

# All is not too well at Charlotte Maxeke

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Late payment of local labourers delayed renovations at the Charlotte Maxeke academic hospital's psychiatric ward for about a week, forcing contractors to extend their deadline.

Sub-contractors, supported by the community, downed tools on 4 October demanding payment and even threatened to vandalise the hospital. This disruption has delayed the project which had been planned to be completed by 15 October. It is now expected to be complete by 30 October.

The contractors, who are employed as part of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), said their money is supposed to be paid on the last day of the month, but there had been delays since April.

The main contractor, Shwings Constructions blamed the Gauteng Department of Infrastructure Development for the delay of staff payments as well as delayed delivery of high-tech machines which had to be imported from abroad. "There have been delays due to non-payments of staff and it is because of the department had not paid us as well and we had to source funds from our other projects... Another delay was because of the equipment that we had to import from America," said Denford Kgurauone of Shwings Constructions.

However, according to Kgurauone, the sub-contractors have now been paid, "I can assure you now that all is now back to normal and work is underway. We had an urgent meeting on Tuesday (8 October) to discuss the payments and the matter has

been resolved."

He said the contractors were paid for the number of days they worked during September and he promised to pay their leave days soon.

According to the community liaison officer, Sharil Phirwa, on 11 October, only some people have received payments. "I have only five of the eight people who had contacted me and confirmed that they received their payments which were done only yesterday (10 October) and the other three I'm not sure.

"As for me, the site manager and safety representative, we have not been paid yet. We were told that we'll be paid on 15 October."

She added on 17 October that she and other subcontractors and EPWP workers had not been paid yet.

Phirwa said it is possible to meet the extended deadline extension of 30 October, but only if all the workers came back to work. "The project stands on about 85 per cent."

On 15 October, the spokesperson for Gauteng Department of Infrastructure Development, Bongive Gambu said the department is scheduled to hand over the project to the client on 30 October.

On the payments, Gambu said the current payment certificate is not yet paid to the contractor.

"Payment was made to the general workers on the 8th of October 2019 by the contractor, only leave day payments are still outstanding... the payment run for 15th October 2019 will reflect in the contractors account by the 22nd October 2019." Gambu also confirmed that an urgent meeting was held on 8 October to resolve the matter.