

Ward 22 ills

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LAST week's petrol bombing of Councillor Patrick Jaca's house in Machibisa (*The Witness*, June 25) follows previous coverage of service delivery protests in Ward 22. They have been attributed to internal factionalism within the African National Congress. However, the ills in Ward 22 cannot be blamed entirely on conspiracy theories.

In 2001, the Built Environment Support Group (BESG) won a tender to develop a housing project in Te Huis, Ward 22. Only a small section of houses behind Qokololo Stadium was included in the tender. The larger informal settlement, lying between Imbali Lodge and Edendale Road, was excluded. This led to protests whenever we tried to engage with the com-

munity. Three years and much planning-later, we presented a development proposal for both sections at a mass meeting. At question time, then ward councillor Nathi Mbeje faced a barrage of complaints that he did nothing to support the community. A section of the audience started overturning tables and we had to be given a police escort out of the hall. A member of the development committee remarked to me that this group was not even part of the community, but came from Machibisa.

In 2006, we presented the development plan to officials in the new housing unit. The Msunduzi Municipality has since abandoned the project. The community feels betrayed and it is no longer safe for BESG staff to go into

the area. The shopping centre development on their doorstep gives them no comfort while they lack access to basic services.

Service delivery protests resulted in national government launching a turnaround strategy for municipalities in December last year. The BESG's contribution to nation-building was launched last month—the Deepening Democracy Project aims to create real dialogue between communities and municipalities around development issues.

Community-based organisations can learn more about the project by contacting Mbhe Mdlalose or Israel Ndlovu at BESG at 033 394 4980.

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