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## Relief in sight for Mthatha flood victims

**Lulamile Feni**

About 400 temporary residential units for flood victims in Mthatha are expected to be completed by September, with the first families set to move in on Monday at Maydene Farm.

The project, delayed by disputes over land, has now gained momentum after residents agreed to host flood survivors on the municipal site.

The June 10 floods devastated Mthatha and surrounding areas, killing 103 people and leaving more than 4,000 destitute.

Thousands remain in community halls after being moved from lodges at the end of July.

Yesterday, the deputy minister in the presidency for planning, monitoring and evaluation, Seiso Mohai, led an oversight visit to assess the progress of the government's response. He was joined by the deputy minister for women, youth and

persons with disabilities, Mmapaseka Steve Letsike, human settlements MEC Siphokazi Lusithi and King Sabata Dalindyebo mayor Nyaniso Nelani.

The delegation toured the OR Tambo community hall, where about 60 people are still housed, the Thornhill water treatment plant and the Maydene Farm site.

The visit formed part of ongoing monitoring of the multi-billion-rand relief package, which includes housing, road and clinic repairs and support for livelihoods.

Mohai said restoring shelter and basic services remained the priority, alongside long-term disaster readiness.

"The construction is now moving with speed, and we can see great progress. We are happy as well that the costs to rebuild are [acceptable].

"We need state-developed systems which respond

strongly and quickly to disasters. It is not nice to stay in the community hall, but they will soon be out of that condition."

Mohai said that once the temporary residential units were finished the government would focus on providing amenities and psychosocial support, particularly for children who had lost family members or endured trauma.

Lusithi said land availability had been the biggest challenge.

"The worst thing was engagement with the community for us to use this land, which belongs to the KSD Local Municipality, but we are happy to be here," she said.

"We are still in engagement with national public works to have more land made available."

She said R120m had been reprioritised in the provincial budget to build 1,200 temporary residential units, with an application to the national

government for further funding.

Units are also being built in some victims' original communities, including in Mqanduli, Ngqeleni and Kumkani Mhlontlo.

The Development Bank of Southern Africa had also donated 20 structures.

The R5bn recovery package covers housing, infrastructure repairs and livelihood support. Officials said the pace of construction was now improving after earlier setbacks.

For survivors, delays have been difficult.

"After the floods struck we were moved to a community hall, and then later moved to the B&Bs, and on July 31 were evicted from the lodges and moved to this hall," Nothobile Mbiza, 74, said at the OR Tambo Hall.

"All I want is my place and privacy," she said. — *Daily Dispatch*