



human settlements

MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Press Release
18 August 2023

UNSCRUPULOUS BUSINESS FORUMS AFFECT SERVICE DELIVERY

Bogus business forums in communities are a serious cause for concern for the Department of Human Settlements. This is a challenge raised by MEC Speed Mashilo during a community engagement at Thembaletu Village, Thembisile Hani Local Municipality, Mpumalanga following a huge outcry by a contractor who had to abandon his project due to constant pressure meted out by unscrupulous bogus forums. It is emerged that the department's **R23 million** infrastructure project had stalled due to their unwarranted interference, thus affecting construction.

In a bid to restore business confidence in the locality, MEC Mashilo told the community to safeguard their projects and report any criminal activities to law enforcement agencies. "These people who pose themselves as local SMME's should stop demanding money from the appointed contractors. These elements are illegal and cannot be tolerated," warned Mashilo. He further expressed that these are some of the factors that delay the delivery projects aimed at bringing development in the sprawling communities.

Executive Mayor, Cllr Lesetsa Dikgale said that the municipality is exploring ways to engage with business forums to prevent disruptions at construction sites. "The municipality is engaging with communities and business entities in the wards where contracts are being undertaken before construction to avoid disruption of projects" said Cllr Dikgale. He further welcomed the contractor and thanked MEC Mashilo for his intervention to resolve the conflict and assist in appointing a new community steering committee who will oversee the operations of the project.

Mashilo concluded by saying that the department has an open-door policy and is willing to engage with any grouping regarding equal access to economic opportunities. "We will, however, not condone instances whereby construction sites are disrupted by anyone demanding to have access to an economic opportunity. In the event there are any acts that are in conflict with the laws of this country, law enforcement agencies should be allowed to do their work," charged Mashilo.

The contractor is expected to resume with the construction of the multi-million facility which is delivered through the Social and Economic Facilities Programme. The project comprise of a community hall with a capacity to accommodate 600 people and a Child Care Centre which consist of 3 classrooms, a medical room, 4 storerooms, waiting area, a reception, an administration office and a play area. This programme promotes the provision of basic social/ community amenities and economic facilities within existing and new housing areas as well as within informal settlements projects. Similar projects are being rolled throughout the province.

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