

# Mixed emotions as land claim is settled

**SABELO NSELE**

A R35 MILLION Richmond land claim brought mixed emotions to a 81-year-old beneficiary, Bhidi Shelembe.

Shelembe, who initiated the Mchobololo land claim that impacted over 120 households, said the occasion had reminded him of the fateful day in 1966 when they were forcefully removed from their area.

"My wife was pregnant. We were accommodated in some tents. My wife went to labour at that time and the child did not make it," he said.

On Friday, the Office of the Chief Land Claims Commissioner officially handed over a R25 million cheque to 114 families who chose financial compensation and also handed over land worth over R10 million to eight households who chose land.

Shelembe said he had lodged the claim 19 years ago in 1998 when the lodgement process was opened.

"The way we had been removed, it was like they were taking soldiers to a war.

"We were never given proper accommodation and we did not know where to put our belongings.

"I am just happy that today it is finally over.

"I could not sleep at night thinking about today. I know my forefathers are happy about this.

"This is not about us, it is about those that were forcefully removed," he said.

KZN head of the Land Claims Commission, advocate Bheki Mbili pleaded with those families who chose financial compensation, to use the money wisely.

"Very often people use all their money and then come back to us to complain that the money was not enough.

"They would make comparisons of how much they got back then with what the other beneficiaries would be getting at that time."

Agriculture and Rural Development MEC Themba Mthembu said the land was already providing job opportunities to 20 people as full-time staff and 20 other people as part-time staff.

The land is being used for farming and grazing.

There is also a game reserve on the land.

• [sabelo.nsele@witness.co.za](mailto:sabelo.nsele@witness.co.za)