

Children Drown in a Neglected Sewage Access Manhole in Uitenhage

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A devastating incident happened in kwaMashu Township in Uitenhage, Eastern Cape, where two siblings, aged four and seven years old, drowned in a sewerage spill that had been left unfenced and unattended for years.

These children secretly found this place as a playing area and a swimming spot to enjoy themselves. Unfortunately, the two drowned, and others who were swimming with them, made it out alive. This access manhole was opened by contractors seven years ago, and they later abandoned the project, leaving the manhole wide open and unfenced.

This manhole is deep and children are truly not safe as the manhole remains uncovered, with no warning signs or red tape to advise against people entering. "..... the manhole needs to be closed and it needs a security guard or put an electric fence so that people, especially children may not come near it, and all these places that are not safe for our children in this community need to be fixed," said Angel Johannes, a resident in kwaMashu.

"Children are dying because there is no playing ground in the area, and that's why children played at that dam," Johannes added.

I spoke with a senior police officer, telling him my deep concern about the manhole and the risk it poses to the community. Even after the tragic loss of lives, the maintenance hole is still the same, even the municipality of Nelson Mandela Bay does not take the safety of our children and the community seriously, they know about the incident but they don't want to take responsibility for fixing the big hole, till today there's still no progress despite our plea to them.

"I so wish the community can make the right choice when electing their leaders"

As the community of kwaMashu mourns the loss of these two young lives, we must also recognise that the power to create change in our communities lies within our hands. As community members, we must take charge by making a collective decision to cover the access manhole and protect our children. Let us work together to ensure that such tragedies are prevented in the future.

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