

Demand for road affects 3,000 pupils

By **Lucas Ledwaba**

At least 3,000 pupils, including matriculants, are at risk of missing out on a full academic year after their community, which has shut down schools for three months over service delivery concerns, undertook to continue the protest.

The pupils from three high schools and four primary schools have not been attending school since April after residents of ward 5 in the Lepelle Nkumpi local municipality in Limpopo embarked on a strike, demanding – among other things – the construction of a tarred road.

The pupils affected are from the villages of Madishaditoro, Madishaleolo and Motserere. The grade 12s did not sit for the crucial mid-term exams due to the strike, which has seen residents barricade roads.

At least 28 people have been arrested on charges of public violence since the protest started. Twenty-four accused were released on R1,000 bail each in April. On Friday, four suspects were denied bail in the Magatle magistrate's court.



School's out as villagers protest about services

Residents of ward 5 in Nkumpi Lepelle municipality have declared a shutdown, which has led to no schooling in three villages for the past three months. Residents are demanding answers to lack of service delivery. /PHOTOS / LUCAS LEDWABA/MUKURUKURU MEDIA

Residents have vowed to continue the protest, saying they want answers from the government and an end to alleged police brutality.

“Why must children return to school now when they have already lost out and no one is prepared to come and listen to us?” asked a resident who wanted to remain anonymous.

Residents said the village becomes a no-go zone during the

rainy season, because the gravel road that connects the area to other villages and main centres becomes water logged.

They said learning is interrupted when it rains because teachers and pupils are unable to get to school due to the poor state of the road.

They said a sanitation project remained incomplete and now poses a danger to residents with unsecured gaping holes left by the contractor.

Residents said they now live in fear – accusing the police of terrorising them in a bid to break up the strike.

“People are being stopped and beaten up in the streets.

When the sun sets, police cars and nyalas are all over here. If they find you in the streets, they beat you up and demand to know who is leading the strike,” said a resident of Madishaditoro village.

Tensions escalated last week after a section of the Mmammati primary school in Madishaditoro was set alight. Police arrested a man in connection with the incident. However, residents claim the man had nothing to do with the incident.

Limpopo police spokesperson Col Moatshe Ngoepe said the matter of the alleged police misconduct and brutality was

being investigated by provincial commissioner Gen Nneke Ledwaba. He urged the community to report any other alleged incidents of police brutality to the Independent Police Investigative Directorate.

Residents said they had delivered a memorandum, letters and even called premier Stan Mathabatha's office since March, but have not received any response.

Mathabatha's spokesperson Kenny Mathivha said they have referred the matter to the department of public works, roads and infrastructure and Road Agency Limpopo.

“They are dealing with the issue. [But] as to denying children school hours, we find it despicable, because the future cannot be postponed because of a road...,” said Mathivha.

“It in turn hurts the same community tomorrow. We plead that when their challenge is being addressed, they should let children attend schools.

“The premier is in talks with relevant political offices, including Sanral since the roads situation in the province is not confined to one area.” – Mukurukuru Media



Residents are fed-up with empty promises.