

uTshani Buyakhuluma

The grassroots are talking

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Families in Grassy Park in Cape Town hope to be able to rezone their area in order to begin construction of their own homes.

Planning together to make a place to call home

By Lindiwe Solani
Grassy Park, Cape Town

30 YEARS AGO THE RESIDENTS OF GRASSY PARK, from two different areas invaded land which was more than 400m² each. They were twelve families who occupied the land. Now they are negotiating to own it.

The owner of the plots was originally a man who passed away, then his daughter took over as inheritance. They used to pay rent of up to R3500 per month to the owner.

Some of these occupants were unemployed, as a result it was hard for them to fulfill their payments. At a later stage, they all received eviction notices from the landlord's lawyer. The people were dismayed for they had nowhere else to go. This was their only home for many years.

According to Jennifer Van Wyk, one of the rent-paying residents, who happened to belong to the Western Cape Backyarders Network, arranged a meeting with the owner, so as to negotiate selling the land to them. They formed a savings club, where they

also fundraised, by selling boerewors on weekends, doing karaoke's, or Valentine's balls. They realized that the savings alone was not enough.

The land owner decided to sell the land to the WC Backyarders. This was done in writing. Their next step was to approach the municipality. The city was supportive as a result, they even received title deeds. The network incorporated a few shacks that were also facing the same plight, to be part of the group.

They were so motivated, that they decided to draft up a plan. They drew a chart, whereby bricks were drawn up to make many levels.

A brick costs R6 each. This is when these families decided to opt for rezoning, to alter the current structures to be residential ones.

The process of rezoning is still underway. There is so much red tape that needs to be followed, such as handling of land purchase over to the new owners, and renovating the structures to be suitable for residential needs. "We hope and pray that one day we'll have a place, we can call our own", explained Jennifer Van Wyk. ♦

Shack dwellers put informal settlements on the map in Cape Town

By Sothembele Siyo
Mfuleni, Cape Town

BURUNDI INFORMAL SETTLEMENT is located in Cape Town, situated between the informal settlement of the Eastern region and different places of Mfuleni. The settlement is 13 years old. The people do not have title to the land on which their shacks are built. There is a total population of about 1 900 families whereby there are 1 600 shacks in Burundi. The settlement has 53 toilets and 18 water taps.

The reason the community felt this information — called a profile — necessary was that the

settlement was not known to the City of Cape Town. It was not on the municipal database.

So Burundi joined the Informal Settlement Network (ISN), which deals with and addresses the basic needs of the shack dwellers.

A profiling team was sent to take all information related to the counting of toilets (bucket, chemical or flushed). The profiling team also took details of the history of Burundi, how it came about to be what it is today.

This kind of information assists the community to negotiate with the municipality in terms

of planned upgrading or development. It is now well equipped and knows exactly where to start. Profiling is conducted by a few members of the committee, the community members and three other ISN members who have experience profiling. Everyone participates and becomes part of the process.

The process of profiling so far in Cape Town has proved to be successful. There are 220 informal settlements captured to date (the number is prone to increase, since there have been more communities identified, including the backyard network). ♦

THE NEWSPAPER OF,
BY, AND FOR THE
PEOPLE

Amandla, imali nolwazi...

Eish, ayilumi ma ihlafuna!

DURBAN PROJECT OVERCOMES CHALLENGES

MEMBERS OF the Federation of the Urban Poor in Namibia Stop 8 informal settlement in Durban built houses for themselves after they got organized. Though there were delays due to communication problems with municipality, now the community and government are learning to work together.

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"BAREFOOT" JOURNALISTS MEET

Community documenters from
Malawi, Namibia, and SA learn
together

ACROSS THE world, informal settlement dwellers are coming together to learn with each other, unite, improve their neighborhoods, and make cities that are more inclusive. *uTshani Buyakhuluma* is a leading example of community journalism within this network, called Shack Dwellers International, or SDI. Three countries in Southern Africa — Malawi, Namibia, and South Africa — have begun to explore their own methods of documenting their processes. In addition to South Africa's *uTshani Buyakhuluma*, Malawi also has a regular newspaper called *Halala*. Namibia will begin work on its own newspaper following the exchange of ideas between community journalists in Windhoek in late March.

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FEDERATION NEWS

Amandla, imali nolwazi: Power is money and knowledge

By Rose Molokoane

Ou Kasie, North West

WHEN I JOINED THIS ORGANIZATION it was when I was attending a workshop organized by the Catholic Bishops Conference and an NGO by the name of People's Dialogue.

The workshop was held on the 20th to 25th March 1991 at an area around North West province called Brooderstroom. The theme of the workshop was called People's Dialogue on Land and Shelter. This was the real people's dialogue because the discussion was amongst the people themselves coming from poor, marginalized communities around the world.

I was one of the members of the community of Oukasie, an informal settlement near Brits. We struggled during the Apartheid regime, as our settlement had been threatened with eviction. Because we were organized as a community, we won.

In the workshop I was nervous because I thought that this was a political gathering and a platform to discuss politics. Almost 150

participants from areas like Asia, Brazil, Kenya, Namibia, Zim, and South Africa were invited to the workshop. The Indians presented their case study about how they voted for their democratic government 40 years ago.

This presentation influenced the South Africans to visit India. This was the first ever international exchange that happened amongst the poor people themselves.

Why the federations? That is how we can address the basic issues of homelessness, landlessness and poverty. How can we confront them if we are not organized? How do we confront these challenges? There are tools that we use in order to be able to face these uncomfortable issues.

1. SAVINGS, LOANS AND WITHDRAWAL — "AMANDLA, IMALI NOLWAZI" This is the powerful slogan that is used by the Federation of the Urban and Rural Poor (FEDUP) in South Africa. Money makes the world go around

hence the slogan has been replicated in many other countries that practice the same rituals as federations.

We looked at our daily lives and found out that as individual families we can pull our monies together but they won't make any impact, but we used it as leverage to attract more resources from the formal world.

In the federations we put women at the forefront of our process, as we know that most of them are not educated formally and are left behind when men go to work.

We also know that in the family circle, women are the drivers of the family, they are the financial managers of their household finances.

Men are not left behind as they are the muscular gender that helps a lot when it comes to development issues. The only thing is they are a minority when it comes to savings.

Savings is also used for loaning and withdrawals for every saver in the group. We do these knowing that people from informal settlements are not recognized by the banking institutions. They are being seen as a risk target. People with no formal addresses. We believe in what we do as the poor because it works for us.

2. EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

Learning by doing. This tool is used for learning and sharing experiences amongst us as poor people. We practice this tool as follows:

- a) Local exchanges: Saving groups visiting each other in order to audit, monitor, evaluate and learn from each other. Also to capacitate and empower ordinary members on the ground.
- b) Regional exchanges: A region or a province or district visiting each other to learn and teach each other. Support in negotiation with different

"We know that in the family circle, women are the drivers of the

family, they are the financial managers of their household finances."

municipalities to support the existing saving groups and their initiatives. For example, KwaZulu-Natal will visit North West province.

c) National exchanges: Countries in Africa visit each other (eg. South Africa to Ghana). When a country wants to partner with their government, they use other countries that have visited to negotiate in support with their government. It works well because the experience from another country can help to change the system in another country.

d) International exchanges: The exchange programs help the federation to speak with an international voice in order to influence the global agenda for urban development in the formal world.

3. ENUMERATION

Know yourselves in order to persuade others. Information gathering in the form of survey, shack counting and shack numbering, mapping and house modeling, are the processes to make the above tool work well for the federations.

When implementing this tool that is where the members of the federations know the analysis of their own communities.

It helps communities to understand the size of land they are staying on, how many people are staying on that

land, whether the land is enough for whole population in that community. It also helps to understand the size and kind of houses that a community will want to build.

The process needs the participation of the whole community, as well as the municipality.

It is a fundamental point for the poor to know who they are, what they want, and how they will get that. Information is the key to achieve our goals as the poor.

4. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Land — As long as poor people do not have tenure security, they will never use their energy on proper development, no matter where they are around the globe.

When we occupy land illegally, we do it out of frustration. We do not even always know who owns it. We do the occupation because we see a vacant land with no use. Maybe it was there for fifty years.

We do that with the aim of utilizing it and not grabbing it. We are securing it. We need secure access to land. We need government to release land for poor people to run their own development if they are well organized.

Housing—Through house modeling, communities come together and draw their dream house. It become a competition amongst the members who are taking part. Discussion will be opened, more debate will take place whereby everyone will want their model to be priority.

There will be questions asked like, "Do you have enough land to build such a big house? Do you have a family that will fit in such a small house? Do you have enough money to buy the costed material for that house?" It starts discussions.

5. LOBBYING AND ADVOCACY

It is important to do what is in line with government policies. It is our duty to influence these policies through activities on the ground. This will not work if we play our game away from the government.

Our role as poor people from communities is to engage them either by meeting them or inviting them in our activities. In some countries, we were able to sign memorandums of understanding (MoUs) to create a practical partnership with government. We continuously have to put pressure by showing what we do on the ground. If we continue to foster our relationship we will ultimately win the battle. Good negotiation brings good results.

6. SHACK DWELLERS INTERNATIONAL

The processes above have helped in the creation of federations in 33 countries around the world in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

This process is recognized globally by multilateral and bilateral donor agencies and other stakeholders. It is a driving force of the poor communities. It is a network of federations around the globe and rich experiences are found in this process.

"Amandla, Imali Nolwazi" — Power is Money and Knowledge. ●

Lekgotla confirms PPM and FEDUP merger



Members of the Federation of the Urban and Rural Poor met in Gauteng for their quarterly lekgotla. FEDUP approved a new unified program of action with its sister movement of women's savings collection, the PPM.

By Moeti Leseba

Odendaalsrus, Free State

ROSE MOLOKOANE, CHAIR OF THE South African Federation of the Urban Poor, used the quarterly Lekgotla meeting to secure the members' support for the merger of her organization with the Poor People's Movement (PPM).

Leaders from all provinces agreed that this was an important step to build a big and strong federation with multiple benefits for the members at grassroots level. Representatives of PPM were present and glad to see first-hand how the federation was handling their internal matters.

In the absence of federation president Patrick Hunsley who was sick, chief financial officer Sandra van Rensburg presented her report, followed by different regions explaining their way forward.

Leaders were furthermore informed that the issue of the funeral policy is now official. They were given forms to take back to

the regions to encourage their members to take up the policies. Fedup T-Shirts and Pap were distributed to be sold in all of the regions.

The federation meal promotes good health, especially for those who are sick.

It is not just a normal pap but enriched with vitamins to fight unwanted viruses and illnesses in the body.

Most importantly, the committee came up with a programme of informal settlement upgrading which needs to be implemented under strict supervision.

They also discussed how to resolve the matter of unfinished houses, and how savings and UPF could be revived.

It was agreed that the federation must put more pressure on government to retrieve subsidies.

This is also known within the Federation as "old debt".

These matters will be taken up at a national forum in the near future. ●

LAND STRUGGLES

Durban community builds despite hardship

By Patricia Sithole

Namibia Stop 8, Durban

MANY RESIDENTS OF NAMIBIA STOP JOINED THE Federation a long time ago to try improving our lives for the better and share different experiences with others. Our leadership helped us to form a partnership with our Government, they welcomed us with wide open hands.

The Municipality and Housing department promised to give us 250 sites where we could build for ourselves. It was a tough negotiation. In order to make room for installation of services, 96 of the housing sites were moved to a nearby greenfield. These houses are currently under construction. The other 154 sites will be in a second phase on the original land of the settlement. Our process was delayed due to communication problems.

However, we have now received funds from the municipality to build the first set of 60 houses and they are almost all completed. There is still need to expand this project. There is a poor lady with no shelter who requested to stay in one of the houses. But what she got was nothing more than lots of stories. Even though she registered for her subsidy here at Stop 8, she is now homeless with her children. More than 300 houses are unoccupied.

KZN Minister Dr Zweli Mkhize saw our houses and wanted to recommend them to others. He asked us how we build such big houses. He even sang our slogan "Asiwafuni Amavila Lana", meaning "we don't want lazy people here." We told him that we do not hire contractors for our projects, but build on our own. He was so impressed.

The Municipality and the Housing Department inspected our houses. It felt good when they were happy with what we did. We were asked if we were getting the same amount of subsidy as the government houses, even though ours were bigger. We proudly said yes. ●



KZN Premier Zweli Mkhize (right) sang FEDUP song "Asiwafuni Amavila Lana" when he visited Namibia Stop 8.

Seven year struggle in Joe Slovo bears fruit

By Mzimasi Ntwanambi

Joe Slovo, Cape Town

IN 2004 THE GOVERNMENT CAME TO THE JOE Slovo community to inform them about a housing development that they had planned for the area. Some residents were moved from the other side of the N2 highway, as they needed to move their shacks inside the community, hoping to be included. People were eager for this development to take place as they felt that it would mean an improvement on their current living conditions.

The flats were constructed by Thubelisha, which was the developer at the time. When the flats were finished, the community was preparing to move in when it became apparent that something was wrong. During construction, the costs had gone up so much that they were unable to afford to live there, and Thubelisha wouldn't give them away for free. They advertised the flats in the newspapers and radios so that people who could afford to could come and rent.

Government came back to the community again, this time offering them housing in Delft. People refused to move as because of the disappointment before. It didn't happen the first time, and there was no indication that this offer was going to be any different. Thubelisha decided to give those who wanted to move the forms to fill in, which is why we formed a task team to fight Thubelisha. Our task team called the stakeholders to try and negotiate the relocation, a request that was ignored. Our Councillor Xolile Gophe, the National Minister of Housing and Thubelisha decided to open a case against us, when it became clear that the majority of the community did not want to move to Delft.

We met as a community and decided to close the

N2 road, hoping it would cause Minister Lindiwe Sisulu to meet us. Instead she sent the Metro Police and Xhanti Sigcawu to talk to us. He didn't have the solution to the problem.

It was a waste of time because he told us that Minister Sisulu was at the Langa Complex and that we should go there. When they got to the hall it was a lie as the Minister was not there.

When the community went back, they were met by police who refused to allow the residents in. They started shooting and locked up some of the community members. We were also banned from holding meetings at this point.

In 2008 we lost our court case, which was presided by Judge John Hlophe. He told us that we could appeal to the Constitutional High Court, which we did and lost again. However the ruling was that the government would have to engage with us. Provincial Government needed to consult the community in every development. It was supposed to start in 2009, but nothing has happened. There was another agreement to start in March 2010, but still nothing happened.

We had numerous meetings with HDA (Housing Development Agency), and they kept on sending us unfinished paper work, which was unhelpful. We finally suggested that they needed to hire someone to do it for them. Our lawyer assisted them, and it was finalized in November 2010. We signed the document on the 11th of January 2011.

We have since established a Project Steering Committee and submitted the subcontractors and security companies list. We are waiting for them to do the decision on the elected companies. We elected a Community Liaising Officer (CLO). At last the development has started, and infrastructure is being put into place. ●

Counting begins in Athlone

By Denise Ruiters

Athlone, Cape Town

THE BACKYARDERS OF ATHLONE STARTED an enumeration on the 23rd May 2010. It was a rainy day, and very cold. They started with holding a workshop to make sure everyone understood why this enumeration was being done: to capacitate the community at large.

Volunteers from various communities came forward. They were excited as for some of them it was the first time to get involved in a people's process.

The first day didn't go so well because of the weather. Residents from Manenberg, Kewtown and Silvertown came to assist. There was some damage control to do, but it was all sorted out. It came to light that the Silvertown backyarders in particular are faced with bad conditions, said one of the enumerators.

She came across an elderly couple living in a small structure, which is actually a storage space. Another example for dire living conditions is a family in Bridgetown which the enumerators discovered to live in a tent with five children.

A challenge was the fact that some of the residents had received misleading information from another organisation. However, the ward councillor was supportive and drew up a letter for the enumeration team to proceed with the process, as she was very impressed with their work. ●

DISASTER & EVICTIONS

Johannesburg settlement youth come together and save

By **Thato Mokoetsi**
Kliptown, Johannesburg

LET US GROW is a new saving scheme established by three youth members from the community of Orange Farm (Thato, Patricia and Kgatatso). The three youth are children of FEDUP members, and their idea of establishing a saving scheme came about through the day-to-day lessons learnt from witnessing their parents' involvement in the federation.

Orange Farm is currently under the FEDUP pledge project that has 180 beneficiaries. With 20 houses already complete, it is not only the elderly that are beginning to see the benefits to being organised. The three youth members decided to take the same concept and use it in a context relevant to their age group. The saving scheme currently has 20 mem-

bers. A great number of their members was mobilised from Love Life (South Africa's largest national HIV prevention initiative for young people). They had their first meeting on the 5th of March 2011.

The name LET US GROW was chosen to motivate the youth in taking the next step towards empowering themselves for a better future. It was agreed upon that weekly meetings are to be held on Saturdays at 2pm, with a focus on income generation. This dominance naturally came about due to high youth unemployment in their settlement. Amongst prioritized activities, the following are already active: recording studio, welding, sewing and sports teams (soccer and netball).

The equipment for the studio came about through members' contributions. A welding machine was purchased from member contributions. The total

cost for the machine was R3000, so they negotiated with the hardware store owner that they could pay as they generate income. Within the welding team, three of them are qualified and have certificates. So far they have done burglar windows for four federation members with new houses from the FEDUP pledge. Income earned has been used to complete the payment for the welding machine. The group has two sewing machines.

Having put together all the activities, the group has the following as their plans:

1. A launch similar to the one held by the youth of North West in order for them to be known in the community, increase membership and start partnering with relevant stakeholders.
2. Register their businesses.
3. Open a bank account. ●

Enumeration alters removal plan

By **Linda Shoko**,
Masilunge, Gugulethu, Cape Town

Lwazi Park is an informal settlement of 38 families, situated in between Lwazi Primary School and an old canal that is under renovation. The settlement is over 14-years old. The former backyarders occupied a dump site — a small piece of land alongside the school.

According to Mandisa Qamata, a 40-year old married mother of three, before they came to live there there were numerous thefts at the primary school. Criminals would steal computers, office furniture and all school equipment. "By occupying that piece of land, it was our way of trying to secure the school because our children attend there," explained Mrs. Qamata. "And since the occupation by backyarders, the crime rate diminished.

The community was challenged by floods that were caused by the nearby canal. ISN and City partnership project meetings had revealed that there was possible relocation for the people of Lwazi Park.

This the community of Lwazi Park didn't take too well, for there were those who welcomed the idea, and some were concerned about the place they are going to be relocated

to. The place was not known to them. Meetings were held between the city officials and the Lwazi Park community, and eventually they agreed to the relocation.

The ISN and the community enumerated the settlement. They counted the basic services, the population, number of shacks, number of people who have sufficient education, what is the income and expenditure of a household, etc. This was captured into the city's database, so it could assist in terms of upgrading and development.

Residents went into tough negotiations and secured agreement for their own plan for the land in which they have now been relocated. Families share one flush toilet and there's enough space for ambulances and fire brigades to freely go in. There are roads and a streetlight that's soon to be switched on. The canal is now finally being renovated.

It is believed that the municipality promised to put a fence around for safety reasons. A children's park is also to be built, and since they do community savings they'll organize for a container to be bought so as to hold meetings and gatherings. "There's hope for a brighter future," said Mrs. Qamata. ●

Evictions, flooding in Kliptown

By **Mfundisi Masithe**
Kliptown, Johannesburg

THE EVICTIONS THAT TOOK PLACE recently in Kliptown made me sleepless. It was a dark day. I woke up in the morning and everybody was crying, saying "This is too much." To me it was like a lion and a lamb sleeping together.

When I talked to other people, floods had removed their shacks. They said that they had told the councillor to come and help. But he was busy helping only those with cars.

There was a lady crying like a small baby who needs milk. I asked her why she was so sad. She told me that she had lost her baby and had no idea where she was. The child was sick with pneumonia and lost without anyone knowing her whereabouts.

It was not the first time that we were faced with the problem of living in low-lying land. When we tell the councillor that we need houses, he gives us parcels of food and tells us that we are going to get jobs. Instead they are now

building a bridge that will benefit the councillor and his committee.

Why does the City of Johannesburg build a bridge while the residents of Kliptown want houses? The community is in need of houses, not of a bridge. Some of the community leaders want the bridge because they will personally benefit from that.

What have we done to Government to be paid back like this? Kliptown is one of the oldest informal settlements. The area was once used to hide struggle leaders like Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu, and for holding secret meetings.

Today we have forgotten about Kliptown, which is also home to the historic Walter Sisulu square, signing place of the Freedom Charter. Mayor Amos Masondo used to come to Kliptown to watch movies in a place called SunSuz, but now he has forgotten us.

They have built a square for tourists, but there is no infrastructure and housing for the people. ●



Nana Buthelezi's young child died last month in a shack fire.

Baby dies in shack fire

By **Ayanda Vena**
Siphamandla, Ekurhuleni
EARLY ON SUNDAY MORNING, 8 May 2011, the neighbours of Nana Buthelezi saw smoke coming out of her house.

One of the rooms of her home in Clevedonway near Toronga Station outside Johannesburg had caught fire.

But when they finally managed to kick the door open, it was too late for at least one of the three kids who were locked up inside.

One two-year-old was burnt to ashes on the bed, a six-year-old and a four-year-old were rushed in critical condition to hospital.

The children were trying

to keep warm by the fire while the parents were out all night. The distraught mother was not available for comment why the children had been left alone.

Her sister Busi Buthelezi, who happens to be the parent of one of the kids who were sent to hospital, said that when first questioned that they were in the house when the fire started.

Later she changed her statement saying that they were next door around the corner from where they could not see that the room was burning.

The fire also destroyed the belongings of the people staying in that house. ●

EXCHANGE

Southern African countries build teams to document their struggle



During an exchange between community journalists from Malawi, Namibia, and South Africa, participants discussed ideas for stories, how to set up community newspapers, as well as techniques for interviewing and writing stories.

By Kopano Molokoane and Ayanda Vena
Ou Kasie, North West / Siphamandla, Ekurhuleni

AS EDITORS AT UTSHANI BUYAKHULUMA, WE WENT to Namibia on documentation exchange with colleagues in the network of Shack Dwellers International (SDI) from Malawi for three days in early April.

We were sharing the ideas of how to document our work in the informal settlements in our three countries. We did it successfully as our Namibian colleagues learned a lot from us. They promised to start doing their own newspaper.

We showed them how to start writing a newspaper according to the different categories, such as housing, upgrading, crime, health, income generation and disaster. They were very interested and loved our approach.

On the second day we went out to informal settlements to interview the members of their savings schemes and found out how they are doing. At Gorengab for instance, 30 minutes from

Windhoek, we spoke to community leader Hanna Eisis. She is a seamstress and runs a savings group with 34 members, of which 10 are active. Some members have taken loans for small businesses. However, some of them are not doing well with their businesses, because people place orders and don't come to collect them. This causes a loss for the business and they are now faced with the prospect of being unable to repay their loans.

Back at the federation house where we were meeting, we assisted each other in writing stories about what we had encountered in the field. Later there were discussions in which we shared and learned from each other. It was very beneficial for us to listen to the questions of the Namibian participants, which helped us to rethink our own issues and choices.

It was also very interesting for us to learn that their housing development works without any subsidies from government. They get loans from their federation which they have to repay in full

using their daily savings. In South Africa we are lucky in comparison because, at least in some instances, government makes funding for housing available. Namibia became a democracy in 1990, four years before us, but this has not made it any easier for them.

The Malawians also have a strong federation and publish a newsletter. They are already working on their third issue. In their newsletter they focus strongly on the federation members and their issues but do not address the whole community of Malawi. Our exchange made them think about this structure and they may include more general interest stories about informal settlement communities, like uTshani Buyakhuluma is already doing. The Malawians include a listing of their savings groups with the amounts saved in their publication. The savings scheme which is most successful is receiving a trophy. This is something that impressed us and that we might introduce into our own newspaper. ●

LAND STRUGGLES

Savings scheme in Ekurhuleni ready to build

After fighting for land, residents of Siphamandla wait over a decade on promises for infrastructure

By Makhatha Mokoena
Siphamandla, Ekurhuleni

AFTER SEVEN YEARS OF PUTTING PRESSURE on their officials, the residents of the Siphamandla informal settlement finally see some change in their community. But things are not moving quickly enough.

In April of last year the municipality started tarring roads followed by the introduction of electricity. However, the community feels that the officials are still dragging their feet.

The Kopanang Housing Scheme, which is ready to build, is now hoping that a letter from their official will speed the process up.

It all started in 1994 when the community which had been on a waiting list for municipal houses for a long time, marched to the offices of Katlehong, demanding their houses.

But the officials failed to address the complaints of the community. The community went to the municipal offices for two days, on the third day they decided to invade a piece of vacant land which they had previously identified.

"The municipality, however, was still not supporting the housing process. They said that basic services had to come first, which was then just an empty promise."

The land was situated near Moleleki, Extension 1, and was earmarked for bond houses. The community named the place "Siphamandla" informal settlement. The owner subsequently claimed his land back, but the new residents managed to negotiate

an agreement through extensive negotiations. In 1995, the leadership and its committee went back to the community to introduce the idea of savings. This opened the door for support from the South African Homeless People's Federation,

now FEDUP, and the non-political organization People's Dialogue.

The Kopanang Housing Savings Scheme started in October 1995. The objective was to get land in order to build houses. In 1996 the council initially failed to assist the community

to win land from private owners. The residents started to build ten houses anyway. When the council came on board, the private land owner eventually gave his consent to residents to construct houses.

The municipality, however, was still not supporting the process.

They said that basic services had to come first, which was then just an empty promise.

In 1997 there were other committee members who took their own way and decided to be against the Housing Scheme, but a record of understanding was signed by that committee and private owners.

In 1998 the municipality promised to install infrastructure, but failed to deliver their promises again.

Only in April 2010 did they actually start building tar roads followed by electricity. ●

OPINION

Initiation source of pride

By Rosinah Matshidiso Mandlasi
Vlaklaate, Mpumalanga

WHEN A GIRL REACHES THE age of 21, it is time for the lqude ceremony, which is when we initiate her into adulthood. She learns how to behave and to respect the elders.

The ceremony takes almost three days. It starts on a Friday and lasts to Sunday. On the first day we slaughter the sheep to give her the traditional medicine.

The cow is killed last for raising a girl child. The women who attend the ceremony get a special jam. The parents buy presents to congratulate their daughter.

After passing the lqude ceremony, the girl receives a new name, which expresses the respect of the community for her adult status.

She is usually given a traditional name, such as Nomhlekhabo, Sphenge, Nofanezile or Vanuhle.

After lqude, the girl is not allowed to leave her room for the period of one month.

We are part of the Ndebele nation and proud of our tradition. ●



Though many things are changing in the modern world, cultural traditions like lqude are a way for communities to remain connected to their past.

Youth federation learns to dream

By Kopano Molokane
Ou Kasie, Northwest

THE MINDTOURS YOUTH Federation uses savings as a tool to mobilize and address their daily and promote anything that will support the youth. This process has already made an impact in the within their community.

On May 7th 2011, the Mindtours Youth Federation hosted a successful dialogue in North West that was supported by a number of stakeholders. The event was attended by representatives from: South African Savings Institute (SASI), LONMIN Platinum Mine, SASKO Bakery, Federation of the Urban and Rural Poor (FedUp), NACTO, CORC, Department of Arts Sports and Culture.

The event held at the Oukasie Community hall attracted more than 600 people. The main objectives of the dialogue were to expose more youth to the youth federation and to strengthen the partnerships.

Established in Feb 2011, Mindtours' current members have saved R3200 so far. The idea came after the realization that more than 85% of Oukasie youth who complete matric are not able to further their studies.

Further research revealed that a lack of sufficient information limits the chances of matriculants to proceed, such as what programs are offered by universities and colleges, due dates for applying as well as how and where to apply for bursaries. High unemployment has lead to interest in income generation activities.

Bearing this in mind, a group of youth, who were exposed to FEDUP rituals through their parents membership, began to mobilise others through savings. We created partnerships with organisations that are relevant to the needs of the youth. For example, LONMIN Platinum Mine will assist with bursaries for maths and science courses. Department of Education have partnered to expand the savings concept in schools. SASKO Bakery will support hosting youth development events.

Mindtours' ability to mobilise, save, establish meaningful partnership with key stakeholders is an indication of a great potential. In serving the best interests of children, we serve the best interests of all humanity. Everyone deserves the best start in life.

We at Mindtours: We Dream, We Save, We Achieve. ●

Organized youth must fight crime

By Moeti Leseba
Odendaalsrus, Free State

CRIME IN OUR COMMUNITY is getting worse, and it's something that we should be worried about. We see people being killed like animals, yet nothing is being done. Instead, we leave everything to the police.

It could be that we are afraid the criminals could turn against us if we speak out and help the police. While this may be true, what happens if we keep quiet? It gets even worse.

Who are these criminals? The answer is simple, it is our youth, our very own South African youth. Why the youth of all people?

When there is a severe lack of employment opportunities, it can quite easily feel that there is no option but crime. According to the latest statistics, the rate of youth unemployed under the age of 24 years in SA is growing. Another cause is the lack of job experience.

This is something that our government and our companies should take seriously and provide these opportunities.

Another problem is alcohol and drug abuse. Our youth use alcohol like it is the only solution to their problems. Some even use weed (marijuana) as if it was legal in our country. I used to be a member of CPF (community policing forum) five years

ago. During that time, I noticed that it was useful to work hand in hand with the police to fight crime, as well as with the community at large because crime was lower than it is now.

It is clear the police don't have support from the community.

Our youth are no longer taking part in sports activities. We used to play soccer in our 20s.

During the week in the afternoons it was training, and at the weekend it was games. Therefore we couldn't think of crime.

But nowadays I don't see that happening. These days there are many sporting activities and opportunities to choose from.

We had limited opportunities, and you had to excel in whatever team you were playing for. Now there are many divisions in different sporting activities to help youngsters to grow up with sports.

It is painful to see our youth in crime because they end up either in jail or dead. Jails are full of these young people with offences such as rape, robbery, and murder. They also become gangsters for fame or fear.

Maybe the solution could be for each parent to sit down with their children and discuss their future with them and listen to their views about the challenges that they face. Parents

should advise them about life and friends, make them aware that they can talk to you.

Give them an example who is a good friend and who a bad friend.

Don't expect them to be perfect but guide them, remember that even you made mistakes at some point in your life before you arrived where you are today. Help them not to make the same mistake.

Remember to seek help from professionals like counselors and psychologists if you have problems.

I also believe that government can help by encouraging the ward councilors to form a sort of youth forum or youth indaba within their respective wards.

There youth can meet at least once or twice a week to talk about the challenges that they are faced with, from crime to HIV/AIDS and support them with accommodation and any support that they might need.

It also might be a good idea to have monthly group sessions with a professional councilor to listen. And, if necessary, these councilors could be available to help guide and motivate young people.

That can also be done by NGOs just to help these future adults. ●

Upgrade your community!

INFORMAL SETTLEMENT AND BACKYARD SHACK COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY NOW HAVE ACCESS TO "MASIKHASE", THE COMMUNITY UPGRADING FINANCE FACILITY (CUFF).

Propose projects and call for funds to upgrade your community. All you need to do is submit an application of one page with the following information: Settlement name, Leadership contact details, Technical committee contact details, Project description, Expected project impact, Project cost, Receipts of community savings, and Technical plans.

The application will then be reviewed by the CUFF board, which is made up of a majority of informal settlement and backyard shack community leaders who are upgrading their settlements.

If you need assistance in drawing up the application contact the Community Organisation Resource Centre to help your community submit a proposal. Contact Aditya or Andy at 021 689 9408, Fax 086 513 5279, Mail PO Box 14038, Mowbray, Cape Town 7705, email admin@courc.co.za

OPINION



Making people's participation in development a reality

By Puti Mashamaite

Siphamandla, Ekurhuleni

THE BROADER SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNITY VOTES in every election in the confidence that every single vote will help change the current living standard of the poor majority. We hope that our vote will liberate us from this poor socio-economic lifestyle.

We continue to vote in best faith as the poor masses of the country, even though there are no symptoms of change. This article is addressing the poor indigenous South African majority, especially those living in informal settlements.

As informal settlement dwellers in South Africa, we need to understand that access to land, adequate housing, health care services, sufficient food and water, social service and social assistance are our socio-economic rights. Government must see to it that they deliver that to the people. We are not saying the government must provide service delivery immediately to everyone. But the State must implement a reasonable programme to provide services to the people. It must be a people-driven process, meaning Government and

community work together towards achieving a common goal.

People-driven processes can only be achieved by participating and engaging meaningfully in every programme or project that affects our life. Participation by people on the ground will prevent fit-one-fit-all methods; this has been seen in many projects, especially in the informal settlements. Government and communities must talk and listen to each other and try to understand each other's perspectives, so they can achieve together particular goals.

A neutral space where people and Government can discuss and shape options and solutions to difficult issues is a must.

The constitutional court has encouraged interested civil and society organizations like ISN, FEDUP, and AFF to get them involved as third parties in the engagement processes.

Skilled and sympathetic people are needed to make engagement processes effective. This is a task for informal settlement dwellers to change the strategy and adopt a new philosophy. We must insist that Government does not design and

implement a socio-economic programme without engaging us. Nothing for us without us.

Many decisions that have been taken in the past affecting us have never been productive.

We must regard these as humiliations of our rights to participate in democracy.

The African Commission on Human and People's Rights has said that Government must provide meaningful opportunities for individuals to be heard and to participate in the development decisions that affect their lives.

These tell us as informal settlement dwellers that our democracy does not end in the voting stations.

We can never allow ourselves to be treated as "voting-cows", let us think out of the box regarding our right of information. Gone are those days when we were misinformed and overloaded with wrong ideas.

A new world order must take place.

Being poor does not mean that we are poor in mind.

A revolutionary turn is necessary if we want to achieve our goals as South Africans. ●

WANT TO CONTRIBUTE?

CALL: AYANDA AT 078 260 4882

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- INFORMAL SETTLEMENT NETWORK (ISN)
- FEDERATION OF THE URBAN AND RURAL POOR (FEDUP)
- COMMUNITY ORGANISATION RESOURCE CENTRE (CORG)
- UTSHANI FUND
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THE COMMUNITY GROUPS LINKED TO THE ALLIANCE ARE AT WORK IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENT COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. BELOW ARE THE COMMUNITY-BASED CONTACTS IN EACH REGION:

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Promise of World Cup eludes the poor

By Ronald Sibusiso Sibeko

AS THE YEAR 2010 HAS COME AND gone, the question is "What's next?" I am a patriotic citizen of South Africa, and 2010 was a year to remember. The mere fact that South Africa hosted the biggest event, the Fifa World Cup, for the first time on African soil surely put Mzansi on centre stage.

We did it successfully though some European countries doubted us. We stood firm and showed the world that we are capable of hosting such a big event. The world experienced the most interesting and exciting soccer tournament ever seen.

But on the flip side, as an ordinary citizen of this country, I'm still confused. I look back at 2004 when Fifa president Sepp Blatter opened that envelope and announced that South Africa would be the host of the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

Who can forget that moment? South Africa erupted with excitement.

There was so much joy. The fact that South Africa won the bid brought so much hope. It was like the first step to the land of milk and honey.

People were subsequently promised job opportunities. But surprisingly the rate of unemployment has since increased

drastically. We still have problems with poverty as the price of basic needs keeps going up.

People are still struggling to get better housing, and — as I may recall — government promised that by 2014 all informal settlements would be gone.

Also, we still find children who have to walk miles to get to school, even though people were promised access to better transportation, education, health care, access to clean water and electricity. For people who live in rural areas these are just fantasies.

Frankly, I believe this opportunity came too soon for our country. We are supposed to clean the house before we even invite the guests. But it is clear that all the dirt was swept under the carpet.

It is a shame to know that many ordinary citizens could not even afford to buy a match ticket.

And we thought this world cup was supposed to bring changes to the ordinary Africans.

I doubt this — it was more the rich man's party. I'm not trying to stir up someone's heart.

But my opinion is that the Fifa World Cup was supposed to be the light at the end of the tunnel for all ordinary Africans but it was more like a train that came to crush us. ●

NETWORK NEWS

Western Cape groups meet to discuss steps to success

By Mzimasi Ntwanambi
Joe Slovo, Cape Town

THE CENTRAL REGIONAL DIALOGUE WAS HELD at Kanana community hall, an informal settlement located in Guguletu, Cape Town.

On the 27th May 2011, there was a preparatory-planning meeting, whereby informal settlements and backyarders of KwaZuluNatal, Gauteng, Durban, Port Elizabeth, Stellenbosch and the South Peninsula were all invited to learn and note guidelines as to how the Western Cape process came about to be as successful as it is today.

The preparatory meeting was based on learning from the challenges faced from the first ever Western Cape regional dialogue. Time for role play was also set aside in the programme. This was where people from the meeting would pose

as one of the invited informal settlements and backyarders, having issues arising from their communities which need to be addressed.

An example of role play was the act of Linda Shoko, a communications person in the WC ISN Coordinating Team, who stood in as a scribe. A chart with all the communities that were invited in the dialogue was prepared a day before. For example, Nolwando Mayongo, also a Capacity Building team member, posed as one of the community members who had issues arising in her settlement. The preparatory meeting took three hours, and it proved to be promising.

On 28th May 2011, the Central Regional dialogue started at 11H00, and all the informal settlements that were invited, attended. According to Linda Shoko, the ISN coordinating team prepared a chart

filled with all the invited communities, so that they complete whatever issues that may arise.

The communities needed to see those issues being scribed on the chart. There was full participation where people voicing their needs, was concerned.

A few examples that were noted were: Siyahlala (Philippi), Gxagxa (Guguletu), Masilunge (Guguletu), Siyazenzela (Retreat) are all settlements who need ISN to arrange a meeting with them and the city, so as to address land ownership and discuss selling of the land to them.

Other communities like Europe, Tambo Square, School Site, Murray and Lotus, Siyahlala (Philippi) and Sheffield Road urgently need electricity installation. Overall, the dialogue went well, and the attendance was quite satisfying. ●

POETRY CORNER

“We need to listen and understand”
By Patrick Magebhula Hunsley
Piesangs River, Durban

If we listen we will hear.
If we hear we will think.
We think we will understand.
If we understand we will know.
If we know we will implement.

we tend to talk all the time.
We tend to spend our energies listening to ourselves.
Thus failing to hear what we mean to say.
To understand what we want to say.
We need to listen.

To listen is a gift.
To posses this gift is an advantage.
to understand is to have knowledge.
And knowledge comes from listening.

If we listen we will hear the whispers in the grass.
Whispers because they come from hungry stomachs.
If the government listens it will hear its people.
If we listen we will hear the grassroots message.
We need to listen to understand.

If the people listen to the people.
And if government listens to its people.
This world will be a better place.
If I listen to my heartbeat I'll know I'm alive.
If I listen to my conscience I'll know what I want.
If I listen I will lead the people with enough information.
We need to listen to understand.

“Anger of the poor”
By Mzi da poet eJoe Slovo

Building a need for the poor
is like building the future
for the next generations.
Development is basic and not enough.
You are wrong in all aspects
to give such an empty promise,
leaving the poor with unanswered questions.
Corruption is the allegation
pointing fingers to the leaders
acting like unbelievers
because of boiling anger.

Waiting for pending promises,
where is the communication?
By small and simple things
big things come to an end

Our vote is our voice.
I guess we are still unheard.
What more can we do or say
for our future plans do fade.
They say wait.
“For what?”, we ask.

“IMFUNDO”
By Lwazi Nongce
Langa, Ikhwezi Hostel, Cape Town

Fumana mfundo uzokonwaba,
kutsho kuvuthuluke ingxaki zobani.
Okwenfuyo namhla kuyalabalaba,
kuba ukwazi ngengqondo.
Isitixo sobomi yimfundo.
Ndamhla ndonwabile kuba
ndinemfundo,
namhla ndiyaphangela andikhali
kubazali.Isikolo asinaminyaka.

ZIFUMANEL IMFUNDO
MZONTSUNDU!!!

“A dream”
By Zoliswa Vena
Siphamandla, Ekurhuleni

While I was on my bed, I had a dream that
was very bad
I was on my way to school, only to find out I
was drowning in a pool
I was sitting in a park, with someone that I
admire, only to find out he was a liar

I was singing a song that made me brave,
only to find out I was singing on my grave
I was walking with my groom, only to find
out it was a broom

A broom that swept my life away
I was wearing a necklace, only to find out it
was a rope
A rope that hanged me to death

I woke up feeling like flying away, only if I
had wings and fly to the sky
Where the stars will shine on me, where the
moon will smile at me
And the rain wash all the pain,
The wind blow me away.