



Reaction Statement

For Immediate Release

Oxfam South Africa Calls for Urgent, Accountable Government Action Following Community Protest Action Amidst Recurring Floods in Mthatha, Eastern Cape.

13 March 2026

On 2 March, survivors of the devastating 2025 floods in Mthatha, Eastern Cape, took to the streets to express their dissatisfaction with the support provided by the OR Tambo District Municipality. The protest followed a surge in rainfall last month that caused severe flooding, destroying homes and livelihoods across affected communities.

In the aftermath of the floods experienced last year, Oxfam South Africa and its local partners provided rapid humanitarian relief to communities in and around Mthatha. These partners included *Masimanyane*, *Ubuntu Restoration*, and *Farmers Network South Africa*. As a result of that intervention, Oxfam raised additional resources in partnership with *City Hope* and *ActionAid SA* to assist affected communities in their rebuilding efforts after the climate-induced disaster.

Through these efforts, 1200 households were supported, with approximately 5000 individuals from 13 community centres. The support included WASH products and psycho-social support for the survivors. Despite these efforts, many survivors report that local government officials have not visited their communities to assess their conditions or well-being since December 2025.

Residents currently staying in temporary shelters and community halls, including the North Crest Community Hall, continue to face severe shortages of essential services such as food, electricity, and clean water. Protesters also expressed frustration over the slow rollout of Temporary Residential Units (TRUs) and the continued delays in providing permanent housing solutions for families who lost their homes.

With municipal food support irregular or absent, many survivors have been forced to rely on their own limited financial resources to survive, often redirecting funds originally intended for medical needs to purchase basic food supplies.

We are disheartened to learn that the same communities were affected again by flooding without receiving adequate support to regain a dignified livelihood.

"The people of Mthatha are paying the price for a climate crisis they did not create. Year after year, communities are exposed to devastating floods, yet recovery efforts remain slow and inadequate. This cannot become the new normal. Climate justice means putting the needs and dignity of the most vulnerable first." - **Busiswa Nyume** | Provincial Program Coordinator (Eastern and Western Cape) at Oxfam South Africa

In our engagements with community members on the ground, we have come to understand that the municipality has been gradually reducing its support to the victims who were housed in Temporary Residential Units (T.R.U). This process began with the eviction of families from the TRUs and the closing of the meal centres - without updating the affected community members.

After, the devastating floods of 2025, the OR Tambo municipality identified several pieces of land to relocate the affected families to. However, this process has progressed slowly resulting in numerous families remaining unhoused. Community representatives that we have engaged have informed us that many of the families displaced in 2025 have opted to return to dilapidated homes, whilst some are currently residing with relatives or neighbours leading to overcrowding in certain households. Furthermore, individuals living with disabilities have seemingly been left destitute, a situation which exacerbates their vulnerability.

Oxfam South Africa expresses profound concern regarding the lack of urgency, accountability, coordination and follow-through from government authorities in response to the pressing needs of the community. The demonstration undertaken by the survivors last week follows previous public mobilisation efforts that led to some engagements with representatives of the municipality, albeit with minimum impact. The absence of decisive intervention poses a significant risk for the affected families, thus deepening inequality and eroding public trust in Mthatha governing authorities.

Climate disasters are no longer isolated occurrences; they are recurring and intensely driven by global climate change. Communities in Southern Africa are currently grappling with the consequences of this year's floods, which extend beyond "bad weather." Their lived experience currently represents a tangible manifestation of a global climate crisis.

The Eastern Cape remains particularly vulnerable due to historical factors, including underinvestment, infrastructure backlogs, and unmitigated socio-economic disparities.

As part of our ongoing efforts to provide support to the survivors in Mthatha, Oxfam South Africa has initiated discussions with the municipality to ensure capacity building

and skills development towards disaster risk reduction, by means of Preparedness and Contingency Planning.

The objectives of this training are to collaboratively develop an inclusive strategy for effectively managing climate-induced disasters in the area and to equip key leaders in the community with skills aimed at reducing risk and exposure. The ongoing training will be targeted at a diverse group of participants, including government representatives, community-based organisations (CBOs), community leaders and ward counsellors.

While this training represents a temporary measure, its effectiveness is contingent upon transparency and just, accountable governance.

Oxfam South Africa therefore urges the national, provincial, and local government authorities to take the following actions:

- Provide transparent public plans and updates on resettlement efforts for flood survivors.
- Establish independent financial oversight mechanisms for just and accountable governance of disaster-related funds.
- Partner meaningfully with civil society and community-led structures in long-term recovery planning, including the investment in climate-resilient infrastructure and early warning systems.
- Implement a wealth tax that will provide climate reparative justice for the most affected communities. [#MakeRichPollutersPay](#)

In solidarity with the affected communities, Oxfam South Africa is calling for a comprehensive, proactive mitigation strategy that prioritises the needs of rural communities and is fully gender-responsive.

We continue to pledge our solidarity with affected communities and remain committed to advancing an equitable future for all

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