Nzo, Joe Gqabi and OR Tambo District Municipalities presented their respective findings to determine whether these district municipalities are in accordance with this year's NCOP Provincial Week's theme: "Advancing the developmental agenda of municipalities for a better life for our people".

The Speaker of the Eastern Cape Provincial Legislature, Ms Noxolo Kiviet, said the session was meant to determine what are legislative and policy interventions that needed to be dealt with, which emanated from the NCOP delegations' meetings with councillors, mayors - and also with regard to the identified projects.

"As a legislature we will determine if there are areas that need to be dealt with. Where we can be involved we will do so. But if there are those that need policy shift, they will be dealt with by members involved in the policy sphere and will determine which challenges need policy change. And those issues will need to be attended to as such."

The issues that were raised concerning the lack of water, lack of electricity, lack of proper road infrastructure, billing systems and collection of revenue, among other things, cut across all municipalities, but there are concerns that are unique to these respective municipalities.

The Alfred Nzo Report, as presented by Ms Zukiswa Ncita, raised concern about the lack of strong inter-governmental cooperative governance between the local and provincial government to entrench the culture of effective service delivery in this district. "Although there are good working relations between CoGTA (Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs) and municipalities, there seems to be a lack of cooperation among the different spheres of government that results in ineffective coordination of projects. If the lack of cooperation of these spheres of governance can be resolved, the backlogs of service delivery can be eased," the report stated.

According to the leader of the NCOP delegation to Joe Gqabi District Municipality, Ms Tabiso Wana, in a public hearing held there the issue of co-operatives came up sharply as one of the mechanisms that can facilitate the growth of SMMEs (small, medium and micro enterprises) in the district and need to be given the attention they deserve. "A member of the community indicated that there are 30 co-operatives in the Joe Gqabi District Municipality, but these co-operatives were never invited to any municipal meeting in the district.

Also, the representative of Rural Tertiary Co-operatives raised a concern about the unavailability of funding for co-operatives and indicated that strategic interventions with regard to co-operatives must be considered and implemented to assist SMMEs as part of job creation initiatives," the report stated.

A huge backlog on land claims is one of the teething issues in the OR Tambo District Municipality, Mr Mandla Rayi, the Whip of the Eastern Cape NCOP delegation, said in his presentation: "The district is faced with a serious challenge of land claims in all of its municipalities. There is also resistance from traditional leaders in this regard. As a result, land claims at times come through litigation."

Mr Mzinawa Nyusile, a Member of the Eastern Cape Provincial Legislature, said as long as there are no incentives to attract competent skills to rural areas, many municipalities in this province will find it hard to manage their finances and to have clean audit outcomes. "We are a rural area, and we cannot attract competent officials if there are no incentives that attract competent chief financial officers to this province. If we still have these regulations that curb these incentives, we will continue to use consultants that are very costly. And if this matter is not resolved it will collapse all our local municipalities. I know that we have discussed this on various platforms. But I think we must be

assisted in this regard by the NCOP to raise this matter so that we are able to attract competent municipal officials."

Ms Phindiwe Samka, a Member of the NCOP, said there is a need to strengthen public evaluation and monitoring mechanisms to continuously assess both progress and challenges in municipalities. "The government has done a lot in providing people with services, but often these programmes are not evaluated and monitored through public participation forums. I think the Speaker's monitoring and evaluation section in the legislature needs to be strengthened to ensure that there is a constant assessment of progress and challenges facing municipalities. If we can have these processes in place, we would not have as much service delivery protests as we are experiencing currently."

"If we do not as a province make suggestions and proposals to the Finance and Fiscal Commission (FFC) about the uniqueness of our terrain when it comes to its funding of built infrastructure, our developmental agenda will continue to lag behind, said the Speaker of the Eastern Cape Legislature, Ms Noxolo Kiviet.

"If we don't put forward a compelling case to the FFC that its formula does not take into consideration the topographical challenges that make infrastructure development not only difficult, but also very expensive in this province, our province will continue to lag behind. For instance, building a school in the Eastern Cape is expensive than building a school in Gauteng. There is already a case study to that effect. To illustrate this point further, the national Education Department committed itself to building 50 schools in the province, but it has since realised that its budget forecast for this built infrastructure was inaccurate because, due to topographical challenges, the cost of building these schools will be higher than initially suggested. It is up to our officials to present this evidence and to package it in a manner that will highlight these funding dynamics that are unique to this province," she said.

*By Abel Mputing*

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