

# Construction workers strike over training fund

By [Thamsanqa Mbovane](#)

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Workers at the R68m construction site of Noninzi Luzipho Primary School in KwaNobuhle township, Uitenhage, are on strike over a training fund. About 40 workers employed by Alex Maintenance and Electrical Services downed tools this week, saying that the strike would continue until their demands were met.



Workers building the Noninzi Luzipho Primary School in Uitenhage are on strike over a training fund. Photo: Thamsanqa Mbovane

Workers said R600,000 had been put aside for training by the Coega Development Corporation (CDC) which has been contracted by the Eastern Cape Department of Education to build the school. They said the training was in bricklaying, electrical services, carpentry, machine usage and plumbing skills. Instead, they said, the money had been used to top up their salaries.

“After the project, we won’t get jobs, because we have had no training,” said protest leader Ndyabo Sifuba.

“What we are saying is that all we want is training, and that is it.”

Learners at Noninzi Luzipho have been taught in prefabricated buildings on Helen Joseph Street, which has had a leaking roof and holes in the floors for years. The school is known as the “rat school”.

After protests by angry parents starting in 2014, the new school was finally started in 2017. Workers said 22 out of the 27 new classrooms had been completed. A concerned parent said she feared the protest would paralyse the project, “I thought that the protesters had a hangover, because their protest commenced on Monday morning. They continue to strike ... while their children are housed in a prefabricated old school which is full of rats.”

“We fought hard to have this school, but now they are fighting for certificates.”

## **Tools down until training received**

Protester, Nzimeni Twangu said workers would only lay the foundation for the new classrooms when they received training.

He said on 17 July last year, a director at CDC had told them about the R600,000 which had been put aside for training of Noninzi Luzipho workers.

“We can’t be general workers for the rest of our lives. We need training so that we can apply for jobs after this project.” he said. He said the money had been used to top up salaries from August last year, from R16 to R22 an hour, instead of for training. “We will stop the protest when we see training happening.”

Alex Alexander of Alex Maintenance said the money belonged to CDC. “We cannot force Coega to release the money.”

Ayanda Vilakazi, spokesperson for the CDC, did not answer GroundUp’s calls.

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