

## **The Wolwerivier social audit**

In 2015, Ndifuna Ukwazi worked with residents in Wolwerivier to conduct a social audit - a community led verification of service delivery on the ground. Wolwerivier is an isolated temporary relocation area (TRA) 40km from Cape Town CBD. It is located on farm land in-between the N7 and Melkbosstrand far from work, shops, schools and transport.

### **What is a TRA?**

TRAs are provided for in the Housing Code - municipalities can request grants for emergency housing to support communities with temporary housing during natural disasters. Metros have begun using this funding as a top up to meet their obligations to provide alternative accommodation for the homeless, the displaced and those the state wishes to move.

### **What happened at Wolwerivier?**

The City of Cape Town wanted to expand the municipal dump but couldn't because a community was living next to it. 200 households in Skandaalkamp made a living collecting scrap metal, recycling and reselling second hand items. Many people got their food from discarded supermarket produce. The City decided to relocate residents and over a five year period they found and purchased an isolated parcel of farm land 10km from the dump and built a township for 500 households. They loaded residents on trucks, demolished their shacks and relocated everyone to Wolwerivier.

### **Why did NU support residents in Wolwerivier?**

The move resulted in immediate poverty for the majority of families who lost their already meagre income and livelihoods, and were now too far to travel to look for work. Poor coordination meant the new houses were crowded with multiple families living in one structure with one toilet and no shower. Learners had no way to get to school and the site itself had no fences, no streetlights and no roads. Despite the City spending over R50 million on the site - Wolwerivier looked like a refugee camp.

### **What happened during the Social Audit?**

Ndifuna Ukwazi staff worked with residents over a period of six months to build relationships with the elected committee. Residents had never had to engage government to claim their rights and they were not well organised. At public meetings and focus groups we listened to their concerns and presented the social audit as a way to present the City with evidence and testimony on the effects of the move and claim their rights. Over four weeks in November 2015, NU staff with 60 volunteers studied the Environmental Authorisation for the site, together with tender specifications for the structures and minutes from public participation meetings. Young volunteers conducted door to door surveys and physical inspections. Others collected testimony and experiences of life before and after the move. We invited City officials to take part but they declined and instead began to intimidate the community by withdrawing employment opportunities, by setting up outsourced security services with dogs, and by conducting an alternative audit which did not include residents.

### **What was the result?**

During the social audit, residents found that the City was not compliant with the conditions and recommendations of the Environmental Authorisation relating to the quality of the structures and the infrastructure on the site. We found that officials had been warned in writing that the move would result in unemployment and had not taken steps to mitigate the risks. The report was presented to the community at a public hearing. We invited the MAYCO Member for Human Settlements, Benedicta van Minnen and other City officials to attend but they declined. In the weeks after, leaders phoned and emailed the City and they presented copies in person. When they were tired of being ignored we supported them to march and picket at the Civic Centre. When Cllr van Minnen refused to accept the report, leaders located her with the Mayor promoting Cape Town at the beach. Leaders found her there and hand delivered the report with members of the media following. Since then leaders have met with the City twice and the Province has conducted a forensic audit of compliance with the Environmental Authorisation. A clinic and school transport has been provided. Isolation and unemployment remain a problem.

### **Why is this important?**

Ndifuna Ukwazi launched an urban land justice programme in 2015 to address the systemic structure of the apartheid city and the policies forcing poor and working class people out of the City and preventing them from accessing well-located affordable housing. Through social media, radio, digital and print news, residents of Cape Town now see Wolwerivier as a symbol of poor government housing policy - the very opposite of an inclusive and just City.