

Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement SA



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Presentation to the Standing Committee on Appropriations (the Committee) established in Terms of the Money Bills Amendment Procedure and Related Matters Act No. 9 of 2009 (the Act).

By: Mr. Thembani Jerome Ngongoma the National Spokesperson of Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement Movement SA.

Addressed to the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Appropriation

SUBJECT: The 2018 Budget Dialogue TBC Wednesday 16TH May 2018

Thank you Chairperson of the Standing Committee of on Appropriation, greetings to all in the house and please allow me to say all protocols observed. I am very pleased as a person to have been trusted and sent by my own organization to represent it in such a remarkable event, at least for a moment I feel a sense of ownership and belonging to the processes that are meant to better the lives of ordinary South African citizens. We must also thank the organizers who had our organization in mind as a valued stakeholder. As one of those citizens who does have a reason to doubt his citizenship, that which also applies to my comrades and or colleagues, I confidently stand before you now, not to convey my own individual feelings in this dialogue but to try by all means to put on the table the true reflection of what is happening at the grassroots level. We are here to assist this Standing Committee to see things through an eye of an ordinary man in the street, because that is exactly who and what we are, the Ordinary South Africans that expect to be respected and listened to.

What is also interesting Chairperson about this opportunity is that our cities and municipalities do not recognize us, they do not even invite us in these spaces. So, often the eThekweni municipality will ask us “who the he....do you think you are to meet the mayor”? Now that we have met with you might mean a different recognition for our movement.

Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement SA is a grassroots, democratic social membership based movement of shack dwellers and impoverished in South Africa. We were formed to fight for, protect, promote and advance the interests and dignity of the shack dwellers and the poor in South Africa. Our Head Offices are based in, Durban, KZN but we also have branches in the Eastern Cape, Western Cape, Gauteng and Mpumalanga provinces and we are still expanding. Our organization is a movement with a Vision and a Mission. The vision being, the movement struggles to build a just and equal society based on dignity and respect for all Human Kind. Our mission is to improve the lives of the impoverished and marginalized ordinary people living in rural and urban areas, with a special focus on asserting if not restoring human dignity for all Human Beings.

As for the benefit of the Standing Committee one must first give expectations by the general landless and homeless as our slogan says, there must be “nothing for us without us”. The South African ordinary citizens expect that when a public servant turns on the ignition of his or her fancy car to go to work. When he or she opens the door of that air-conditioned public office to sit on that swivel chair, he or she must remember who waited in long queues to vote for them to be there. The ordinary citizens expect you to remember that before we become anything that we all are in life, before we become Doctors, Mayors, Members of Parliament, Ministers, Police Officers, Teachers to name a few titles, we are first Human Beings so let us all receive and treat each other with dignity and respect. It must all begin there.

Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement SA as an organization, is ready to avail itself to be of use by positive contributions with regards to the issues of any nature. I wish to point out to you one of the root causes of the countrywide protests. The root cause is that budgets are not properly spent. Monies that are meant to improve the lives of ordinary voting citizens end up in the wrong pockets of certain individuals. No living and sane individual member of the public may just wake up in the morning and blockade the road with burning objects risk being teargassed, sjamboked, arrested, shot at with rubber bullets, risk injury and even death just for the fun of it. This comes as a result of the accumulated anger when ignored, corruption issues not taken seriously by authorities, lied to or even taken for granted by the leaders at Local level. At the Local Sphere of Government in this country, in the Municipalities we have a very important number one citizens in the wards and that citizen is a Ward Councillor. This figure is the first individual to interact with the communities and if anything expected by communities is not properly handled and or communicated we see fireworks. Therefore, a lot of focus, monitoring and evaluation must be drawn to the activities of the Councillor in the ward.

Therefore, as shack dwellers and ordinary citizens we expect any budget by the State or local government to talk to the following”

- 1. Land first, the budget, if communicated properly to us will deal with security of tenure**
 - This could be in a form of certificates or documents which will free people from any possible eviction.**
 - If this is catered people will start investing on the land and start looking after their property.**
- 2. Provide serviced sites for those who may be able to build for themselves to do so,**
- 3. Roll out interim services such as electricity, road access, refuse collection, water and sanitation while people wait for decent housing.**
- 4. Budget for disaster management especial for shack fires, floods etc.**

5. Invest in human capacity and public participation not just for ticking the box but genuine engagement.
 - Abahlali are not consulted just because we are taken as the people who do not even count in our society.
 - The authorities do not even respect us.
 - In many instances it is not just a question of budget constraints but how we are treated by the authorities
6. We are in most cases excluded from the IDP, even those of us who have the opportunity to participate in IDP whatever we say is not taken into account. In Siyanda for instance, they pretended to be recording everything the community was saying but come the IDP nothing the community said was captured and reflected. So, the question is what was the point of calling for public hearings when the community voice will not be taken seriously?
 - In Thembisa, Vusimuzi Section, the eKuhuleni municipality and its councilor Cllr Seloan, Ward 90 destroyed many homes in what he called re-blocking and development.
7. Our municipalities are very good at publishing the budgets only when it is time to announce it to public forums and not when they are being discussed. So, often the budget are imposed from above. They should use the same energy of announcing it to actual mobilize us to engage and input it.
8. In eThekweni, the eThekweni Municipality is deliberately excluding Abahlali and shack dwellers in general not only in any housing development but in other benefits eg EPWP as a form of punishment for our activism against corruption, inequality and injustices.

When time permits our Movement will be more than ready to explain how do we think this should be carried out because as responsible law abiding citizens, when we call for the budget to talk to the above items as in the order of priority, we are also mindful that this must be done in a manner that has an element of saving.

Thank you chairperson for this very rare opportunity and we as a Movement are looking forward to many meaningful engagements in future for the sake of peace, development and prosperity of all deserving and voting citizens in our country, particular those who live in shacks. Thanks to each and every one of you who took time to listen to us.