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The current of Elijah Mango College. > Photo: Bongekile Khumalo

Community questions future of dilapidated college building

Beatrice Shongwe

KABOKWENI - Residents say the government has remained silent on the future of the dilapidated Elijah Mango College. According to the community, officials used to engage with residents during progress meetings, but the last meeting was reportedly held in May, with no updates since.

One concerned community member, Shando Magagula, said the college, which was previously used for nurse training, has been neglected and subjected to vandalism since its closure. The building has been looted of water pipes, electrical cables, and equipment.

Magagula told Lowvelder Express that Nsikazi is the only community without a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college. Travel to higher learning institutions in town is unaffordable for many. He added that converting the building into a college or skills development centre would greatly benefit the youth.

"We all witnessed the building slowly dying. People started stripping it, and eventually it was left like this. If the government had properly utilised or privatised it, nobody would have vandalised it," said Magagula.

He accused the government of using the building for political gain and questioned the

purpose of hiring a security company to guard the empty structure after it had already been damaged.

"The community is no longer sure which department is responsible for the building," he said. "At first it was the Department of Health, then the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs (Dardlea)."

Magagula said they have since been told it is the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport's (DPWRT) responsibility.

He believes that, in addition to providing a local skills development centre, effective use of the building could boost the surrounding economy by creating jobs.

This publication previously reported that in March 2024, Dardlea announced plans to refurbish the college, inviting other departments to participate. It had also been occupying part of the building for use as an agricultural training centre.

Dardlea spokesperson Zanele Shabangu said the department is no longer involved, adding that all plans are now with the DPWRT.

DPWRT spokesperson Bongani Dhlamini said this department plans to use the building for Ehlanzeni TVET and has received a formal request to that effect. "We are currently in the process of finalising the building transfers and title deeds," he said.