

uTshani Buyakhuluma

The grassroots are talking

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After organising themselves, residents of Langrug informal settlement went door-to-door to survey each other and prepare to develop their settlement

Langrug residents plan for their future

By Alfred Ratana

Langrug, Stellenbosch

THE RESIDENTS OF LANGRUG, AN INFORMAL SETTLEMENT in the winelands near Franschhoek in the Western Cape, are well prepared for the relocation of parts of their settlement.

An enumeration earlier this year has provided them with the necessary information. The reason for this relocation is that people built their shacks inside the empty dam which is very risky.

There is a possibility that the dam will be flooded in winter.

The relocation at Langrug started early in 2008 but failed due to politics.

The residents didn't want the suggested bungalows

but preferred the well-known zinc shacks. Last year the Informal Settlement Network (ISN) came to support the community, upon the initiative of the city.

They talked about how a community-based organization works. The residents bought into the idea and worked with the ISN to voice the community's problems.

The ISN has empowered the people in Langrug: They soon felt strong enough to face their own problems. An exchange to go and see the concept of Blocking Out in Sheffield Road, Philippi, further helped the understanding of the process. The community of Langrug started to get more seriously involved with the ISN at the beginning of 2011.

Attending the information meetings helped the residents a lot. It was an eye-opener for the community at large. In the meetings it was suggested to the community to have an enumeration as to collect various facts and figures about the community.

Earlier this year ISN conducted a workshop, which

made people understand the purpose of the enumeration. It is a tool for the community to open the doors at the municipality or other places and to negotiate. The enumeration was conducted by volunteers from the community.

The reason for the community conducted enumeration is to find out how many people live in the community, who is working or not working and how many children are going to school.

There are many more questions being asked in the questionnaire regarding vulnerability, economic status, service delivery and other issues.

During the enumeration, the team discovered that most people do not have IDs. This is a problem, because some

are disabled and do not receive a grant.

The community proved that in subsection Zwelitsha, there are no toilets. Only one tap was functioning and serving 277 people.

They were also facing the problem of blocked of water pipes.

Not only the volunteers, but also the community leaders learnt a lot in this exercise. It was an example of how the community can engage itself meaningfully in the negotiations with the Stellenbosch Municipality.

Now the residents are in talks with the Municipality about fixing the problem of running water between the shacks. A supported relocation is in progress.

16 shacks are about to be moved. The second group of 14 shacks will follow soon. Blocking out is also happening.

The municipality agreed to meet the community's demands and promised to pay R7000 per structure. The second relocation will sort out the dam area which is a danger zone in winter with heavy flooding. Residents are being moved to a more open space.◆

THE NEWSPAPER OF,
BY, AND FOR THE
PEOPLE

Amandla, imali

nolwazi... Eish, ayilumi xa

ihlafuna!

Coming together to recycle in Durban

THE COMMUNITY of iZakheleni in Durban has struggled to build their community, ever since they first identified their land in 1990. They began recycling as individuals to earn a small income. Residents did this by collecting boxes, plastics, and bottles. Now they are pooling their savings from the recycling activities, and also embarking on projects to clean the streets where they live. The money will be used to contribute to upgrading communal infrastructure in the settlement.

» see pg 6



PE settlements show solidarity

THE INFORMAL Settlement Network (ISN) recently elected a new coordination team in the Eastern Cape. The three-day-meeting took place at the George Botha Hall in an area called Kwa-Noxolo. ISN Chairman Patrick Magabhula was present as well as 29 other community leaders. CORC field worker and ISN representative Mzwanele Zulu from the Western Cape facilitated the process. On the first day, communities identified their specific needs, on day two those with needs in common were grouped together. After the election of the coordinating team, the last day was used to draw up a three-month-action-plan and a corresponding budget. The success was tangible: Within two weeks after the meeting, the capacity building, savings & technical team managed to mobilize ten new communities!◆

SAVINGS

Bester residents build for themselves



Members of savings groups in the the Durban settlement of Bester are beginning to build the second round of houses

By Patricia Sithole and Mondli Blose

Bester, Durban

THE BESTER SAVINGS SCHEME IN DURBAN, which consists of three groups, is building more houses for its members.

Since joining FEDUP in 1998, they have been saving successfully.

"Our purpose is to not only to save and cater for houses, but also to look after our inner self by saving for gifts, soaps and emergency items," says Bester resident Khanyisile S'bongile Zondo.

That was where community quickly realised the importance of FEDUP.

The whole ward 47 started to save. Meetings have since been held every Saturday.

The savings scheme has currently three groups

with a total of 35 members.

In 2002, the group built 34 houses with the help of the uTshani Fund after paying R500 each.

They continued with their daily savings, which helped them to repay the uTshani loans.

By 2005, five members received their subsidies and managed to top up their roofs with savings of R5,333 and built 52m² houses with four rooms.

The group negotiated the issue building other members' houses.

They decided to start another form of monthly savings of R100. They negotiated with the building material supplier CashBuild to open an account for their savings scheme.

Every month they save in this supplier account. The group is about to start laying slabs.●

JHB community, city, and students, collaborate

By Mfundisi Masithe, Ruimsig, Gauteng

RUIMSIG IS AN INFORMAL settlement near Roodepoort in Gauteng, close to the affluent suburb called Portview.

The community is busy mapping their area, as part of a mobilisation campaign by the Informal Settlement Network (ISN) and the Municipality of Johannesburg.

Ruimsig is a pilot project of the partnership between ISN and the City.

The activities include an enumeration, technical support, savings and other issues of the landless.

On the 12th of July 2011, people gathered outside the hall, waiting to meet some donors and representatives from the ISN.

After an inspection of the site, everyone went inside the hall which is made of zinc and can accommodate 100 people. The programme started with the introduction of the visitors, namely the donors from Chile,

an architect from the University of Johannesburg, and iKhayalami, the building support organization of the South African SDI alliance.

The meeting was fruitful, as the visitors asked many questions about Ruimsig.

They were interested to hear about education, health and recreation. They emphasized the importance of serving the community.

The architect said he would bring students to do mapping. People were divided into two groups, representing big shack and small shack owners.

It was discussed how the community would go about sharing donated zinc sheets, and what the community could contribute themselves.

It was decided to first help the very poor, as ISN is a network which is there for those most in need.

People learned slogans like "Amandla imali nolwazi, Awudelela banyye and Ayilumi xa ihlafuna".●

CT group unites through savings

By Mzimasi Ntwanambi,

Cape Town

THE PHILIPPI SAVINGS scheme Hlala Uphila in Cape Town has successfully implemented the new savings methodology, introduced by FEDUP. A team came to the group and explained the rituals. The members are keen to do what is needed of them. Exchanges with other groups are happening.

Hlala Uphila was formed in 2007 with eleven members. The group was busy setting up their shacks on a site which was previously a cemetery. They started to save R1 per day. When they saw they were doing well, they mobilised more women to join, as this proved to be a good thing to keep the community united.

They held weekly meeting, and the group quickly grew to 24 members who are all active. The group has already saved R8,294, and their Urban Poor Fund (UPF) is sitting at R14,180. They are using a post office book

to save their money. There are collectors for the daily savings, and treasurers for the bookkeeping. The meetings are now taking place on Thursday of every week to check if they have all books in order and to hear what the issues are within the group.

For instance, their place is very small: When they dig for electricity they struggle to get to the electricity poles because they find casket structures underneath.

The toilets they are sharing are not in a good situation. They have tried to go to places to get land, but nothing helped as the land in the Western Cape is owned by the municipality or private.

The group regularly attends meetings with FEDUP. Every three months, they participate in the regional meeting of the Western Cape Federation.

These meetings deal with everything that concerns poor people. National leaders are being invited for support.●

Sheffield Rd makes safe space for kids

By Linda Shoko

Guguletu, Cape Town

IN OCTOBER 2009, A MOBILISING TEAM of the Informal Settlement Network (ISN) visited the community of Sheffield Road in Philippi, Cape Town. This involves firstly calling on the leadership of the area, and explaining to them the aims and objectives of the ISN, which is to include all existing communities of the poor, also the backyard dwellers, so they form "one voice" in negotiating with municipalities around development and upgrading.

After the initial meeting, an enumeration of the community was conducted, where social, economic and demographic data are collected and used in negotiations with the City. Some of the major findings of the profiling process were as follows: 167 shacks and 507 residents. Other findings were that there was no space between the shacks, and no playgrounds. This meant there was a need for "blocking out" to be done. Blocking out – realigning the shacks – is also necessary in case of fire and emergencies, so that ambulances can freely move within the shacks.

According to Nozusakhe Mandevu, a 38-year-old married mother of two and Sheffield Road committee member, new building material through iKhayalami which, is part of the SA SDI alliance. The material provided is stronger than normal zinc sheets used for building

a shack. It also takes longer to burn in times of fire, and is cooler in hot seasons.

Blocking out is done cluster by cluster, after it had been agreed in communal meetings to do so. This gave way for shacks to be built facing each other, safer for residents to look out for one another in terms of crime. There's a double advantage to blocking out: Space inbetween was created, which gave space for communal gatherings and meetings.

The first cluster needed 14 shacks to be blocked out. Initially, the size of an individual shack was agreed to be 15m², and later on extended to 20m².

To qualify for a new shack, each household has to contribute R650 towards the Masikhase fund, which is to financially assist communities with housing and upgrading projects (or 20% of project cost)

Presently, Sheffield Road is busy completing the fourth cluster. Already the community is using the new space for meetings, communal gatherings and braais on warm days. Children play and consider the area their play park. Before they were built, the crime rate was high.

Now, with the shacks facing each other, there is a lower chance of break-ins within the neighbourhood. "The re-blocking is the best option", explains Mrs Mandevu proudly. "People from other informal settlements come here to find out how we created our new spaces".●

UPGRADING

Shack dwellers teach planners, architects



Residents of Barcelona and Europe in Cape Town have surveyed themselves and used the information to work with university students and city officials to plan for development.

By Linda Shoko,

Gugulethu, Cape Town

20 PLANNING STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF Cape Town met with residents of the informal settlements Barcelona and Europe in February engaging in a joint upgrading project with the City.

This was part of their study plan, and they were requested to draw up a developmental plan, which looked at upgrading these communities along the N2 freeway in Cape Town.

The UCT students spent six weeks in Barcelona and Europe, in a venture to understand the communities and their needs and bring about a solution to some of the problems faced by them.

The project was divided into three phases, where the first phase was to analyse the site, i.e. to get a feel for the culture of the place, as well as the educational and medical services.

The second phase entailed looking at the legal side, like the city documents and policies.

This was aimed at observing major challenges, and figure out ways to deal with the piles of bur-

ied rubbish on which the shacks of Barcelona and Europe were built. The last phase looked at ways of rehabilitating and linking Barcelona and Europe to other communities.

Rehabilitation in this context means getting rid of the rubbish within the layer of the land.

The reason why rehabilitation is important, is to make sure no further pollution takes place because this could impact on the city of Cape Town's water supply situation which is already very stressed due to the growing population.

It is alleged that the rubbish dump in the area was opened in 1952 and closed up in 1986.

It was never capped (taking off the first layer of the land and putting it back) and never sealed, which is a major concern and health hazard.

During a presentation at UCT on the 1st of July 2011, the alliance discussed some of the student proposals.

One focused for instance on the immediate needs of the communities and economic opportunities.

The proposal suggested the formation of a cen-

tral developmental market space into which basic public services could be integrated.

This however would include the temporary relocation of some residents.

Another student looked at ways to improve transportation and proposed a road to be built over the N2 highway into Europe.

What was most interesting about the students' findings was that clinics and hospitals were not needed, but that taps and toilets were a major need of the communities.

"What I've learnt in the course of the project was overwhelming," said Acacia Hasler, one of the UCT participants. "We got to deal with people's real situations, their hopes and dreams. It somehow changes your perspective of what informal settlements are really like".

City officials participated in the presentation. "The ideas are good because they will help to change the conditions of the people living in Barcelona and Europe", said City field officer Sandile Bebe. ●

Women draw in support to feed the poor and hungry

By Patricia Sithole,

Amaoti, Durban

THEY SAW OLD PEOPLE, THE SICK and parents passing away and leaving children alone behind. That was when nine women of the informal settlement Amaoti in Durban decided to start their soup kitchen uThandolwethu which means "Our love". There is no financial support from a sponsor, so they each contribute R50 per month. They also bring what they can from their houses. But they are not happy because they can only cook once a week, which is Thursday.

Their goal is to be able to feed the poor every day because everyone needs something to eat every day and not only once a week. Some have to take medication on an empty stomach.

The soup kitchen is not the first project that the ladies got involved in. In 2004 they started the saving scheme Zimele Geqe with 100 members at Amaoti.

The former councilor accepted the new partnership with open hands. Soon after they organized an enumeration, which is a survey to find out about people's needs in the community.

They also looked at the necessary services to meet these needs, and how many people lived in every household. The saving scheme worked hand in hand with the community, as well as the ward councilor.

Since then the group opened ten more active saving schemes, one per area, which they were visiting. They saw that whatever they were doing

was coming along fine.

ISN chairman Patrick Magebhula came to negotiate. Together they decided to build a show house in every area where there was an active saving scheme. Since 2004 they built five houses, one in 'Nigeria', two in 'Cuba', one in 'Namibia' and one in 'Mozambique'.

It was not all that easy: When these houses were built, the old councilor had already left, and her replacement was not sympathetic at all.

The soup kitchen is also a FEDUP project. A reverend from Ntuzuma E, near Kwamashu, tries hard to support the feeding scheme once a month. A visiting bishop from Peru donated R2,000 which the group decided to share with another soup kitchen from Piesang River. But there are still

lots of problems. Shelter and premises are lacking to feed the poor. When it is raining, the group cannot cook, which is terrible as they are feeding 68 adults and 103 children.

The project also needs First Aid kits to help those who can't bath themselves and to protect the people who live with the patients.

Their greatest wish is to help the orphans who don't have a birth certificate. Without this paper they cannot go to school and be registered for the child/foster care grants.

"We can't fulfill our dream because we don't have anyone assisting us", says one member.

They have approached a few companies for support, which would help with transport costs, and are waiting to hear from them. ●

VOICES FROM ATHLONE

ARTICLES ON THIS PAGE COMPILED ON SITE BY THE UTSHANI
BUYAKHULUMA COMMUNITY JOURNALIST TEAMS

Family emerges from hidden life without roof

A FAMILY OF SIX, A COUPLE AND THEIR FOUR kids from 12 to 30 years, are living from child grant income which is R260 per child.

This is their story: "We have been waiting for fifteen years for a proper house from the municipality. Before we moved to the current place, we were living on a grassroots stoep for five years.

We then moved to Park Town where we had a shack for another three years.

We moved from there because our shack burned down, and we were left with nothing. Where we are now living, we are sleeping on cardboard.

We must put something to cover our heads.

The structure is not stable. When it's raining, it's leaking and flooding inside as much as outside. We get very cold".

We asked them how they survive in terms of taking care of the family.

"We are living and surviving of handouts and some odd jobs", Rose said.

"Our kids are growing, and it is frustrating. We are happy that the enumeration was done in our area, as it is bringing some hope to the community who need help."

We are happy to hear that the Ward Councilor is willing to work with the community. We hope that this will improve their lives.●



"Our kids are growing, and it is frustrating. We are happy that the enumeration was done in our area, as it is bringing some hope to the community who need help."

Community surveys itself to be part of the City

WHEN WE MET WITH THE BACKYARDERS OF Bokmakkerie, we wanted to know who they are, and the reasons for the enumeration.

We learned that the community had decided on the enumeration to find out about their needs. They were willing to enter into a partnership with the municipality so that they could get better services. The enumerators were trained on how to collect the information from people correctly.

One of the organizers from the alliance, Denise Ruiters, told us they went to see the councilor of Ward 49, Ms Susan Little, who was keen to work with them. She handed them a consent letter. The view of the municipality is that the house owners need to look at the best interest of the people who are renting from their backyards. Denise Ruiters told us that Councilor Little promised to cooperate according to this view-

point. They are planning to have meetings once a month to look at the community needs. As a start, she requested to receive ten names from the "Over-crowded" category and ten from the "In need" group, as a start to support the community.

We spoke with a 60-year-old woman named Magrette. She was sitting on the bed in her leaking shack. The whole house was damp with water, as it was raining heavily. It is a very bad situation for an old person. Against the leaking holes in her roof, she is using small empty tins of ice cream to protect her belongings. Magrette moved here in 2004 and pays R750 in rent, as the shack belongs to the house owner. She uses her disability grant to pay her rent. Her dependants are her son, who is also disabled, and her grandchild. She doesn't have electricity; she is using candles to light her house which is not safe.

For the past eight years staying at this place, she has been using the bucket as a toilet. When they are finished, they take it 16 meters away from where they stay. This is stressing her, as she is not feeling strong.

There are 11 shacks in the yard, and all are paying the same rent to the owner and there is no toilet. They are getting water from the house. Magrette told us, "the owner doesn't take no excuses when it's month end". Her problem is she can't get any financial assistance from her family as the older son is having a problem.

She has never applied for a government grant. She uses a wheelchair to get around and struggles to get her medication. She pleaded for help from the alliance to get her a proper place to stay. She was crying so hard that we had to end the interview.

It was very sad for us to see her tears.●

Shack lords, bucket toilets, but still hope



Backyarders in Athlone are telling their stories and coming out from the shadows

ATHLONE IS THE HOME OF ONE OF THE WORLD Cup training stadiums. Hazendal is about 2 km away from the stadium. One can actually see the stadium from the backyard shacks.

We visited Alouise David, a backyarder. She stays in a three-roomed shack with her husband and child. The 'rooms' are smaller than a pool table. You could hardly move when you are inside.

Her husband travels a lot with work, so she stays alone with her baby most of the time. She has been staying there for four years now, paying a rent of R700 plus R100 per month for electricity. There are 13 families staying in that backyard. The shacks are from one to three rooms, ranging from R550 to R700 rent per month, excluding electricity. They use one tap and a single toilet that hasn't worked for about six months. The landlord has been calling the municipality. They are forced to use a bucket and plastics as a toilet. These people face more problems when it rains because most of the shacks are leaking. Compared to backyarders in townships far from the city like Khayelitsha and Gugulethu, their situation is more painful because of the expensive rent they are paying. She said she does not have any future plans of moving from that area as she does not know where else to go.●

Mother evicts daughter

ON WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON OF THE 22nd of June, a national documentation team of the SDI alliance visited the Bokmakkerie in Athlone (Cape Flats), Cape Town. The group met a lady who is staying with her three kids in her mother's house, where she occupies her own room. She is a divorcee and only living off maintenance money, as she is not working.

Since 1992 when she submitted the subsidy form, she has been waiting for her own house, but nothing has happened until now.

She is depressed staying at that place. Her own mother is serving her eviction papers to chase her out of the house. She is begging to be allowed to stay. All she wants is a home for her kids.

The process of the enumeration brought hope to this area.

Residents want things to change, and they know that the alliance is using the information gathering as a tool to achieve this goal.●

LAND STRUGGLES

Project stalls without subsidies

By Sidwell Mama,
Port Elizabeth

THE JOE SLOVO HOUSING PROJECT in Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape (uTshani Buyakhuluma reported in detail in the first issue) is struggling not to lose momentum.

In total, the development comprises 1950 sites. 1650 houses have already been built: 650 build by the Nelson Mandela Municipality, 840 build by iThubelitsha and 160 through uTshani Fund loans and other builders. FEDUP applied in 2008 to build another 181 houses with the assistance of uTshani Fund.

This was approved by the Eastern Cape Human Settlements Department. However of the 181 houses, only 30 have been constructed and the department only paid for 10 houses, apparently the remaining funding went to iThubelitsha Housing.

uTshani has made several attempts to retrieve the subsidies. A request for intervention by the minister of Human Settlements and the Eastern Cape MEC was discussed at a national Joint Working Group meeting of the People's Housing Process (PHP) in May in Pretoria. The project was supposed to be finalized by 2009.◆

People's housing acknowledged in PE

By Sidwell Mama

Joe Slovo, Port Elizabeth

BUKELWA POTWANE IS one of 27 members of the Joe Slovo housing scheme who received a loan of R10,000 in 1997 to build a 56m² house. This was to demonstrate to government that a people-driven housing process can manage the building of complete houses. In this case, the CPA had been established in 1996, and the title deed received.

The Federation facilitated a people-designed

layout plan and allocated its members to sites. Residents participated by labour, costing and planning. In 1999 the sketch layout plan was formalized by Metroplan and engineering designs were done.

However, the main sewer pipe ended up crossing over half of the houses. The savings scheme discussed the issue and agreed to ask uTshani Fund to forfeit the loan and rebuild the houses.

FEDUP and uTshani in-

spected all the "Old Debt" houses built in Joe Slovo, in order to recover debt through subsidies and finish all the outstanding plastering, plumbing, ceiling and painting of incomplete houses. The process was started by appointing an architect to formalize existing house plans and submissions for approval by the municipality. The house owners contributed by paying the municipal submission fee. uTshani provided the finance for the drawing fees.◆



Informal settlement dwellers are coming together to upgrade their communities

Gauteng residents save for tenure

By Alfred Gabuza,

Vosloorus Extension 20

THE TOKOZABACKYARDERS HAVE REALIZED THAT they need to be organized in order to secure land tenure. They engaged in negotiations with the municipality and councilors. They were told that there is no land near Tokoza or the surrounding areas available. They then identified a piece of land called Caravan Park that was owned by Debruno Austen who stays in George in the Western Cape. Joining the federation with the purpose of building houses for themselves, they traced Mrs. Austen to start negotiations.

There was a conflict between the federation and the council, as they also wanted to buy the land. Two months later, the federation signed an agreement with the landowner and deposited R20 000 from the savings as they agreed on a purchase price of R1.5 million for the land. The members agreed to pay R600 per member for the land, which was now costing R1.2 million after re-negotiations. They only managed to pay R245 000. uTshani gave them further support of R1 million.

As there were people renting farmhouses, they instructed the landowner to remove them so they could relocate their members to those farmhouses and named the area Thinasonke. Councilors told them that the land is for agriculture not for housing. It would never be zoned for housing. They decided to re-zone the land themselves, and started negotiating with town planners. People drew their own layout plan that was formalized by Urban Dynamics and named streets after our late leaders.

Layout plans and a beneficiaries' list were approved, then the building of the infrastructure started. As most of the beneficiaries are living in backyards, they were allocated on site. ◆

Settlement builds 185 homes for itself in Odendaalsrus, Free State

By Moeti Leseba,
Odendaalsrus, Free State

THE HOUSING PLEDGE, GIVEN TO THE FEDERATION by the government in 2006, is running smoothly in the Free State: Subsidies are being paid upfront. There are a few problems here and there, as it can happen in any project.

But the relationship between Mr. Thabang Tsoene and his team from the province and the regional FEDUP people around Emily Mohohlo is good.

They have all put hard work in to make this possible, including the FEDUP construction teams (CCMTs), which have been active in various settlements.

Initially, it was agreed that each province would be given 200 subsidies out of 1000. Then it would be taken from there.

So far in the Free State, a total of 185 houses have been completed in four different towns: QwaQwa completed 50, Kroonstad 50, Bothaville 45 and lastly Odendaalsrus 36.

All houses are 50 square meters big and satisfying for their members.

All these towns started with their respective projects early in 2009.

The QwaQwa project was only finished in March 2011 - the reason for it to take that long being amongst others the delays in the approval of the members as legitimate beneficiaries.

Also the payment took sometimes longer than expected. The biggest obstacle, however, was the difficult location of the place.

It is situated in the mountains, with sites being located on steep hills.

The roads are so bad in some places that deliveries could not even be made.

In such instances people working there, for example the CCMTs, had to carry some of the

building materials by hand to the sites, which was tough for them.

Kroonstad started their project early in 2009 and finished it at the beginning of 2011.

They did not have many problems compared to other towns because their members are situated in an area that uTshani helped them to buy.

The last house took them almost a year to build due to an ownership problem.

If it hadn't been for that, they would have finished building in not much more than a year.

The Bothaville project also started at the beginning of 2009.

They could have been finished quickly as well.

However, some members did not have title deeds, and it took them a long time to sort this out.

The matter has recently been resolved, and they are busy finishing the last five houses.

Odendaalsrus has finished 36 out of their 50 houses.

Six of the unfinished ones had a problem with their title deeds. The problem is being dealt with at the moment.

In the case of another eight houses, province mistakenly swapped names with people who are not members of the federation.

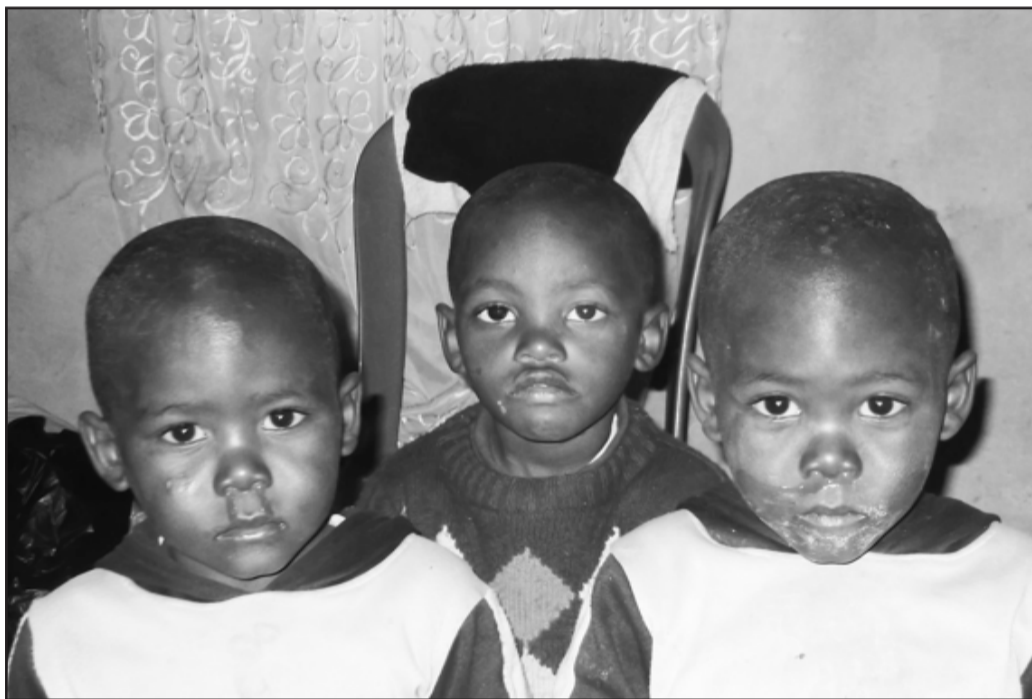
They are busy resolving that problem and correcting the names.

The federation and province have done a great job so far to put the Free State on the map by working jointly and understandingly.

It is also important not to forget the different municipalities and their contribution in making this process a success, because without a good working relationship with the authorities, it would be much harder. ◆

INCOME GENERATION

Creche owner keeps dream despite challenges



A mother in a Durban informal settlement has struggled successfully to maintain a crech for small children.

By Sma Simelane,
Eskhawini, Durban

THIS IS THE INSPIRING STORY OF 49-year-old Fundi Phiri, the mother of all in her community Eskhawini, an informal settlement near Durban, where she runs a crèche for 93 children. Born at Empangeni in a place called Kwa-Dlangezwa, Fundi grew up in poverty.

Things were not easy.

She was raised by a single parent, who was not educated at all. They survived by growing crops.

Fundi had five siblings; she was the third-born in the family.

She was forced to drop out of school when she was in Standard 5 (Grade7) at Khandisa Primary School. Her mother could not afford to further her studies. "This broke my heart," remembers Fundi,

15-year-old Fundi started to work as a domestic for her former teacher. Her employer increased her income. She could send her mum more money and save more at the post office.

With her savings she managed to go back to school the following year.

In 1991, she attended a one-year-course as a crèche and pre-school teacher at the Training and Resources in Early Education (TREE) in Durban, and later trained as facilitator for the Nosizwe Community Project.

Back from Durban, she moved to Eskhawini where she stayed at a hostel. The community was in desperate need of development and employment.

In 1996, through Bambanani micro-business network, Fundi heard about the uTshani Fund, where people invested ten cents for a better life.

That same year, she got the opportunity to visit Piesang River, situated at Inanda Newtown A in Durban.

She was enthusiastic about the process. She learnt more about how

the Fund worked and saw that even houses were being built from savings.

She went back to Eskhawini and started recruiting people and informing them about the uTshani Fund and formed uKukhanya Savings Scheme.

But politics in the community made things difficult.

The savers were discriminated against. Fundi even received death threats if she didn't stop with this savings scheme.

Some members withdrew, but others stayed and kept on saving. They were rewarded with three houses from the Landless - the happiest moment for the uKukhanya Saving Scheme.

Now the members were willing to work even harder. "Where there is a will, there is also way," remembers Fundi. She was determined to change her life for the better.

She registered at UNISA for a Bachelor of Education (BED) while helping learners at a nearby school. Being a volunteer for a year made her stronger.

She felt her journey in life had been disappointing so far, but now it was her time to shine. She went to FEDUP and two women there helped her start a day-care centre.

In 2006 she registered 65 children, however parents withdrew their children, after instructions by the principal where Fundi had worked as a volunteer.

Fundi did not give up. By the beginning of the next term, she had 15 new registrees, the number increased every year.

In 2010 she had 120 children attending her pre-school. Some parents are not paying fees because they are unemployed. This does not matter to Fundi.●

Recycling project paves the way for upgrading

Mondli Blose
Durban

IN 1990 WE FOUND a piece of land which was a field full of trees and grass. We decided to invade the land where we chopped the trees, cut the plots and erected shacks. We decided to name the place iZakheleni.

In 1991 political fights started, and we were running around, having nowhere to stay and sleeping in the street. If there had been electricity, the police could have protected us, but the neighbourhood was dark.

People went to iSe-maweleni, looking for water. They tried to get support for taps. They managed to find one tap, which they installed at the nearby Mango-suthu School. People

were very happy.

Women from the area started to organise themselves to see how they could generate income.

They came up with the idea to collect boxes from the streets, shops and around and sell them to the recycling places.

It worked for them as it was earning a small income, even though they were working individually at that time.

A community member requested a meeting with all residents to see how they could increase their earnings.

They decided to also collect plastics and bottles to sell. People liked the idea and started to collect more, keeping the place neat and clean at the same time, so children wouldn't get

hurt from broken bottles. We were encouraged by this success.

One day a team of people came to our community.

They firstly introduced themselves as the Informal Settlement Network (ISN) and told us about the way they were supporting other communities.

We heard that they are from informal settlements themselves, and we took time to listen to what they had to say.

They told us about the communities' need to do things for themselves and the importance of savings.

It was suggested to do our recycling as a community, so we could save money towards our contribution for any community development.●

WANT TO CONTRIBUTE?

CALL: AYANDA AT 078 260 4882

MAIL: UTSHANI BUYAKHULUMA, PO Box 14038, Mowbray, Cape Town 7705

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UTSHANI BUYAKHULUMA IS A PRODUCTION OF THE SA ALLIANCE OF CBOs, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, AND NGOs AFFILIATED TO SHACK DWELLERS INTERNATIONAL (SDI). THE ORGANIZATIONS THAT MAKE UP THIS ALLIANCE INCLUDE:

- INFORMAL SETTLEMENT NETWORK (ISN)
- FEDERATION OF THE URBAN AND RURAL POOR (FEDUP)
- WESTERN CAPE BACKYARDER NETWORK
- 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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CRIME & DISASTER

Mother takes stand on gangs

By Denise Ruiters

Silvertown, Cape Town

MRS BAKER IS A MIDDLE-AGED, former social worker, dealing with gangsters and drugs within the Manenberg community.

In the name of it all, Mrs Baker's son, Anzio who is 17 years old, was involved in gangsterism.

The other children of Mrs. Baker were also affected by this, so much so one of her boys couldn't finish his matric, for it was not safe on the streets.

In 2002, "Anzio was shot in the head, just two streets away from our home", she recollects.

At that trying time for Mrs Baker, the whole community supported her.

She refused to continue with the community work, because of what happened to her son.

The injuries were so severe that there was a chance that Anzio would be left in a vegetative state.

When he was discharged from the hospital, he could no longer

stay at his home for fear that the gangsters might come to finish the job.

Mrs Baker received death threats if she didn't drop the case.

The whole family was forced to attend counselling.

Mrs Baker pulled out of community work about for about three years, but then she realized that the community still needed her strength and energy.

She got involved again, especially with helping the children addicted to drugs.

"I will strive and fight tooth and nail to ensure that gangsterism is eroded in this community", says Mrs Baker adamantly.

Today, Mrs Baker is a true patron a proud resident of Manenberg. Her son has changed and is attending school to finish up matric.

Anzio also assists his mother in bringing about peace and stability within the community. ●



A mother in Manenberg is showing that it takes a dedicated community effort to stop children from entering a life of crime

Hostel fire leaves three families homeless

By Lindiwe Solani,

Langa, Cape Town

A FIRE AT NUMBER 37 IKHWEZI HOSTELS IN Langa, Cape Town, left three families homeless and destitute. Vusumzi Matika, a 45-year old married father of four, was allegedly having a braai in front of the house until the darkest hours of the night, and later on went to sleep.

This is an all too common occurrence within informal settlements, often with tragic consequences.

37-year-old Thandiwe Matika woke up when she heard her 17-year-old son Bonisile shouting, "Mama, fire, fire," from the opposite room.

"The fire must have started around two o'clock in the morning", explained Mrs. Matika, a mother of four herself.

She filled buckets with water to put out the fire,

but it got worse instead.

She ran to try find help to put the fire out, after she woke everyone up.

Even though the neighbours responded there and then, they couldn't control the raging fire.

The fire brigade came in just 30 minutes, but by then the fire had ruined almost everything.

All the furnishing was damaged beyond repair. Fortunately, there were no injuries.

The fire had spread to other shacks because they were so close together.

The three families affected by the fire, are now staying in a community hall.

With the help of the community, blankets, clothes and food were offered to the victims.

SASSA (South African Social Security Association) also supported by giving each family a voucher of

R1500.

The fire victims are pleading to the government to provide them with an RDP house as they have been waiting for this for long time.

It remains to be seen if their wishes will ever come true.

Transnet has promised that they would upgrade the hostel and look after it. This means the residents must find a contractor to oversee the work and arrange payments.

But nothing has been put on paper as a result of this meeting with Transnet.

For now, the hostel residents are hoping for the best, and happy with these initial results.

Above all, the community aware of how easily that this accident could have ended with the loss of life, and are thankful it didn't come to pass. ●

HEALTH

"HIV/AIDS is manageable"

By James Pesi

Khayelitsha, Cape Town

ONE OF THE RESIDENTS IN Nkanini Khayelitsha is disclosing her status.

Her name is Noxolo Nongoto.

She says: "I am disclosing my status, because I want people to know that HIV is manageable."

I have known my status since 1999 when I was pregnant.

My first test was in the Eastern Cape at Kaskama Hoek Hospital.

I delivered a boy who was HIV positive. A few months after his birth, he suffered from TB. Then he died.

I came to Cape Town where I have been receiving ARVs since 2006. My CD4 count was initially 176.

After taking my treatment the right way, my CD4 count

went up and is now 1019.

There were challenges like I was not married when I found out that I am HIV positive.

But now I have been married since 2005.

I also got a child who is HIV negative.

He is one year and three months old.

I am not working.

I am a volunteer at Grandmothers Poverty & AIDS (GAPA).

It is at J.Section in Khayelitsha.

I also make bits and pieces and sell them.

Just to have food on the table.

The only problem now is that because I am living in Nkanini Informal Settlement, I am at risk of getting other diseases like TB. ●

Fortified pap provides extra nutrition

By Kopano Molokoane,

Oukasie, North West

THE FEDUP MEAL-IN-1 IS AN INSTANT energy porridge, which is sold and distributed by the North West federation in Oukasie. They heard about the pap at the National Lekgotla on the 13 March 2010 after a presentation by Johan Honeybull. The North West region was appointed to do the distribution as they have enough office space in Oukasie, with the main office in the Free State.

They organized a workshop to teach the members of the federation how to package it. There are different sizes, 1kg that is sold for R25 and 500g for R15; they also do 20g as a sample. The company gave them a start-up stock to sell, until they made enough profit to order their own stock. The porridge is not only for sick people, but it does help them a lot, as it contains nutrition, energy and vitamins in one package. There are different flavours: banana, vanilla, strawberry and chocolate.

Constance Mokwena, a 62-year-old gogo from Oukasie, smoked and drank a lot. "I was an alcoholic and lost weight," she said. "I ate pap from September 2010, when I was weighing 39.5kg. Until February I had extremely gained weight, I was now weighing 70.5kg. I also participate in a soccer team with other gogos. I am now fit and healthy, and I don't drink and smoke anymore. The pap really helped me." There was an exchange programme in Oukasie with visitors from Mpumalanga, Free State, Limpopo and Gauteng. They visited families around the Oukasie community and introduced the Meal-in-1 to the people who loved it. The majority of them put in orders. Our aim is to have distribution areas around the country, even abroad. The pap is selling very well especially in Mafikeng and Kwandebele.

We need every member of FEDUP to experience it and introduce it to communities at large. To make an order contact Sarah Mulaudzi at 073 159 4444 or 012 254 4692 ●

OPINION

The power is in our hands to fight poverty



By collecting information and saving, one community in Durban is upgrading and is taking the fight to the disease of poverty.

By Sthembile Doncabe,
Ezakheleni, KZN

WE ARE THE COMMUNITY OF EZAKHELENI, AN informal settlement near Durban. We have been staying there since the 1990s. We believed the land belonged to two institutions; the Mango-suthu Technicon and Umlazi Comtec.

In case of an eviction, the members of the community had nowhere to go, which is why we started a savings scheme after talking to FEDUP and ISN in 2009. In 2010, an enumeration took place and we found out that our land actually belonged to the Municipality rather than the two institutions.

We decided to collect waste for recycling for income generation. Sandile Maphumulo, from one of the recycling companies, provided us with a recycling bin and once it's full his company collects it. We also collect coded plastic bottles like two-litre coke bottles. It also means the children are no longer at risk from cuts from broken bottles.

We need to develop our community: We need facilities like a community hall that can be a crèche for and be used to raise money and be hired by people for events. This will bring more resources for the community and boost our daily and monthly savings. Our aim isn't to benefit individually but to fight poverty in general. Our saying is: "The finishing line is the start of a new race." ●

Drug abuse puts promise of the youth at risk

By Thandeka Mvakwendlu,
Mayville, Durban

THE YOUTH OF OUR COMMUNITIES ARE ENERGETIC and powerful. But they use their energy and power in a way that ends up destroying their lives. They love to help cleaning neighbours' yards and washing cars, but the money they earn they use to buy the drug "whoonga". We wish that our youth chose to focus on education and to engage in activities, which get them out of the claws of this monster that kills them.

In our neighbourhood, a 21-year-old young man is living alone in a two-room house after his mother passed away four years ago. He is now the owner of the house, but he is unemployed and as a means of survival, he began to sell drugs. Mr S.

promised he would earn R1400 per week, which was too good an offer to refuse. He started to smoke whoonga himself. These days he wants to go to rehab because his life is a mess. He has stopped selling drugs, after being shot in the right knee twice. Now he can't even walk properly. He uses crutches and has an iron screw inside his knee. Even if he had the money, how is he supposed to walk to the shops to buy food?

He sobbed "I've brought shame to my life by wanting it the easy way. Now I'm disabled." When he was shot, he called his boss for help. But he was himself running away from the gunmen.

After a few days, Mr. S. came to visit him in hospital. He brought whoonga for him so he could

continue to smoke. But now he doesn't want it anymore, he wants to be a better person.

After the shooting incident the community formed a group called "Juluka Tsotsi" to supervise pupils, so they are at school on time. When they see a student walking around during class hours, they take him back to school.

They also deal with drug addicts: they talk to them about how they can help to keep the community safe and secure. The parents are very happy that they can go to work again and come home safely.

So we are dealing with our problem ourselves. But we still need the police to work together with the community and "Juluka Tsotsi" to lock up these drug dealers because they are killing our young generation. ●

Upgrade your community!

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

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 the application contact CORC to help your community with a proposal. Contact Aditya at 021 689 9408, PO Box 14038, Mowbray, Cape Town 7705, email admin@courc.co.za

POETRY CORNER

Move on young man!

By Khayaletu Nkondlo
Guguletu, Cape Town

Move on, young man!

Move on, for life won't stop challenging you.

Move on, let life's challenges challenge you.

Move on, young man,

You've already won some of life's challenges,

And this too shall pass.

You are the winner,

Lift your head up high,

Remind yourself of what you've

achieved in past years,

And be proud of your achievements.

The challenges will only make you stronger and wiser.

They'll make you a better person tomorrow.

Move on, young man,

Life is there to be lived!