## Families in Motsoaledi informal settlement living in fear of eviction

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'Just thinking of not having a place to live for my family is enough to think of killing myself."

These are the words of 43-year-old father-of-four Abraham Mudau, whose family is one of the 10 families living in corrugated iron shacks on the outskirts of the Motsoaledi informal settlement and in fear over the threat of eviction due to development in the area.

Last year, residents' prayers were answered when they heard former Joburg mayor Amos Masondo promise that the council would build more than 2 500 houses, which would be separated into 1 456 single residential units and an additional 1 300 double-storey units for them to live in.

The target for completion of the R340 million Elias Motsoaledi development project was set for the 2013/14 financial year.

However, this plan did not factor in the 10 families living on the outskirts of the settlement.

Residents told The Star on Wednesday that officials from the city's housing department told them last month that they had until January 27 to find alternative accommodation or face eviction.

Mudau has been living on the land near Motsoaledi since 1990. Back then, the land he worked and lived on belonged to his employer, a livestock farmer.

"We sold goats, sheep and cattle... but the owner died in 2008. The whole area above the settlement used to be his. He left the land to his daughter, who then sold it to the government. We weren't told the land had been sold, so we stayed there," he said.

Mudau lives with his wife and four children, and says that after being told they had to move, they consulted with ward 24 councillor Willie Dhlamini.

"He told us the law said that when a municipality wanted to develop an area, they had to find the people other places to live. But since then he hasn't spoken to us, and we have only two more weeks till the deadline." he said.

"We see the development they are trying to do, and it is a good thing, but the thought of having nowhere to live may even cause a person to think about suicide.

"It wouldn't be so bad if I didn't have children, because I'd just go live in those big pipes... but you can't raise children in those conditions. I just want my family to feel safe and have a place to stay, that's all," he added.

Lucky Ngobeni, a member of the Motsoaledi Concerned Residents Association, said while residents were happy about the development, the council needed to factor in the other families too.

"We as an association feel the government should make space for the families as they didn't even know the land they lived on had been sold." Ngobeni said.

When The Star contacted the ward councillor, he denied that the families would be evicted on January 27, adding that a plan to make alternative arrangements for them was in the pipeline.

"We are in negotiations with the city; it is not as if we are chucking people out. We are juggling people around to make space for construction to happen.

We are negotiating with the city to accommodate them and integrate them as part of the Motsoaledi informal settlement," Dhlamini said.

The Star submitted queries to the city's housing department, which were unanswered at the time of publication. - The Star