

March 2009

Help us today to fight poverty in South Africa's slums

No running water. No electricity. No heating. No permanent home.

Dear Supporter

Imagine you live in a cramped shack too small for you and your family. You fear eviction by the authorities at any time. You face the threat of your home being demolished. This is a reality faced by hundreds of thousands of people in South Africa – every single day.

At a time when housing is a key issue for many in the UK, millions of people in the poorest countries are already living in sprawling slums.

In South Africa, War on Want's partner organisations are helping shack dwellers by fighting for their right to safe housing and for the provision of decent public services like water and electricity. Support us today to make this happen.

Clearing the way for the World Cup

As South Africa prepares for the football World Cup in 2010, the government wants to hide the poverty in which millions of its citizens continue to live. As part of its plans, the government wants to clear the slums in South Africa.

This means that many shack dwellers on the outskirts of large South African cities are already being evicted and forced to move to far away settlements. Communities are destroyed, lives are disrupted and the cost of getting to work and school increases, pushing people deeper into poverty.

Authorities are preventing improvements to water and electricity provision in slums as this would legitimise them. The government wants to eradicate slums but without providing viable alternatives. Slum residents are entitled to decent and affordable public services with the possibility of improving the homes where they currently live.

Lack of electricity and water makes life very difficult for people living in shacks. Moreover, it has led to an increase in shack fires that have claimed hundreds of lives in recent years. The use of candles and paraffin stoves for heating and cooking is the most common cause of shack fires, and water shortages make it harder to put these fires out.

Fighting back

War on Want is proud to be supporting partner organisations in South Africa that are fighting against evictions and privatisation of public services. ***These movements have grown from within the communities they are helping. They are enabling people to fight for their homes and livelihoods and urgently need vital funds to continue.***

They are successfully campaigning and mobilising thousands of people living on the edges of South Africa's biggest cities. However, local authorities and police are cracking down hard on their activities and War on Want is committed to increasing its support at this crucial time.

One of these organisations is the Abahlali baseMjondolo (shack dwellers) movement. Established in Durban in 2005, it has grown quickly to include tens of thousands of people from more than 30 settlements.

The movement's main aim is to oppose demolitions and evictions which have left thousands of shack dwellers homeless. It is also resisting attempts to re-house them many miles outside the city, where their poverty is likely to worsen. Finally, they are fighting to secure better access to essential services such as clean water, sanitation and electricity.

There are very encouraging signs. After 18 months of negotiation, the movement and the local authorities have recently signed a deal to provide services to 14 slums and to improve three with better accommodation. This is an extraordinary breakthrough that gives hope of what can be achieved with more support from you.

Give your support today

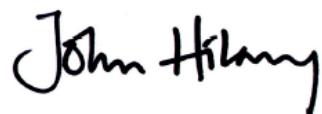
When apartheid ended, there was great hope that the inequalities that had lasted so long would finally be redressed and black people would have better access to public services such as housing, water and electricity. Unfortunately, despite its vast wealth in natural resources, South Africa has so far failed to improve the lives of its poorest.

However, you can do something special today. You can support this appeal and enable grassroots organisations like Abahlali baseMjondolo and others to continue fighting and ensure better lives for people living in South Africa's growing slums.

A donation of £40 could help our partner organisations like Abahlali baseMjondolo oppose the demolitions and evictions which have left thousands of shack dwellers homeless.

Despite the challenges, our partner organisations continue to fight on with dignity and dedication against the root causes of poverty. Your generosity will show them and the people they are working with that they are not alone and will not be forgotten in their fight for better lives – lives free from poverty.

Please give as much as you can today. Thank you.



John Hilary
Executive Director