

■ REPORT

# Highest incidence of graft in the land sector in KZN

**MPHATHI NXUMALO**

KWAZULU-Natal is one of the leading provinces when it comes to corruption complaints in the land sector.

In a report entitled “Unearthing Corruption in the Land Sector” that was released this week, non-governmental organisation Corruption Watch said out of the 706 reports it received between 2012 and 2018, 11.4% were from KZN, with Gauteng coming in first with 38.3%, while the Northern Cape had the least reports 2.4%.

Corruption Watch researcher Melusi Ncala said there were cases of government officials using people to lodge fake land claims. There were also issues of ward councillors giving houses to their family members and friends, often to the detriment of people who had been on the waiting list for houses for years – some as long as 20 years.

The report also highlighted issues affecting the eThekweni Municipality. Corruption Watch interviewed 295 people in June and found that a common complaint was about corruption among municipal officials.

Another complaint was poor workmanship on the municipal houses built. “I think the government should take this as a call to say that when we talk about land, we need to prioritise the issue of corruption,” Ncala said.

Among the observations made in the report was that although people were affected by land corruption, not many understood the issue. Another observation was that people were discouraged from being whistleblowers even if it directly affected them, as they feared for their lives.

Department of Human Settlements provincial spokesperson Mbulelo Baloyi confirmed there were people who tried to sell land illegally.

He said the land often belonged to state-owned enterprises such as Transnet or other government departments such as Public Works.

Baloyi said that while these entities should be looking after their land, it did not always happen.

There was also corruption in housing.

The department was trying to resolve a situation in Mandeni Municipality where there was rampant corruption. Baloyi said they discovered some houses were registered to more than one person.

To try to prevent such corruption, he said they were considering reintroducing a National Housing Needs Register for people who are in need of housing. He said currently the housing allocation was done by the municipality, and that Human Settlements merely provided the funds for the projects and checks to see if people qualify for housing.

eThekweni Municipality spokesperson Msawakhe Mayisela said the city was doing its best to fight corruption. The City Integrity and Investigations Unit was investigating cases of corruption and some officials had already been dismissed. He said it was important for the public to help the city by reporting cases of corruption so that offenders can be prosecuted.

Mayisela said it was also difficult for the municipality to keep up with demands, as there was a mass migration of people into the city, putting it under severe pressure.