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TRUCKS BRING SERVICES TO THE PEOPLE

March 30, 2012 | Filed under Popular News, Previous news | Posted by editor



**Serving the people ... Cooperative Government, Traditional Affairs, and Human Settlements
MEC Olly Mlamleli with community members.**

The introduction of mobile offices for the Department of Cooperative Government, Traditional Affairs, and Human Settlements promises to go a long way in taking services to communities.

Disebo Mokoena, who has been living in a mud house on a farm near Clarens for 21 years, hopes to be one of the beneficiaries assisted by the newly launched mobile offices of the Department of Cooperative Government, Traditional Affairs and Human Settlements' (Cogta) These new additions to the department's bag of service delivery tools were officially launched in Bethlehem last week.

Mokoena lives with her mother and child in a mud house and has applied for an RDP house countless times – but to no avail.

According to the MEC for Cogta, Olly Mlamleli, land remains a huge challenge for government when it comes to the delivery of houses.

“People must apply for RDP houses and they will be placed in townships because the department cannot build on someone else's land.”

She said her family has to pay R300 rent to live on the property.

“My parents built this house from scratch and having to move is really difficult since I have been living here for a long time. This is my home.”

Mokoena's mother works in a fruit and vegetable shop in Clarens and uses her salary to support the household.

Mokoena has a child who uses transport to attend a nearby farm school.

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Mlamleli promised that Mokoena's predicament will be addressed when she lodges her RDP application at the mobile office.

She will have to bring her ID book to the mobile office when the trucks return to Clarens in order for her to track the progress of her previous application.

A humble abode ... The mud house that Disebo Mokoena has lived in for 21 years.



The Head of Department of Cogta Nthimotse Mokhesi said the mobile office moves around rural communities to assist people to apply for houses and to check the progress of their applications.

He added that the two mobile trucks will assist the department with registering people on a database in order to better address housing challenges in the province.

According to Mokhesi, there are 21 000 incomplete housing units in the province and QwaQwa, Mangaung, and Fezile Dabi are key areas of concern.

“So our key priority is to complete the houses that were left incomplete due to reasons related to lack of payment by government and contractors deserting their work stations before we begin to build new houses.”

The spokesperson of Cogta, Tieho Motaung, said the mobile office is equipped with air-conditioning, computers, a boardroom, a disability-friendly lift, and a generator.

“This will allow easy operation of the trucks in all provinces, regardless of the availability of electricity.”

The trucks will also help relieve pressure on the existing departmental offices in the different districts of the province.

Mlamleli said the two trucks will go a long way in assisting government to provide services to villages in different towns of the province.

“The trucks should be sufficient.

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Reaching remote communities ... Scores queued up in front of the Department of Cooperative Government, Traditional Affairs, and Human Settlements' mobile office which made a stop in Clarens.

We wanted to broaden the scope. We already have offices of municipalities, councillors, and the community development workers who are assisting communities with these services. The demand and experiences from the implementation of this project will dictate if we need more trucks or not."

Mlamleli added that there was much confusion in the past as a result of people applying for houses in different towns in the province.

"We need to look into our list of beneficiaries and clean the list to ensure that all beneficiaries receive proper housing."

This, according to the MEC, will be resolved by having more people on the Cogta database.

The MEC stated during her budget speech last week that there was information "lying dormant" on the Housing Subsidy System (HSS) that needs a "rigorous and concerted" effort to get the database in order.

"We are working on an improved HSS to ensure that the right people benefit. There will be particular emphasis on the vulnerable social groups such as the aged, 70 and above, child-headed households, and people with disabilities.

HSS is a computerised system that is used for the management of the housing application process and beneficiary data management. It has a database of all houses that have been built in the country, all applicants and beneficiaries and their status, and is used as part of the application process for ensuring that the right people benefit from the housing process.

The mobile offices will enable beneficiaries to receive answers immediately from the HSS.

Cogta's mobile offices will provide communities with immediate feedback on:

- The status of their applications should they have applied,
- The processing of applications and giving them immediate feedback on whether they qualify or not, and what options they have,
- Responding to other housing related concerns such as incomplete houses, problems with quality, etc,

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- Providing housing consumer education, and
- Attending to any other housing related matters on the ground.

[Source: www.theweekly.co.za]