

McGregor in crisis: Gift of the Givers races against time to provide urgent aid

Humanitarian aid group, The Gift of the Givers says the Cape Winelands town of McGregor has requested urgent help after being hard hit by inclement weather conditions.

 By [Katja Hamilton](#) 3 Oct 2023



Source: Katja Hamilton.

The organisation says the community has been isolated following heavy downpours over a week ago, with the Keiser River bridge connecting the town to Robertson suffering serious damage as well as the approach road to the bridge.

While work on building a road directly from McGregor to Greyton over the neck of Boesmanskloof pass, Die Galg, was started in the early 1900s, the project was halted due to lack of funds. With the road into the town from Robertson now blocked off, McGregor is locked in.

Food supplies have run out and there is a water shortage in the town. Moreover, fuel supplies have dried out. There is no money left in the ATMs, which the residents rely on because many grocery stores in the town do not accept card payments. Also, the elderly, children and those with disabilities cannot be paid their grants.

A big concern too is the impact this will have on local businesses that rely on tourism.

Logistically it's impossible for delivery vehicles to enter the town at this stage, said Gift of the Givers' Ali Sablay.

"The initial plan was to transport aid by means of a helicopter, but this has not materialised. We managed to find a back gravel road. Unfortunately, this gravel road is only accessible with 4x4s."

Authorities have made seven vehicles available to Gift of the Givers, which will allow the team to deliver food packs, bottled water, blankets, bread, hygiene packs and baby packs.

MEC for infrastructure Tertuis Simmers, said work has begun on reconstructing the bridge connecting Robertson to McGregor, and that it is estimated to be completed by next Friday, 13 October.

Residents from the community have confirmed the Stormsvlei/Boesmansrivier gravel road is now accessible for low ground clearance cars after District Municipality teams filled up holes and placed sandbags. Drivers are requested to exercise caution when using the road.

Construction on the Langverwagten tar road between Robertson and McGregor has commenced and it is estimated for completion before the end of October.



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Simmers said teams are working around the clock to repair damaged roads around the province. He called for those using the roads and experiencing delays to be patient.

He said teams have been out since last week to assess the damage to roads in the Overstrand municipality, the Cape Winelands and Langeberg and that many roads are still closed.

These include the R43 in the direction of Villiersdorp; the R321 from Malteno in the direction of Villiersdorp, the Heuvel er Aarde Road in the direction of Hermanus and the N2 outside Bot Rivier, which burst its banks taking away part of the national highway.

A stop and go on the N1 at De Doorns is expected to be in place for three months.

"There are areas in the province where water levels need to subside before cost assessments can be made," Simmers noted.

He said the cost assessments would be released next week, but that these would be provisional given that further rainfall was expected in these areas later this week and over the weekend.

Furthermore, he said his department was waiting for confirmation from President Cyril Ramaphosa on whether he would appoint South African National Defence Force (SANDF) engineers to assist with the rebuilding of roads and bridges in the province.

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