

Over 40 left homeless after shack blaze

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More than 40 people in Masingenge informal settlement, on the KZN South Coast, are still trying to rebuild their homes after a gas cylinder exploded and destroyed 24 shacks last week.

Masingenge resident Asanda Khuzwayo, who was affected by the flames, said she lost everything in the fire.

"I was coming back from work when I found my daughter waiting at the bus stop, she told me that the house is burning. We both ran and I tried to get in the house but I could not because the inside was already burning. The only clothes I have left are the ones I am wearing," she said.

Another resident, Bhekani Ngcobo, who lost his identity book in the fire, explained that the gas cylinder exploded when one of his neighbours was warming up his bath water after work.

"No one died from what I know but people lost a number of their belongings, their homes and it will take a lot of time to recover some of these things back," said Ngcobo.

In 2013, Masingenge residents were relieved to hear that a housing project was under way in the area, but eight years later, the project is still incomplete.

KZN MEC for Human Settlements Jomo Sibiyi, who visited Masingenge recently, said they have appointed a new contractor for the housing project, which is expected to be completed in the next 24 months.

"Since the housing project started there have been a lot of problems, such as the issue of workmanship. Some of the units are poorly built and some of the work the previous contractor was asked to do was not according to standard. Monitoring as well has not been up to scratch.

"We brought in a new contractor. He has started working on site we believe



KZN MEC for Human Settlements Jomo Sibiyi (left) with Ugu District Municipality mayor Sizwe Ngcobo and KZN MEC for Social Development Nonhlahla Khoza in Masingenge informal settlement after the fire incident.

that in the next 24 months we will be done with those houses," he said.

KZN Human Settlements also provided victims of the fire with food parcels and materials to build temporary shelters. A non-profit organisation based in Masingenge has also been rallying behind the residents and has provided victims with temporary shelter, collected building materials, clothing, kitchenware, blankets, food parcels and other donations for the victims.