



Parliamentary Caucus

Water and Sanitation

Budget Vote 41

Comrade Keamotseng Stanley Ramaila, ANC MP

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10:00

Towards the modernization of the sanitation infrastructure to realise the constitutional obligation—the right to access adequate sanitation infrastructure

As the 7th parliament of our democracy, we bear a significant responsibility to ensure we provide adequate sanitation for all South Africans. For our people in rural areas, in townships, in informal settlements, and those who live in urban areas. This is a commitment to improve the human dignity of all. We do note that this is a department programme which has been largely neglected.

We must move quickly to ensure that we modernize our sanitation infrastructure in accordance with the constitutional imperative of using every legislative measure and resource to provide South Africans with decent sanitation services. We must continue to live up to our slogan, "Sanitation is Dignity."

- **Emphasis ANC prioritisation of tackling the sanitation problem and highlight the gains in this regards**

Honourable Members, over the past thirty years, our ANC-led government has initiated the bucket eradication programme in all formal settlements and townships. Initially, our government set a deadline for 2006, but a number of challenges forced a move to 2015. Four provinces could not meet the 2015 deadline: the Eastern Cape, Free State, Northern Cape, and North West.

In the 6th parliament, our ANC-led government managed to eradicate the bucket system in two provinces, the Eastern Cape and the North West. The Bucket Eradication Programme only targeted formal areas or townships that already existed

at the beginning of our democracy. Only the Free State and Northern Cape have yet to eradicate the bucket system, and the department intends to eradicate at least 596 bucket systems this fiscal year. Overall, there have been significant improvements in providing decent sanitation.

- **Rolling out modern sanitation infrastructure to make the bucket system a thing of the past.**

The recent 2022 census report supports our claim that our government is hard at work, even though there are challenges with the implementation of sanitation infrastructure across the country. The census report indicates that there has been a general increase in households with access to improved sanitation from 61.7% in 2002 to 84.1% in 2021. The report highlights the two most rural provinces, the Eastern Cape and Limpopo, as the most improved provinces in terms of providing decent sanitation.

- **A decent or modern sanitation infrastructure is equal to a healthy living environment.**

Honourable Chairperson, we commend the strides made by the democratic government in restoring our people's dignity through decent sanitation services. These strides have ensured that there is a drastic reduction in waterborne diseases compared to other countries that have the same development status as our country. Despite the fact that between four and five million people live in informal settlements, our democratic government has been able to improve the quality of life in those communities through various interventions. In other words, the various government interventions, such as piped water in informal settlements, have managed to promote hygienic practices, resulting in improved health outcomes.

The ANC-led government has prioritised the upgrading of informal settlements, and during this process of upgrading, the installation of basic infrastructure such as flushing toilets has been a priority of our democratic government.

- **Employing consequence management against non-compliance with the Green Drop Certification Programme**

As much as our government has made significant strides in modernising our sanitation infrastructure to ensure healthy living environments, there are still a number of challenges relating to compliance with the norms and standards prescribed in the Green Drop Certification Programme.

Honourable Members, former Minister for Water and Sanitation, the honourable Senzo Mchunu, released the Green Drop Watch Report 2023 last year, which details the state of our water and wastewater treatment plants across the country. According to the Green Drop Watch Report, 334 municipal wastewater treatment works in 2022 were in a critical state, receiving Green Drop scores below 31% across the nine provinces.

We, as members of this important committee, must be vigilant and act against these local water service authorities. As we debate this budget vote today, we should be aware that almost all the local water service authorities are going to receive allocations through the Water Services Infrastructure Grant and the Regional Bulk Infrastructure Grant as presented in the budget vote.

Therefore, it is our responsibility to hold those to whom we have allocated such conditional grants accountable in this portfolio and to encourage the enforcement of consequence management against those who have failed to fulfil their duties of ensuring that we have functional water and wastewater treatment works.

We must also address the systemic challenges of financing water infrastructure projects and urge the department to support water authorities in having public-private partnerships to increase infrastructure maintenance and development funding. We know the financial constraints impacting our local government and water boards.

Honourable Minister, without additional funding from private investments in the sector, the problem in many areas will persist.

- **Focusing on maintaining, repairing, and refurbishing the existing sanitation infrastructure to avoid sewerage spillages**

Honourable Members, we can never stress enough the importance of maintaining, repairing, and refurbishing the existing sanitation infrastructure to avoid sewerage spillages. As members, we are also aware of the budgetary constraints due to competing demands, but we must ensure that our state organs do make budgetary

provision for the maintenance, repairs, and refurbishment of existing sanitation infrastructure.

We call upon the local water service authorities to use the existing grants allocated to them by the national department of water and sanitation to not only build new sanitation infrastructure, but also ensure the maintenance and refurbishment of the existing one.

The department must monitor maintenance spending across its portfolio and by water authorities.

We also call on the Minister to focus on addressing the water losses that we have been incurring as a country, and it is estimated that we are losing more than 47% of safe, clean drinking water due to water leaks.

- **Adapting new sanitation technologies as an alternative to flushing toilet systems while also conserving water, a precious scarce resource**

Honourable Members, we have grown accustomed to relying solely on flushing toilets as the only decent or modern sanitation infrastructure, often overlooking other technologies that also ensure healthy living environments and preserve scarce precious water resources.

The 2022 census report credits the installation of pit toilets with ventilation pipes, which significantly improved access to decent sanitation in the two rural provinces of the Eastern Cape and Limpopo. There are also other new sanitation technologies, such as composting latrines, dry on-site toilets, and toilets that self-recycle water for reuse for flushing.

The government and the whole of society need to have a dialogue on how best to use the limited water resources to provide safe, clean drinking water for future generations. We are well aware of cultural perceptions about sanitation facilities, but it is through community dialogue that these new technologies will be acceptable.

Honourable Chairperson, I would like to express my support for the budget vote, joining the other honourable members who have already expressed their support.

I thank you.