

Kwa-Thema Without Electricity For Months

By Nobuhle Sibaya

Release date: 12 July 2023

The residents of Kwa-Thema have been on multiple strikes and mini protests almost every week after the fire at the Nkabinde substation that supplied a lot of sections in KwaThema with electricity. KwaThema is a township in the East Rand, and in May 2023 just after loadshedding the power station caught on fire. It is still unclear if the fire was due to sabotage, started by someone, or if it was because of faults within the substation.

Since then, the township spent the whole month of May 2023 without electricity. During that time, electric cables were being moved to different substations around the neighbouring townships including Brakpan. As a result of that the whole township was able to get some electricity in the month of June 2023.

Issues then arose when the substations were beginning to have overload, and as a result, there were a lot of power trips and some areas would go for days without electricity. This has caused a lot of division as neighbouring community members feel like it would have been better if the whole community of KwaThema did not have electricity, instead of other areas being affected at all by this.

Like the community of Deep Levels, in Kwa-Thema, who took to the streets after not having electricity for over two days. When speaking to the local councillor of Ward 77 Thulane Dunjane, he said that the workers hired to work at these substations have refused to continue working after their work hours because they have not been paid to work overtime. This is after they first worked till late at night and would sometimes go home to sleep for 4 hours, only then come back at work so the community has electricity. But they have not been paid at all for their overtime. Now when there are any problems that could cause power outages, no one will be there to fix those problems until the next day during working hours.

Dunjane also explained there will be a lot of load reductions during the recent cold days because the more electricity is used, the less electricity they have to give to the community as a whole. So, people will have to be patient as not everyone will have electricity at the same time. There will be a 24-hour rotation between the areas, meaning that if there is an overload on a certain day, only one area will be cut off and it will not have electricity. And if the overload still persists, another area will be cut off.

This is expected to happen until the Nkabinde substation is fixed or replaced in August 2023. Dunjane also added that there is a limited capacity in one of the substations, Monareng substation. So after the cold front we had on Monday, 10 July 2023, when people had a lot of appliances switched on, the community of Mthembu Village near Kliptown had to go 24 hours without electricity.

Community members were very unhappy about this, and they have taken to the street protesting and burning tires. Areas they target are the entrance points of KwaThema and the local community care centre; they do not destroy the facilities, but they just stand outside, singing and burning tires.

Additionally, the power cuts in Kliptown do not excuse the area from the Eskom loadshedding schedule. Because of this, some of the community members are now saying that they are getting used to having electricity for only a few hours in a day. The community is tired of fighting for a basic right like electricity, and hope that the government will hurry with fixing the Nkabinde substation. The members of the community are afraid of using other measures to keep warm in their houses given the recent gas explosion that happened in Boksburg and the rise in shack fires caused by “imbawula;” a makeshift brazier.

This article was submitted on 12 July 2023. You may republish this article, so long as you credit the authors and Karibu! Online (www.Karibu.org.za), and do not change the text. Please include a link back to the original article.