MINISTER
LAND REFORM AND
RURAL DEVELOPMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

BUDGET VOTE 42 SPEECH 2025
MR MZWANELE NYHONTSO, MP
MINISTER OF LAND REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
08 JULY 2025

Speaker of the National Assembly, Ms Thoko Didiza

Members of Parliament

Distinguished Guests

All the stakeholders, who are providing us with so much support (andinakunibiza nonke one by one, ixesha lam lincinci)

Special Invited Guests

It is a singular honour and privilege for me to address you today to present the Budget Vote 42, of the Department of Land Reform and Rural Development for the 2025/2026 financial year. This budget is a commitment to redress, equitable access to land for all, and to improving the lives of our people, especially those residing in rural areas.

Land is a foundation for identity, dignity, and economic prosperity. Land is a key component of the factors of production; therefore without land any aspiration of socio-economic development remains just that – aspirations. Thirty years of democracy in our country, land reform and land ownership remain highly contested and emotive subjects. Without a doubt, land reform is an engine for propelling inclusive growth, for reducing poverty and unemployment, and for fostering the expansion of the national tax base. It is therefore with this in mind that we welcome the current trend of convergence in the national discourse on the land question, among those of us who suffered dispossession and oppression. Siyavuya kuba sasisodwa kulento; ngoku sonke sicula iculo elinye.

Madame Speaker

We must never grow weary of reflecting on our past, so that we may understand how we were we are as a country, in order to move forward with greater clarity and purpose. The legacy of both violent and legislated dispossession is manifest in the poverty, inequality and underdevelopment that still plague our communities to this date.

The *Natives Land Act of 1913* was a calculated, cruel instrument and strategy of mass dispossession, that consolidated the historical dispossession that our forebears fought bravely against, and it successfully entrenched racial segregation and economic inequality. This Act restricted Africans to only 7 per cent of the land, reserving the rest to white ownership. Indeed this 7 per cent was only later increased to 13 per cent with the passage of the *Native Trust and Land Act* in 1936.

Land reform must thus speak to the need to access land for residential, small-scale farming, industrial, grazing, recreation, heritage, conservation, and commercial agriculture. Therefore, the implementation of a meaningful land reform programme requires a co-ordinated approach to enhance integrated and sustainable interventions. We thus wish to pay tribute to the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Land Reform chaired by the Deputy President for the role it plays in co-ordinating various efforts to avoid overlapping and duplication of functions related to land reform. This will enable us to accelerate efforts to address the land needs of historically dispossessed communities and to support the poor and landless to access land.

Madame Speaker

Among the top priorities that we have been driving since I assumed office is the development of the *Equitable Access to Land Bill* and the *Communal Land Tenure and Administration Bill*, which will serve as key mechanisms to address the Constitutional imperatives set out in sections 25(5) and 25(6) respectively. We will encourage South Africans to participate in the development of these historic pieces of legislation as they will redefine the legislative framework on access to land on an equitable basis. I have no doubt that this will be a subject of discussion during the National Dialogue.

We are on record in a number of forums as having emphasised that the delivery of land and the provision of support to the beneficiaries of all land reform programmmes are two sides of the same coin. A particular focus, since taking office, is to address the phenomenon of poor performance of land reform projects and inadequate pre- and post-settlement support for beneficiaries. Indeed, this is a concern that has also been raised by a range of stakeholders.

The overall budget of the Department for the 2025 financial year is R9.820 billion. Relative to the total allocation, Land and Tenure Reform; and Restitution, have received the largest share, amounting to R6.168 billion or 63 per cent of the total allocation. This demonstrates that our budget is grounded on our core mandate.

The Land Redistribution and Tenure Reform branch has been allocated a total budget of R1.073 billion. Within this budget, a total allocation of R559 million has been set aside to acquire and allocate 44 000 hectares of land. The Department continues to process applications for awards of land to labour tenants which were lodged not later than 31 March 2001. It should be acknowledged, though, that the area of tenure security for labour tenants, including the continuing spate of illegal evictions, remains an unacceptable situation.

The Department is implementing a comprehensive plan to address historical inefficiencies relating to the management of state land. This includes calling for accountability from some recalcitrant officials and ensuring consequence management.

Our Department is also addressing the challenges related to Communal Property Associations (CPAs), particularly their dysfunctionality. To address this challenge, the Department is implementing measures that include the establishment of an independent CPA office which is currently headed by an Acting Registrar. Furthermore, a continuous process of training the executives of these structures on governance, financial management, land management, and related skills and capabilities is currently underway. A series of roadshows that will culminate with a CPA Indaba has also been planned for.

The Commission on Restitution of Land Rights has been allocated a budget of R3.7 billion for the current financial year. The speed with which the claims are settled is heavily reliant on the allocated budget year on year. To address the challenge of expediting the pace of settling of the old order land claims, i.e. those lodged before the original cut-off date of 31 December 1998, the Commission is streamlining processes, underwritten by new policies and standard operating procedures (SOPs), as part of an acceleration strategy. That said, however, additional financial and human resources will still be required, and in general terms we have to focus on enhancing the efficiency of the offices of the Land Claims Commission in the whole country.

It is unacceptable that our rural areas continue to carry the burden of extreme poverty, disease, rampant criminality including drug abuse, underdevelopment, and ignorance. This remains a blight on our Constitutional promise of equality and prosperity. As a Department we are committed to work with our people in these areas to turn their misfortunes around, acting in solidarity with them, harnessing skills and capital for shared prosperity, and communicating unequivocally that the time for oppression is over and freedom is nearer.

It should be borne in mind that the Rural Development functional area, which in the budget for the current financial year has been allocated R891.7 million or 9 per cent of the total, is a multi-sectoral undertaking that should not be equated to agriculture, and that should also not be reduced or limited to the provision of basic services. Its critical objective is also to empower the inhabitants of the rural areas at the household and community levels to rise to an extent of becoming meaningful producers who can also engage in entrepreneurial initiatives and in a range of income-generating activities. All that we have to do is to provide the democratic space and essential tools to support these long-suffering communities to reach their full developmental potential.

Madame Speaker

Land Administration has received R792,3 million or 8 per cent of the budget for 2025/26.

In line with the Medium-Term Development Programme (MTDP), our Department’s plan for the 2025/26 financial year includes the development of a framework, known as the National Spatial Observatory (NSDO) which will provide a road-map for establishing a centralized platform to track spatial planning implementation. It will also support data-driven decision-making. As part of our strategic drive to realise a spatially just and inclusive South Africa, the Department is leading reforms and institutional programmes aimed at strengthening spatial governance across all spheres of government. Similarly, a process of enhancing the participation of traditional and Khoisan leaders in spatial planning and land use management issues that is currently underway, is gaining traction.

The National Spatial Development Framework (NSDF) remains our long-term blueprint or reshaping spatial logic and guiding co-ordinated public investment towards equity, resilience and productivity. Our efforts towards implementing the NDSF in the 2025/26 financial year will include:

- Finalising Regional Spatial Development Frameworks (RSDFs) for Greater KwaZulu-Natal, the Greater Cape Region, the Eastern Escarpment, and the Musina-Makhado Special Economic Zone (SEZ); and
- Convening a National Regional Planning Conference to enhance intergovernmental and intersectoral spatial planning cooperation under the District Development Model.

The National Geomatics Management Services (NGMS) maintains an Integrated Geo-Spatial Reference System which is linked to the Global Reference System to secure accurate positioning. This is linked to the Integrated Survey System which contributes to unambiguous positioning, speedy and orderly development, while the mapping and associated products facilitate sustainable development. As part of efforts to modernise land administration systems, the Department has undertaken a revamp of the Cadastral Information System.

The base datasets produced and maintained by NGMS play a key role in land administration in the country, especially for land development and the promotion of security of tenure as well as for evidence-based planning. The network of continuously operating Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS) reference stations, called TrigNet, allows for centimetre level accuracy positioning across the country. The TrigNet network has seen significant growth in users and applications, serving not just the surveying and construction sectors, but also increasingly finding applications in space weather, precise agriculture, mining as well as the rapidly growing drone industry.

South Africa, through the Department, is also proud to be the host of the African Geodetic Refence Frame (AFREF) data centre. The service makes GNSS data from across the African continent centrally accessible to all for various geodetic and scientific applications. The Department will continue with the systematic acquisition of high resolution digital aerial imagery over the Republic, which is available as national geospatial infrastructure.

The Deeds Registration Branch, as an entity that operates a trading account, has projected revenue of R1,106 billion to be generated. The implementation of electronic deeds registration (eDRS) marks a transformational leap in the modernisation of our property registration systems. The eDRS system also promotes the inter-operability of e-government platforms and reduces the deeds registration turn-around times from seven to three working days.

From 1 August 2025 all conveyancers will be able to use the system after registering their profiles on the system and can now lodge from anywhere in the country to the required registration office without having to use a correspondent. The eDRS system will also facilitate the interface with various government departments and institutions, including the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, the Department of Home Affairs, and the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission. This intervention will contribute immensely to reducing fraud and corruption.

Madame Speaker

Other entities of the Department, namely the Ingonyama Trust and the Office of the Valuer General (OVG) have been allocated amounts of R22,847 million and R65 440 million respectively.

In addition, we appreciate the need to strengthen our capacity to deliver on our mandate by creating a conducive environment for the employees of the Department to perform their duties as expected, by among other interventions, completing the fit for purpose structure. In this financial year, the necessary resources will be derived from the budget of R1,968 billion or 20 per cent that has been allocated under Programme 1: Administration.

As a department, we are committed to work with our people in these areas to turn the misfortunes of our people around, so that one day we can recite the words of the poet Alfred Themba Qabula, when he says –

> *The wheel is turning and there shall be no mercy for thos killing innocent children*
>
> *The wheel is turning,*
>
> *freedom is nearer*
>
> *our strength and our dignity,*
> *increasing*

We shall conquer as

The time for the oppressor is coming up.

As I conclude, I wish to take this opportunity to thank Deputy Minister Stanley Mathabatha, the Acting Director General, and the officials of the Department, for the support that they have given me during my first year in office.

Ndiyabulela!