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South Africa

Free State – a province in crisis, and Botshabelo – the symbol of broken promises

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The recent findings by the Auditor-General confirming the Free State as the worst-performing province in South Africa are not just shocking, they are a painful reminder of how deeply broken our systems of governance and service delivery have become. For many residents, especially those in Botshabelo, this is not news. This is daily life.

The Free State has racked up 16 municipalities with unfunded budgets, over R4.2 billion in unauthorised expenditure, repeated disclaimer audit opinions, and chronic failure to submit financial statements on time. These figures are not just numbers—they represent collapsed communities, stolen futures, and the silent suffering of thousands.

Nowhere is this collapse more visible than in Botshabelo, a once-promising township in Mangaung. Section D, one of the oldest parts of Botshabelo since 1979, still operates under the bucket toilet system, a clear and degrading failure of human rights. There are no proper roads, no consistent refuse collection, and little to no public maintenance of any kind.

Residents who qualified for RDP houses and had their applications approved years ago are still living in shacks. What's worse is that the government records show those houses as already built. They don't exist. These are not isolated cases; many residents are known to have been approved, and yet no house stands in their yard. These homes exist only on paper while families sleep on concrete or mud floors.

To make matters worse, Botshabelo and the surrounding Free State regions are now dotted with unregulated skwatta camps, informal settlements filled with people abandoned by the system. In these camps, there is no electricity, no toilets, no refuse collection, and only a few communal taps for hundreds of people. These areas grow because people have nowhere else to go, and the government does not care to provide alternatives.

These camps, like the rest of the province, suffer from the same disease: no accountability, no oversight, no leadership. Poor consequence management and uninvestigated irregular expenditure have become the norm. Billions are spent, or rather, disappear, while citizens continue to suffer without even the most basic services.

The Auditor-General's office may recommend action, but we know what happens to recommendations: they gather dust while politicians play politics and ordinary people are left in the dirt.

It is no longer enough to just talk about service delivery failures. It is time to name them. The people of Botshabelo have been betrayed, not once, but repeatedly, by officials, by empty promises, and by a system that pretends to work on paper while failing in practice.

We demand answers. We demand investigations. And most importantly, we demand justice.

Botshabelo, and the Free State at large, deserve better than bucket toilets, fake RDP houses, and broken infrastructure. We deserve real development, honest governance, and a future we can believe in.

Source [Amandla](#)

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