

Bank pledges R7m to kill toilet stink

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Winnie Madikizela-Mandela was supposed to attend a meeting with residents but she failed to show up, due to ill-health

MOQHAKA local municipality in the Free State, which has been hit by the open-toilet scandal in the last few years, has been given a lifeline after it entered into a memorandum of understanding with the Developmental Bank of Southern Africa to acquire R7-million to cover the remaining open toilets.

This was announced at a meeting with residents of the municipality - which encompasses Kroonstad, Viljoenskroon and Streynsrus.

ANC veteran Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, who chairs the Department of Human Settlements' task team on the open toilet saga in the country, was supposed to have attended the meeting.

But, she failed to show up at the meeting with residents of Rammulotsi due to ill-health.

Task team member Patrick Magebhula, who attended, said they visited the township in order to listen to community members' grievances about the toilets.

Magebhula said: "Some toilets have been covered while others have yet to be covered. The workload is too much. We have another programme in which going to visit the affected houses.

"And if it happens that we find wrongdoings during our investigations, there are recommendations that will be applied."

According to the provincial department of human settlements, the municipality still has about 2800 uncovered toilets.

Department spokeswoman Senne Bogatsu said there were still a number of toilets that were unclosed, but that most of them had surfaced after media reports early this year.

She said most of the current uncovered toilets surfaced after residents realised other toilets were being fixed.

Bogatsu said: "Initially, there were 1831 uncovered toilets in the Rammulotsi and surrounding areas, but most residents destroyed their toilets with the intention of acquiring new ones."

The good news is that the municipality has entered into a partnership with the DBSA to assist in covering all the uncovered toilets, she said.

The department has also pledged R2.5-million to help cover the costs of the open toilets.

"Most of the outside toilets were covered with sub-standard material," she said.

The task team, which was sent to all provinces by Minister of Human Settlements Tokyo Sexwale to investigate irregularities and malpractices in the implementation of the programme, visited the area to assess the progress of the covering up programme.

One of the objectives of the team is to investigate problems and challenges relating to the delivery of sanitation facilities towards the development of sustainable and integrated human settlement.

About 500 residents who gathered at the town hall urged the government to fix the toilets in their areas.

Most of them complained that they had houses without toilets, while others had toilets without proper houses.

Resident Neo Mokoena said her toilet had been fixed, but she did not have a proper house.

"We can see that they are trying to fix the toilets, but they must not forget that we are still in need of proper houses," she said.