

Angry villagers barricaded local roads with rocks and other debris in a bid to force government to honour its promises.
Photo by Joshua Sebola



VILLAGERS: WE'RE GATVOL!

By JOSHUA SEBOLA

GATVOL residents of Mogalakwenastroom Village in Steilooop, Limpopo, have taken their anger to the streets.

According to protesters, they're tired of being undermined by the government.

This as officials always knock on their doors and make promises that aren't ever fulfilled around election season, residents said.

Community members barricaded the main road to the Steilooop Shopping Complex with rocks, tree trunks and tyres.

The standoff with members of the public policing order started on Tuesday.

About 14 schools in the area have been disrupted for three weeks.

Residents up in arms over govt's empty promises

Philemon Mafa (68) told *Daily Sun* residents have been engaging with the Department of Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure since 2004 about the need for a tar road in the area.

But he said nothing had been done, prompting further negotiations with government in 2013.

He claimed the community was then told the development of a tarred road would fall under the department's prioritised projects.

Said Philemon: "In 2014, we then involved other villages because they would also benefit.

"In February, we went to the premier's office, where we were also

referred back to the Department of Public Works.

"That's when we realised we were being undermined. They aren't taking us seriously."

According to Philemon, the department also failed to respond the community's memorandum of grievances in December.

Resident Phuti Masebe (26) said the community was worried that deployed police were abusing their power by beating up pregnant women who weren't part of the protest.

"We're protesting here because we feel pain," Phuti said.

"Our parents' vehicles have been

damaged by this bumpy road.

"We believe by coming here we could force government to attend to our plight."

Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure spokesman Joshua Kwapa said the department called for calm in the area.

"Together, with Road Agency Limpopo (RAL) and the Mogalakwena Local Municipality, we met with community leaders and agreed that next week RAL would send its internal engineers.

"This to conduct a visual assessment to determine, among others, the cost to upgrade the road."