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R43M Wentworth housing project shows cracks

Allan Holmes, a resident and ward 68 committee chairperson for housing and human settlements, shows the deterioration of the flats.



Flat out fears

Nadia Khan

FROM walls and floors cracking, to windows falling off hinges, the residents of a block of flats in Wentworth fear that the structures will soon collapse, putting lives and property in jeopardy.

The residents of the flats, at the corner of Lansdowne and Silvertree roads, said the R43 million housing project by the City and KZN Department of Human Settlements, was meant to provide them with 'proper housing', instead it's crumbling beneath their feet.

Allan Holmes, a resident and ward 68 committee chairperson for housing and human settlements, said the residents were moved into flats from the 'Barracks', a temporary housing project along Tara Road in 2010.

"We were moved from our tin-homes in Duranta Road,

so new flats could be built for us. However, those flats were occupied by other people, and we continued living at the barracks for 37 years until we were forcefully removed. We never wanted to leave as we had proper houses, yards and a park for the children. We protested, but we were told that if we didn't move, we had to find alternative housing. There were so many elderly people who had no choice but to move," he said.

Holmes said since moving into their current dwelling, which consists of 128 units, they have experienced life-threatening issues.

"From the day we moved in, there were repairs that needed to be done. The bathtubs were cracking, the taps would fly-off when opened, the lights didn't work, the electrical plug points would shock us and the windows would fall out when we opened

them. For the first few years, repairs were done, but then it stopped.

"We are now faced with broken sewerage pipes, leaking baths, faulty water metres and toilet systems, poor water and electricity infrastructure, as well as leaning walls, structurally unsound staircases and holes in the roof. We are fed-up. We want them to do proper repairs this time, or build new homes at the barracks so we can live in peace again," he said.

Elaine Pieterse, a resident, said she has escalated the concerns to various stakeholders over the years, but has not received any joy. "We have had endless meetings, but nothing is being done. We even had the National Home Builders Registration Council (NHBRC) to do a quality check. They had compiled a report on their findings and recommendations,

but we are still waiting for it to be implemented."

Marlaine Nair, DA's spokesperson on human settlements in KZN, said they have called on KZN MEC for Human Settlements and Public Works, Sipho Nkosi, to provide an urgent update. She said a motion was tabled by the DA in the KZN Legislature recently, after desperate pleas from the community.

"We demand an update on the project after the NHBRC submitted a report in 2014. The DA expects the MEC to act with urgency. The ongoing defects

and maintenance issues must be dealt with and closure brought to the project," she said.

Gugu Sisilana, eThekweni Municipality's spokesperson said, "The Rental Housing Department has been requesting maintenance funding for repairs from the provincial department of human settlement. This was in response to recommendations of the NHBRC report.

"We are also currently conducting water related as well as other emergency repairs," she said. The KZN MEC for Human Settlements hadn't responded at the time of going to press.