

Company leaves R164m housing project unfinished

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Nophakamile Qongwana is 75 years old. Two months ago she moved into an RDP house for the first time, even though the house in Daluxolo, Madantsane, was not finished.



One of the 55 unfinished homes that beneficiaries of Mtantsane NU6 have occupied. Photo: Nombulelo Damba-Hendrik

She said she was excited when she was approved for a house in 2012. Construction [started in 2015](#). The Siyavuna Housing Project was meant to build 88 houses in Daluxolo. Then the company left in late 2015, leaving 55 houses, but without roofs, windows or doors. Construction resumed in 2017 and roofs, windows and doors were added. But water and electricity were not connected.

Fed up with waiting, residents decided to occupy their homes. Qongwana said she waited for an official handover, but none came.

“At least the houses were numbered, hence I could identify which one is mine,” said Qongwana. Then she saw that one of her home’s windows was broken. She decided to move in. She was the last to occupy the houses.

She had been living in a shack since 1985. “My mother died living in a shack. I was 46 when she died in 1990. She dreamed of having a decent house but she never got one.”

The houses were part of a much bigger housing project. In 2014, a R164m tender [to build over 900 houses](#) was awarded to Johannesburg-based company Siyavuna Trading, a close corporation owned by Thembekile Cynthia Mnisi.

Houses were going to be built in Walter Sisulu, Francis Mel, Hani Park, Winnie Mandela, Mahlangu, Gwentshe, Mathemba Vuso and Daluxolo informal settlement.

In 2015 GroundUp [reported](#) that the workers at this company were on strike because they claimed they were earning less than R100 per day. In 2017 we [reported](#) the slow progress of this housing project, and our failed attempt to get comment from the company. Last year the company went into voluntary liquidation.

We tried to phone Siyavuna to get comment, but the number has been changed and the automated Telkom operator provides no new number.

33 families still without homes

Siyavuna only built 55 of the 88 houses meant for Daluxolo, leaving 33 families who are still in the dark about their houses. One of them, Lindeka Makeka, 67, has lived in the informal settlement since 1991 and shares a leaking, two-roomed shack with her three elder children and six grandchildren.

“I’ve been holding a house number, but there’s no sign of a house. What frustrates me mostly is that no one tells us anything, including our ward councillor. It looks like he is in the dark ... No one is giving us answers,” said Makeka.

“As old as we are, we had a protest here before the election [May 2019], closing the roads with burning tyres demanding answers about our houses. The municipal official who came here promised to attend to us after elections, but we are still here and he never came back,” said Makeka.

Ward councillor Mashwabade Gcilishe (ANC) said some of the houses were left at foundation level because they were built on top of a sewerage pipe. He said a construction company has been hired to install another mini-sewerage system to make sure the current sewerage pipe does not affect the houses.

Meanwhile Qongwana and other residents currently relieve themselves in the bushes. The whole area has six toilets, but four of the toilets are blocked. Some occupiers have made illegal electricity connections. For water, they share a standpipe with an informal settlement.

Questions sent to Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality spokesperson Bathandwa Diamond and Samkelo Ngwenya last week Thursday were not answered.

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