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## SOCIAL CONTRACT IS KEY TO CHEER RESIDENTS TO PAY FOR MUNICIPAL SERVICES



Speaking during the one-day Technical Intergovernmental Relations (TIGR) Forum meeting in East London last Monday, Deputy Director General (DDG) at Cogta, Mr Vuyo Mlokothe (*left*) urged the Municipal Managers (MM) to activate communities and educate them about the need and value of paying for municipal services thus build a social contract between the two parties. “Leaders should have an appetite to lead aggressive campaigns and communicate with ratepayers and encourage them to pay for municipal services

rendered, monthly,” he said. Mr Mlokothe said non-payment by residents increases municipal indigent registers. “People are not paying and there is no reciprocated approach by the municipal leadership to encourage them to pay,” he said.

He further revealed that there is a growing distance between elected representatives and those who are receiving municipal services. “At some point we spoke of active citizenry, but it appears that we



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have not mastered it,” he said. The Forum is a strategic platform that pursues a common agenda to improve integrated and aligned service delivery in municipalities. Government and private sector stakeholder attend and present various service delivery projects and updates including reports from the District and Metro municipalities guided by the Back to Basic pillars of Good Governance, Sound Financial Management, Delivery of Services and Putting People and their concerns first.



Commenting on the non-payment for municipal services, Ms Nokwanda Tungata (*left*), the DDG for Municipal Financial Governance at Provincial Treasury (PT) said debt owed to municipalities by government departments as of 30 June 2023 amounted to R1.2 billion. “There are quarterly sessions between municipalities and government departments on arrear government debt. Unfortunately, the departments of Health and Public Works in the Province are failing to pay municipalities owing to inadequate budgeting for municipal services

and verification of state-owned properties,” said Ms Tungata.

Ms Tungata added that in the same period, debt owed by businesses stood at R5.1 billion, while household consumers owed R25.1 billion for the same period. “We are working with CoGTA and South African Local Government Association (SALGA) to conduct quarterly Revenue Management Forums to assist municipalities with any challenges that affect revenue collection,” she added.

Providing an update on the Risk Adjusted Strategy at the Forum, the Director for Municipal Infrastructure Services, Mr Tshitsho Majavu said that for the 2023/2024 financial year the Eastern Cape has been allocated an amount of R7, 455 billion for municipal grants. “Furthermore, a total of 455 projects will be implemented through the Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG) within the financial year in the Province.”

Mr Majavu added that Joe Gqabi and Sarah Baartman District municipalities are leading with implementation readiness of 63% each whereas OR Tambo and Alfred Nzo Districts are slow with procurement and are sitting at 19% and 21% respectively.

Also sharing information at the session, Mr Sabelo Siwundla from Vodacom said they are currently working on rolling out various projects to improve the quality of coverage of their network services areas that experience poor quality in the Province. He said the emphasis is on the KSD, Buffalo City and Nelson Mandela Metro municipalities.

“We committed with the Premier of the Eastern Cape to build new network sites and upgrade the existing ones in rural areas so that communities have access to connectivity and get ambulance services when the elders get sick,” said Mr Siwundla. **By Siphokazi Nonyukela.**