

# uTshani Buyakhuluma

The grassroots are talking

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Communities across South Africa are coming together to develop informal areas like that pictured above.

## Long journey from upgrading to housing in PE

By Sidwell Mama

Joe Slovo, Port Elizabeth

THE FEDERATION OF THE URBAN AND RURAL POOR (FEDUP) IS about to finish 30 new houses in Joe Slovo Township, Port Elisabeth. The building was pre-financed by the uTshani fund which also gave 95 loans to members of the savings scheme. To see the last ten houses at roof level, is another cornerstone in the long and successful development, led by community leader Evelyn Benekane.

It all started in 1994, when the community of Veep-laas was invited to an enumeration programme at Kenskool where all informal settlements came together to share experiences to alleviate poverty, focusing on issues around their land- and homelessness.

Evelyn Benekane, Zoliswa Robile and other SANCO committee members from Veeplaas went back to their community to introduce the idea of savings.

This opened the door for support from the South African Homeless People's Federation, and the non-governmental organization People's Dialogue.

The Injongo Zama Afrika savings scheme started in November 1995. The objectives were to acquire land in order to build houses. The group quickly grew to 1000 members as they were staying at a flood plain where they could not set up solid structures.

Through exchanges, a national forum took place early in 1996.

The members stood up very strong, identified land and started negotiations with the council to secure land for housing.

However, the council was unable to assist with the right property as there was great demand in the PE city for housing, and most of the land was privately owned.

Subsequently a land committee was formed as a platform for negotiations. On 28 May 1996 the committee members went to look at a piece of land between PE

and Dispatch, which was a big forest. They decided to invade and negotiate later. Evelyn Benekane was elected as group spokesperson, and five other members were elected into a land committee.

They went to see the Municipal Planning Department to check the ERF number of the land in order to get hold of the owner. They discovered that the 263 hectares belonged to Sunridge Estate. The land had been lying unattended for 50 years with nobody interested in buying it.

Eight community members started building shacks on 30 May 1996. Eventually the others joined them bit by bit.

They then organized other communities where many members were influenced by politicians not to follow the invasion route. Magarette Befile, Pindiwe Bokum and Sharon Mpengesi came in with members from Mandela Village in New Brighton.

The land committee was increased to be able to more powerfully negotiate with Sunridge Estate. The owner agreed to sell his land for two million Rand. He also allowed the municipality to bring in basic services before transfer date. At a price of 1.5 million Rand the parties had a deal.

In the meantime the municipality wanted to evict but they managed to stay. They didn't have the money to purchase but were hoping for the support of their organization to help them acquire the land. They were not disappointed: Joel Bolnick from SDI made contact with the Department of Land Affairs (DLA). DLA accepted the Residential and Agricultural Plan, which is needed to make the project eligible for-

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THE NEWSPAPER OF,  
BY, AND FOR THE  
PEOPLE

Amandla, imali

nolwazi... Eish, ayilumi xa  
ihlafuna!

## FROM THE EDITORS

**THIS NEWSPAPER** is made up to bring communities together by sharing their experiences, ideas, and motivating one another by telling their own real stories. It is the voice and vision of rural, urban and informal settlement communities. It revolves around issues such as disaster, land, eviction, shelter, economic development, health, and culture. We hope that everyone will find this issue productive and enjoyable. ♦



**“WE ARE  
USKOTENI. WE ARE  
SURVIVORS.”**

Patrick Magebhula on the historic  
Kolping Conference in Cape Town

**FOR SLUM** dwellers like myself, there was a time when the word “uskoteni” was a word that police and government officials used to demean us. We were squatters. We did not belong. We were to be removed or, barring that, continuously harassed. But we have changed this word. Throughout South Africa, we now refer to ourselves as “uskoteni” with a feeling of pride. To us, the word means that we are survivors. The capacity of the poor to survive and innovate in the face of harsh conditions forms the backbone of a shift in South Africa's approach to changing the living conditions of the poor in cities throughout the country.

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# UPGRADING

## Langa residents build block of toilets and showers, mobilize savings

By Mzimasi Ntwanambi

Joe Slovo, Cape Town

IN MAY 2010 CORC CAME TO JOE SLOVO TO DISCUSS a new ablution block. The NGO people wanted to hear from the community what they thought about this. The Joe Slovo Task Team as well as the community welcomed the idea.

In cooperation with the Cape Town municipality, the right location for the new structure was identified. The task team also decided how much should be contributed up front and later on for the usage of the new toilets and showers. The community had to make sure that CORC at the end of the day would get their money back.

This was understood and agreed upon by everyone. The task team chose two ladies and two men to collect the contributions. I was one of the people selected for this job.

However, when I spoke to the savers, different stories emerged. They had been told by some task team members that they must not contribute, because they already have a toilet. Other rumours were spread, for example that the toilets were a donation, and that CORC would earn a lot of money doing this for us.

But Mzwanele Zulu and I convinced the community of the real need for the ablution block. Even though the conflicts in the task team could not completely be resolved, CORC put up the ablution block in November 2010.

We were wasting time, and the community asked when we would finally start building. But the problems continued with complaints about the building structure. I told them that they had to contribute to be part of the process. The ablution block is nearly finished now, and people have finally started to make their payments. ●



Residents of Joe Slovo informal settlement in Cape Town lay the foundation of their communal ablution block.

# INCOME GENERATION

## Chicken broiler self-help projects expands, receives government support

By Rosinah Masidiso Mondlana Mandlazi

Buhlebesizwe, Mpumalanga



Members of the chicken broiler self-help project in rural Mpumalanga.

Mpumalanga government has promised to fund a new broiler house at Buhlebesizwe village in Thembisile Hani municipality. The expansion of the existing Zenzeleni self-help project would create another 20 jobs. Future employees have already been put on a list.

Now the community is waiting for the officials to identify a site and approve building plans.

The poultry production, two houses with a total of 3000 birds, was started about 17 years ago. It has since created a number of livelihood opportunities for the surrounding villages. Zenzeleni currently gives work to about 30 people. Many of them were unemployed before, and are now able to support their families.

The project was originally about sewing: 15 women between 25 and 50 years old produced school uniforms, clinic clothes and wedding garments. By 2001 the project started to expand. Two more local men were employed. In 2007 Zenzeleni introduced a cooperation, which provided another six women with an income, some of them being the only bread winner in their family.

The business is supporting the nearby orphanage Madio community centre with meat and other food donations. As the chairperson for the project, I am currently planning to adopt three children from three families. The elderly people are also being looked after, especially during festive seasons.

The project has a hall which is used by the community for meetings. School children also have access for school-related activities.

The support from the community is remarkable. Young people have developed a love for agriculture. Government is conducting awareness campaigns about food security. Schools involved in feeding schemes come and learn from the project. They want to find out how it was started and how it is being run so successfully.

The only challenge is the limited space for further expansion - a problem hopefully soon to be solved by the responsible municipality. ●



# South African shack dwellers unite to upgrade informal settlements, build partnerships with municipal government

By Patrick Magebhula  
Piesangs River, Durban

FOR SLUM DWELLERS LIKE MYSELF, THERE WAS A TIME WHEN THE WORD “USKOTENI” was a word that police and government officials used to demean us. We were squatters. We did not belong. We were to be removed or, barring that, continuously harassed. But we have changed this word. Throughout South Africa, we now refer to ourselves as “uskoteni” with a feeling of pride. To us, the word means that we are survivors.

The capacity of the poor to survive and innovate in the face of harsh conditions forms the backbone of a shift in South Africa’s approach to changing the living conditions of the poor in cities throughout the country. The Ministry of Human Settlements is changing its approach to slum upgrading. Since 1994, the RDP housing program has produced matchbox houses for a few on the periphery of cities. Though the government has built approximately 2.1 million houses, the backlog of those without housing is actually larger than it was in 1994. Now the Ministry has agreed on a new program of action: incremental upgrading of informal settlements that benefits whole communities where people already live. In December, Minister Tokyo Sexwale made a commitment to upgrade 400,000 informal settlement households on well-located land by 2014. This is one of three major outcomes of his performance agreement with President Jacob Zuma.

*“The goal of this network is to bring together poor communities at the city-wide and nation-wide scale to share concerns, talk about problems, and develop solutions.”*

For slum dwellers this change in approach is similar to the way we have changed the meaning of the word “uskoteni.” The RDP housing program has created false illusions for the millions who live in hope of a free house that will likely never come. Those who do receive RDP houses often end up living further away from economic opportunity than when they lived in informal shack settlements. More still have faced the cruel hand of a State that evicts shack dwellers from settlements in every major city in the country. Under the RDP program, the poor are dependent, dispensable, and defenseless.

I write as the chair of a broad network of informal settlement organizations called the Informal Settlement Network. The ISN includes national organizations of the poor like the Federation of the Urban Poor, a network of autonomous, women-led savings schemes and the Poor People’s Movement. But the majority of ISN participants come from organizations constituted at the individual settlement level. These include residents’ committees linked to the South African National Civics Organization (SANCO), crisis committees, development committees, and settlement task teams. The goal of this network is to bring together poor communities at the city-wide and nation-wide scale to share concerns, talk about problems, and develop solutions.

In every municipality where the ISN has come together thus far — Cape Town, Ekurhuleni, Ethekwini, Johannesburg, Nelson Mandela Bay, and Stellenbosch — it has sought out partnerships with municipal government. These partnerships are a key ingredient to our work in pioneering community-led informal settlement upgrading that can go to scale in managing the growth of South Africa’s cities. In total, ISN is working on or has planned 55 pilot projects for informal settlement upgrades in these cities. All are being done to varying degrees of partnership with municipal authorities, and at least two are being done in collaboration with universities.

On Friday, 21 January, the community organizations that work with ISN, as well as the Community Organisation Resource Centre, uTshani Fund, and uDondolo Trust — NGOs linked to Shack Dwellers International — made a historic commitment. After three days of deliberation at the Kolping House in Cape Town, we held a ceremony that will come to be seen as a watershed moment for all interested in the plight of the urban poor in our country, and especially for the participants in our movement. Many of these people have been part of the constituent organizations of ISN for the past two decades.

We recommitted ourselves to a broad agenda for working with local communities to develop an issue-based approach to their own development. This means capacitating communities so that they can collect information about themselves through household surveys, plan for their settlement using this information, and to network at the city level so that the poor are a key ingredient to all city planning activities. It also means building partnerships with city governments in order to create maximum impact for our struggle. We were therefore proud to clasp hands with representatives from the housing departments in the city of Cape Town and Stellenbosch.

Many of us at this conference, like myself, have traveled a long path in the struggle for the poor to live decent and empowered lives in cities in a democratic South Africa. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, we invaded land to create many settlements, which are now home to formal communities with services, legal tenure, and housing developments. We have worked with all levels of government to build a voice for the urban poor in the institutions of South



ISN, FEDUP, and other community leaders spent three days agreeing on a common vision for community-led informal settlement upgrading, in partnership with municipal governments such as the City of Cape Town’s Mzwandile Sokupa (pictured above).

Africa. In the late 1980s and 1990s, we invaded land to create many settlements, which are now home to formal communities with services, legal tenure, and housing developments. We have worked with all levels of government to build a voice for the urban poor in the institutions of South Africa’s developmental state. We have worked with communities to learn to save their money, collect their own information, and upgrade their settlements.

As government shifts to an incremental approach to informal settlement upgrading, it is finding that communities are preparing the ground for a historic possibility. For settlement-wide upgrading can only be done with communities as central partners in the process. With such a strategy in hand, the new policy environment is paving the way to real change on the ground. “Uskoteni,” in partnership with our cities, are now ready to upgrade lives, and build the nation that has long been our hope and dream. ●



# LAND STRUGGLES

## After building houses, Moleleki residents deal with broken promises



**By Ayanda Vena**

Moleleki Ext 1 ("Siphamandla"), Ekurhuleni

THREE YEARS AGO MY HOUSE AT MOLELEKI EXTENSION 1 was demolished, because the city decided to put new pipes in. Since then I have waited for a replacement.

But no information has come forward, when this would finally happen, neither from the municipality or from my own organization FEDUP.

I am living with my three children, plus my granddaughter in a two-room shack on the same stand. We originally arrived in 1994, and named the place Siphamandla informal settlement. There were no toilets and water.

We started to dig our own toilets and made means of having taps on the streets.

One year later, people from what is now known as the Federation of the Urban Poor (FEDUP) came to tell us about their work. They taught us to daily save one Rand. We loved it a lot, and joined in numbers. Then we grouped ourselves, named the group Kopanang Housing Saving Scheme, and

opened a bank book for the saving scheme. But the owner of the space where we had built our shacks came to claim his land back. This is when our leaders from the settlement began to meet with the FEDUP leaders and had negotiations with him.

Eventually we came to an agreement. In 1996, we started to build our houses with the help of FEDUP and uTshani. We built ten houses as a start to prove a point to the municipality.

Then municipal development arrived in 2007. It started with the re-allocation of the residents for housing.

As a result, there were people who were moved to the "waiting area," as a means of making space for water and sewerage pipes.

This is where my problems started. Because my beautiful new FEDUP house was in the way of the city's upgrading plan.

An agreement was made, that the organization would demolish AND rebuild my house a few metres further on. However, this did not happen.

Instead, the city demolished and no one ever replaced my property after that.

It was cruel. The municipality sent the Red Ant in to break down two houses, one of which was mine. It was winter, we had to sleep outside with no shelter for three nights. My granddaughter was only six months old. Only a few weeks later they started to move at least 300 families to where the playground was. This place was then called "the waiting area".

Before people were told to demolish their shacks. It was very confusing, because some of them did not even seem to be in the way of the upgrading process.

This all happened at night, and the local committee was working in concert with the councilor, Mr. John Taba. These residents were told that they would be brought back from the playground after three months when the development was finished.

Those three months turned into three years. Amongst those people who are still waiting, there are those who are disabled and the elderly. These people cannot even reach the toilets that Mr. Taba rented because they are too far away.

We are waiting – for answers, for new houses, and to be moved back where we want to be. On 5 June 2010, some of those people were taken again from the "waiting area" back to the settlement to the stands known to be theirs. These stands do not have water or toilets. There was a conflict amongst the residents who had water and those who did not. They made means of providing themselves with water and the councilor provided them with temporary toilets again. There are people who are left on the playground "waiting area" who do not know where they are going to be taken.

According to Mr. Taba, there is no land and there is no space in Siphamandla. Those people are very worried as they do not know what is going to happen with them at the end. They do not have an ID book and some do not have approval letters. ●

## Forced removals in Johannesburg take toll on residents

### Kliptown

**By Mfundisi Masithe**

Kliptown, Johannesburg

28 JUNE 2010 WAS THE DAY THAT I SAW JOHANNESBURG METRO POLICE OFFICERS carrying guns and some tools into my settlement of Kliptown. It was a Monday. They were threatening the community with guns, and people were not allowed to pass. They vandalized the furniture of the owners of the shacks.

It was so painful because some of the sack owners were not there when the Metro police vandalized their shacks. After I saw that I called Max Rambau from CORC to come to the place. When he came he found us having a mass meeting about going to the councilor's house.

I, as a member of the ISN, was the leader to the councilor's house, together with the community who were against the eviction of the shacks. ISN took the matter to Johannesburg high court and they won that case. ●



### Lanseria

**By Mfundisi Masithe**

Kliptown, Johannesburg

IT WAS 6:00 PM WHEN I GOT A CALL FROM CORC'S MAX RAMBAU. THE DAY WAS SO COLD. I won't forget that day. It was a miserable day, as I was changing transport to another transport to reach Lanseria.

When I got out at Lanseria it was 8:00 pm and it was so cold. I was surprised when I found old Gogo Mahlangu, who is 86 years old, sitting outside in such weather with her family. One of her grandsons was beaten by the Red Ants who came to take them out. I have called the media to come and take the story. It was on eTV and the Star newspaper, as well as the Daily Sun.

The good news was that ISN helped take the matter to court and the residents won the case. The Mahlangu family are going to have houses paid for by the owner of the plot. The City of Johannesburg are asking themselves about from where this group called ISN has suddenly come. ●



At left are the belongings of one family evicted from their shack in Kliptown. The family was without a roof over their head at night, their bedding and other belongings in the open air. At right are residents of Lanseria informal settlement, meeting to decide how to proceed after they were evicted by "Red Ants."



# LAND STRUGGLES

## In Port Elizabeth, Joe Slovo community identifies land, builds 1000+ houses

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funding through the land restitution programme. A communal property association (CPA) was formed.

It was registered under the name Joe Slovo CPA. This happened within seven months, while the members were pushing all the processes on their own.

On March 1997 a deed of transfer was granted to the Joe Slovo CPA with Evelyn Benekane as chairperson and signatory.

This people's process was a wake up call for the municipality and politicians: They had never heard of communities owning such a big piece of land in an urban area.

The federation members kept on saving for infrastructure development as the municipality didn't make further plans for the development.

The members also wanted to show the government how much could be done with little money in a short period of time. It was not necessary to wait 18 months for plans, another 18 months for funding to come through, and up to three years for the final approval.

The savers started paying for a water connection. With the money they bought pipes and taps.

The land committee took the layout to a professional town planner called Ndaba Nozombane at Metro Plan.

They negotiated with Mark Stemmet of Ulwazi Engineering designs and drafting of an application for housing and infrastructure development. Ulwazi Engineering then secured a loan from uTshani Fund.

In 1997 the members asked for one million Rand for water and sewer installation in 350 sites as Phase 1 of the development. Then the rezoning of the land to a township and agriculture was approved, as well as funds for bulk infrastructure and high mast lights. While the process was taking place, there were many political challenges but the federation didn't give up. There have been many challenges along the way. The community was



The Joe Slovo community meets in 1997. Pictured in the white shirt on the left is community leader Evelyn Benekane.

influenced to stop saving because the word got around that government was giving away free houses. They were also advised to elect a councilor because the government would not provide houses without a councilor in place. They were told that no development could take place on a private property and that the land had to be transferred to the municipality. In 1999, the community became divided: Strong CPA members stood up and pushed for the housing application to be approved. They refused to hand over the

land and fought for all the resources they had put into Joe Slovo.

In 2002-2003 the community started to engage traditional leaders for support. In 2003, former MEC Gugile Nkwinti solved the dispute. He advised that Ulwazi Engineering should start the P1 to P4 development. P5 would be done by the people. The councilor and his followers did not agree with this. They were against Ulwazi Engineering. Other political leaders within the municipality supported this viewpoint. ●

### Accomplishments to date

- The Joe Slovo township was established with 1950 sites.
- Infrastructure, including electricity, was installed.
- 1650 houses were built by different developers, municipality, Thubelisha, and FEDUP.
- FEDUP has a 181 Project Contract to continue building houses. Although the building process is very slow, uTshani has prefinanced new housing with 30 subsidies and 95 loans to FEDUP members.
- 20 of the 30 houses are finished. The last ten houses are now at roof level.
- Land ownership is still with the CPA.
- CPA and FEDUP want to negotiate with the Department of Agriculture for funding to develop the remaining agricultural portion.
- The Department has advised the CPA and FEDUP to bring the member list for the following project proposals: 1) Crop farming, 2) Chicken farming, 3) stock and feedlot, 4) piggery, 5) eco tourism.

# HEALTH

## When the ambulance is late to the scene

*The desire to help someone in need runs up against difficult bureaucracy. What should one do?*

**By Kopano Molokoane**  
Ou Kasie, North West Province

It was a Wednesday, an ordinary spring afternoon between 6:30 and 7:00 pm. I was walking with my two friends Ompi and Lebo, we just came back from delivering tupperware bowls at Lebo aunt's place.

On the way back home we met two girls coming from the opposite direction, they were both eating African burgers which we call it "sphatlho". My friend Ompi stopped one girl and asked her to cut him some spatlho. Lebo and I continued walking.

The other girl walked away as well, we both left Ompi and the girl talking.

I walked for less than 100 metres with Lebo. Suddenly a speeding bakkie passed us, we did not look back because we are used to that happening, until we had a loud bang. Car brakes were screeching.

I looked back, and saw the same car stopping on the other side of the road. I was so shocked, not knowing what to do. I decided to run and see what had happened. As I was approaching the car, the only thing that was on my mind was Ompi.

When I got there, he was next to that car with the girl I had left him with. I was so relieved thinking maybe the bakkie had hit the

scrap combi which was parking on the other side of the road. But when I glanced down the combi, I saw a person lying under it: One of the two girls we had previously passed was now lying motionless under the wheels.

*"Why am I not supposed to take the injured person to hospital? Why is it 'better' that the ambulance arrives late at the scene with the person already dead?"*

The bakkie had hit her. We didn't know if she had rolled under the combi or whether she had flown right over to the other side.

Within a few minutes people had gathered to see what had happened. We started calling the police and ambulances, meanwhile we pulled the girl from under the combi to check if she was still breathing.

We could see from the movement on her stomach that she was, but she was bleeding badly from ears and nose.

15 minutes later there was still no ambulance or police showing up. I started organising a car to take her to the hospital.

Some people said that we could not take her to the hospital ourselves because if she died in our car it could

be said that it was our fault. So we had to wait for the ambulance. We started panicking because of the state she was in.

The poor girl was just lying there, unconscious not seeing or saying anything.

Her friend was on the other side with Ompi crying. She then told us that her friend was also pregnant. The ambulance was not coming, and we could see that she was seriously injured but our hands were tied behind our back.

After about 40 minutes the police and the ambulance finally came. The police took statements while the paramedics were busy with the girl. A few minutes later she died right there on the scene.

Four years later I am still asking myself what do I do in an accident? Why am I not supposed to take the injured person to hospital? I need a valid reason because I do not understand why it would be my responsibility if she dies in my car. Why is it "better" that the ambulance arrives

late at the scene with the person already dead?

I went to M.E.R.S (Madibeng Emergency Medical Rescue Services) and spoke to Mrs. Maserame Mosito, responsible for "Intermediate life support". After explaining my story to her, she told me the basic rule to never take a patient with your car to hospital in the event of an accident.

When you are on the scene of a P.V.A. (pedestrian vehicle accident), there are often lots of fragile parts of the body affected which may cause death if moved inappropriately.

A bone can cut a vein causing internal bleeding which is way more dangerous than a broken leg, hand and so on. All one should do is to support the head, keep the patient busy by asking him/her questions, so he/she does not panic.

Furthermore one must keep calling for assistance and hope for the ambulance to come soon.

This reassured me that I had done all I possibly could, but it did not bring the girl back to life.

Apparently the reason why the ambulance came so late in our case was that there are only six ambulances on the night shift for the huge area that Brits (Madibeng) covers.

Therefore, it seems pure luck if the ambulance arrives at an accident scene on time. ♦

## How to submit to uTshani Buyakhuluma

Have a story that needs to be told?

Interested in finding out other people's stories?

Are there interesting cultural events taking place in your community?

Want to share your opinion?

Do you compose poetry?

It is easy to get in touch, and be a part of uTshani Buyakhuluma's next edition.

Here's how:

by phone — call Ayanda Vena at 082 604 4882

by fax — 086 513 5279

by mail — PO Box 14038, Mowbray, Cape Town 7705



## “Service delivery” fails to fight poverty

By T. Eric Ravhura  
Ravele, Limpopo

Government is failing to fight poverty: Makhado municipality for instance promises a better life through service delivery. But what the voters get is unfinished business, such as half-built RDP houses, rendered by government employed contractors.

Ms. Mudau is only one of many examples. She registered for a house in 2007. More than ten RDP houses have since been approved and built, but there was nothing for her. One Mrs. Ragimana put her name on the list because she is staying in a house full of cracks. Mrs Malowa is also in dire need for a new home: She is living with three sons and one grandson in her two rooms.

Shortage of water affects our daily life: Every one needs water. Without water people won't be able to live a better life. The Mashanga residents at Revele village are suffering a lot because they depend on only two water pumps. Another one is most of the week without water.

Mavhange residents have to walk very far to get water in Thondo (Isezazwau area). The municipality tries to help by bringing in a water tank. However, this causes further worries for the residents.

When the water in the tank is finished, the Department of Water Affairs take time to come and refill the tank. Then residents have to pay R1,50 to R2 from their own pockets to buy 25 litres of water.

Jobs are as important as houses and water: People need jobs to be able to work. A job is an opportunity to earn a salary which helps take care of one's family. Without job creation there is nothing to get up for in the morning.

Government must create jobs because the level of employment is too low. Especially in Limpopo people go to other provinces like Gauteng to look for a job. Only more work will reduce poverty in the long term. ●



While government promises of service delivery often never materialize, many are suffering from the immediate effects of eviction. Pictured above, two residents of Barcelona informal settlement in Cape Town the day after an eviction by the municipal Anti-Land Invasion Unit. Communities are organizing with the support of the South African Alliance to upgrade informal settlements, network at the city-wide, and nation-wide scale, and build partnerships with municipal governments. In this way, the once-unfulfilled promises from government becomes services that communities and government produce together.

## Xenophobia must stop

By Mokgobo Elizabeth Tladinyane  
Ou Kasie, North West Province

THERE IS A STRONG DISLIKE, EVEN HATRED, OF PEOPLE who do not come from our country or community. Many South Africans are prejudiced against these migrants, calling them “amakwerekwere” and believe that they will take our jobs, steal our women, spread HIV/AIDS and sell drugs to our children.

This negative attitude has resulted in migrants being stabbed, having their homes burned and struggling to find work.

The crime committed by South Africans in recent xenophobic attacks is unacceptable. Innocent foreigners were attacked and killed for nothing. The foreigners were accused of committing crime in the country by South Africans.

Their homes, business premises were broken, their property stolen, and houses burnt to ashes. They were expected to leave the country empty-handed without their property.

To foreigners committing crime in the country, the law must be hard on them, and after the sentence they must be deported to their country for good. Jealousy is killing our country because most foreigners are attacked for nothing but their own businesses, for which they work hard.

The xenophobic attacks have killed our country because it increased the rate of crime. South Africans: stop hatred and jealousy because we are destroying the dignity and image of our beautiful country. ●

## Need for much greater focus on fighting TB

By Moeti Leseba  
Odendaalsrus, Free State

IF THE GOVERNMENT CAN FOCUS ON TB the way it is focusing on HIV, it would make a difference within our society. Many people seem like they are not aware that HIV does not kill people.

It is opportunistic diseases like TB that are more dangerous and that are killing majority of our people simply because of lack of knowledge and misunderstanding.

AIDS awareness campaigns throughout the country. This can help them to restore the lives of their members from these giant killers, while these NGO are still busy in finding them better places/environment to live in. But if their focus is only on houses and facilities then their members will keep on dying unnoticed.

It is not too late to start, it is only a matter of whether they take this issue of TB seriously the way they should or not. They should really engage their members to take part in

*“If the focus is only on houses and facilities then [FEDUP and ISN’s] members will keep on dying unnoticed. It is not too late to start. It is only a matter of whether we take this issue of TB seriously.”*

It is also up to organizations like FEDUP and ISN. They are working closely with the poor people where there is also high risk of TB. This is because of the environment that these people are living under. Since these organization are having health components as one of their components they should also focus on the state of lives of their members because these members are also their assets and yet they keep dying day in and day out because of TB, some living children as orphans at an early age, something which is sad and painful.

With a financial backup from CORC, surely such NGOs can be able to maintain stability within their members by starting TB and HIV/

a fight against this killer disease. They should also form partnership with the government, especially the health department, so that they jointly tackle this fight together. They surely have statistics through enumerations that they always do so why can't they act now?

With the experience that I've gained from helping conduct a research study on preventing TB among miners, and as a HIV/AIDS counselor I am prepared to contribute in taking action on the fight against this TB problem. I can help by making people aware of signs and symptoms of TB and encouraging them to go for a check-up, as well as making sure that those who are already on treatment to adhere until the last day. ●



HEALTH

New study shows that TB can be prevented

Community workers assist in survey among miners demonstrating that TB is not a killer disease

By Moeti Leseba  
Odendaalsrus, Free State

A NEW STUDY AMONG MINERS SHOWS THAT tablets for tuberculosis (TB) can protect mine-workers from the disease. TB is one of the deadliest diseases in the world and it can be cured or prevented.

But people tend to take it lightly or ignore it and focus only on HIV/AIDS not realizing that one in four AIDS related deaths is caused by TB which is curable. Some believe that the government is really not doing enough to make people aware of that TB can be prevented and cured at the same time.

*“People tend to take TB lightly or ignore it and focus only on HIV/AIDS, not realizing that one in four AIDS related deaths is caused by TB, which is curable.”*

That is why it took the people like Professor Gavin Churchyard to stand up and take action to see to it that he helps in this fight against TB.

With his company called Aurum Institute for Health Research he started a research campaign called THIBELA TB (prevent TB) in Free State and

North West and Gauteng gold mines to prevent the spread of TB by giving the miners the tablets called Isoniazid (INH) which would help them to prevent TB.

The reason he chose the miners was simply because the rate of TB at the mines was found to be high due to working conditions.

The way the workers mix, the condition of their working environment especially those working underground where it is easier for mycobacterium tuberculosis to spread because there is no enough oxygen and light around the place.

Another reason he chose the mines was because of the silica dust they inhale caused by the gold that they are digging.

This is causing them to contract silicosis. Silicosis is not curable and it affects the lungs, the very same lungs which are also affected by the TB bacterium.

TB and silicosis can be detected and be differentiated by X-Ray even though TB can also be detected through the sputum.

So it is clear that people working at the mines are at high risk compared to other people.

Still, everyone is at risk because TB bacterium flow with the wind and everyone can inhale it anytime anywhere.

Even though the official results are not yet published, it is clear that the rate of the newly infected TB patients at the mines was dropping dramatically. The other factor that is evident is that the government have started to give the patients who are HIV

positive with CD4 higher than 200 the same INH at the clinics just to make sure that they are not infected with TB because they don't qualify for the ARV's.

I was lucky because I was part of that research team and my role there was that I was Community Mobilization Support Officer.

*“The reason miners were chosen for the survey was because the rate of TB at the mines was found to be high due to working conditions.”*

I was leading treatment supporters in mobilizing the participants for the study and also to restore adherence by making follow-ups to those who were defaulting.

In order to show that TB can be cured and prevented, the turnout spoke for itself throughout the mines where this research was done.

At least 80% margin of miners/employees of which was the target was reached compared to other campaigns like HIV testing (vct).

These tests were done by the mining companies whereby the turnout could be about 20% to 30% participation. ●

For an opinion on this issue, see page 7.

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POETRY CORNER

By Vuyisa Benekane  
East London  
Age 12

AIDS you are the killer monster  
I hate you for your deadly blows  
You have delivered into my people  
You have caused pain to people of my land

Where should they go?  
Their roots are here  
Their soil is here

I hear the voices  
I hear the voices crying  
I swear the day will come when HIV/AIDS will  
be cured just like any other disease  
When people living with HIV/AIDS will be  
treated just like any other human being

Rise and rise  
Rise and beyond  
God bless Africa, God bless people living with  
HIV/AIDS