

# NEWS 24

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## Fowl play! National Lotteries Commission board member received millions linked to lottery grants

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Millions of rands from recipients of lottery grants were paid into the private home bond account of former National Lotteries Commission (NLC) board member William Huma while he was still on the lottery board.

Besides payments to Huma's bond, a GroundUp investigation has also uncovered details of further questionable payments.

Two payments of R1 million each into Huma's personal bank account [were from Upbrand Properties](#), a construction company closely related to suspended NLC chief operating officer Phillemon Letwaba and his close family members. Letwaba also paid R1 million to Huma.

The investigation also uncovered details of a R13 million lottery grant to a non-profit, The Samaritan Initiative, meant to uplift women in Marikana, the site of the massacre of striking miners in 2012.

It appears that part of this grant was used to build a state-of-the-art poultry facility on a smallholding owned by a company in which Huma is the sole director.

Huma failed to respond to detailed emailed questions about the money paid to him and about the chicken farm. He also did not respond to a follow-up email, and WhatsApp and email referring him to the emailed questions.

NLC spokesperson Ndivhuho Mafela emailed a comment similar to the one he has regularly supplied since the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) [began investigating](#) NLC corruption late in 2020:

The NLC will not be making any comment about grants that were allocated between 2014 and October 2020. The reason for this is that the [president's] proclamation commission[ed] an investigation of the organisation [that] has set out this time-frame as the one that is under this inquiry.

Huma resigned from the NLC board late last year and is no longer [listed as a board member](#) on the NLC's website.

On Huma's sudden resignation, Mafela said the reasons for the resignation are "between the board and ... the Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition".

### **Payments to Huma**

Our investigation uncovered payments into the bond account for Huma's luxury Pretoria home, into his private bank account, and for a luxury estate he owns in North West.

The dodgy payments, totalling R13.4 million, are made up of:

- R1 million paid to Huma by [suspended](#) NLC COO Phillemon Letwaba in February 2017.
- Two payments from a non-profit organisation, Mbidzo Development Programme, into the bond account for Huma's luxury Waterkloof home. Mbidzo received R8 million in funding from the NLC between 2014/15 and 2016/17. The payments to Huma were made up of R2 million on 28 March 2018, and a further R500 000 on 14 May 2018;
- Thwale Front, another non-profit organisation, paid R1.9 million into Huma's Waterkloof house bond account in April 2018. The sole director of Thwale is Promise Fulufhelo Kharive, who is [one of several people](#) facing charges of fraud involving a R1.5 million lottery grant. She is married to Collins Tshisimba, who is an office bearer of Mbidzo Development Programme. At the time of her arrest, Hawks spokesperson Captain Ndivhuwo Mulamu said: "Investigations revealed that in October 2018, an amount of R200 000 was transferred into Kharivhe's company Thwala Front (Pty) Ltd's bank account from a non-profit organisation named The Message." The Message received a

R1.6 million grant in the 2018/19 financial year, according to that year's NLC annual report;

- Mudonde Events and Investments, a non-profit company, paid R1 million into Huma's bond on 29 March 2018. Mudonde's sole director, Ndoweni Makutu, is also an office-bearer of Mbidzo Development Programme. Both Makutu and Tshisimba are also directors of Mbidzo Independent Administrators, a closed corporation that is listed as "inactive" by the CIPC.

- GroundUp has [previously reported](#) on two payments, totalling R2 million, paid to Huma in late 2016 by Upbrand Properties, a company associated with Letwaba. The payments were made just months before Huma was appointed to the NLC board.

- GroundUp has [also reported](#) how Matieni Community Centre, which received R23.7 million to build an old age home in Marapyane, Mpumalanga, paid R5 million to the transferring attorneys handling the purchase by Huma of a luxury house in North West.

### **Huma's chicken farm**

Our months-long investigation found that Huma is the sole director of a company that owns a smallholding on which a state-of-the-art poultry facility was built. At least some of the money for this appears to have come from a lottery grant — R13 million for a project meant to uplift poor women in Marikana in the North West.

Huma's niece, Keitumetse Ntshole, and two people, Khutlwano Khunou and Keitumetse Moumakwe, who are both known to Huma, are linked to The Samaritan Initiative (TSI), which received the multimillion-rand grant.

Huma was a board member of NLC at the time the grant was approved on 2 September 2019 and he was aware of his niece's involvement with TSI. The grant was awarded for an "arts" project in North West, according to the NLC annual report, where it is listed.

After he resigned from the NLC board, Huma became sole director of Silverlite Trading, the registered owner of the Marikana property on 9 November 2021, the same day his niece resigned as sole director. The Samaritan Initiative was registered with the Department of Social Development (DSD) in March 2016. It was both dormant and non-compliant at the time the NLC approved the grant.

It has never submitted financial and other statutory reports to DSD, raising questions about the extent of the NLC's due diligence before awarding the grant. The non-profit organisation also has no Facebook or other internet presence.

When TSI applied for DSD registration, it submitted a constitution that listed its activities as the "prevention and education about HIV Aids" and "to give care and support to orphans, vulnerable children". It is registered in DSD records at an address in Roodepoort, Gauteng.

The directors listed by DSD are different to the people who were involved in the application for lottery funding. TSI has all the hallmarks of having been hijacked and then used to successfully apply to the NLC for funding, as has happened with other non-profits awarded grants, like [this one](#). Attempts to reach the founding directors of TSI – via an email address and phone number supplied to DSD when it was first registered in 2016 – were unsuccessful.

### **The paper trail**

Based on the timing of payments, it appears that part of the R13 million grant was used to construct the poultry facility and outbuildings on the smallholding in Marikana, owned by Silverlite Trading. It is unclear how the rest of the grant was spent.

Ntshole, Huma's niece, was the sole director of Silverlite Trading from 14 May 2019 to 9 November 2021. The company was first registered with the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC) on 12 February 2019.

Three months later, on 14 May 2019, Silverlite purchased the Marikana property, Farm 296, Zwartkop, North West, for R400 000. It was registered at the Deeds Office in Silverlite's name on 16 August 2019.

Just over two weeks later, on 2 September 2019, the NLC approved the R13 million grant. It was awarded as [proactive funding](#), which allows the Minister of Trade and Industry, who has oversight of the lottery, or the NLC in consultation with its board to fund "worthy causes" without receiving an application. Why this project was awarded proactive funding, rather than having to follow the normal grant application route, is not clear.

Google Earth photos show that construction of the facility on the until then empty property began after Silverlite became the registered owner. An [April 2020](#)

[satellite](#) photo shows newly-laid foundations for the poultry facility. And a [2021 satellite photo](#) shows the apparently completed [facility](#).

The "turnkey" facility is climate-controlled and needs very little human intervention in the fully automated feeding, watering and cleaning process. It was supplied by Big Dutchman, a Dutch company that operates worldwide, and has offices in South Africa.

We have seen a document linking Silverlite to a transaction involving the poultry farm.

When we visited Marikana late last year, there was no visible activity on the property and it was unclear whether the facility was yet operational.

Ntshole did not respond to detailed questions sent to her via email. Khunou and Mouwake failed to respond to questions sent via WhatsApp, even though the messages were blue-ticked, showing they had read it. Letwaba did not respond to questions sent via WhatsApp about the payment he made to Huma. And Jim Skosana, the sole director of Upbrand, did not respond to emailed questions about the company's payments to Huma.

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## **Poverty-stricken**

Poverty is rife in Marikana, a mining town seared into the memory of South Africa after a massacre in 2012 when police opened fire on protesting mineworkers.

The route to the Silverlite property takes you along a potholed road running through the heart of the business centre of one of Marikana's poorest areas. The street is lined with vendors selling fruit and vegetables, cheap new and secondhand clothing and sweets, crisps and cool drinks.