

Life at the Ezimbuzini Informal Settlements

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05 May 2024

Ezimbuzini is one of the many informal settlements in Soweto. *Ezimbuzini* (literally, 'place of goats') was started in 1997. It is situated in the middle of Orlando West and Orlando East, taking a nice spot next to the famous Orlando Stadium where Orlando Pirates Football Club play their home games and the world-renowned Vilakazi Street.

The informal settlement has more than 1000 households with a population of about 5000 people. Some households can have more than 15 family members, there is no privacy and sadly, the safety of children is not guaranteed there. This means some of the rape cases in the area take place at Ezimbuzini.

Many families depend on social grants, and most of the households are owned by single mothers, many of them being from the Eastern Cape province who came to Johannesburg to find greener pastures. Only a few have got a proper education.

The unemployment rate is rife in this area which also has some people who are from countries such as Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique. A lot of these migrants do not have proper documentation to be in South Africa, which makes it hard for them to find good jobs or even register their children in schools.

More than 200 children do not attend school or early childhood development centres here. This affects children's development. With nothing to do due to the high rate of unemployment, many young boys and girls end up being drug addicts, sex workers, alcoholics, petty criminals and of course, fall into the problem of teenage pregnancy. Most girls are forced to trade sex for a living and date older men.

"I got raped and became pregnant, I am not working since am from Lesotho and do not have a passport. I have to sleep with many people so that I can provide for my child and family, I see my child as a blessing regardless of how I had her," said a young woman who chose to remain anonymous.

Many political parties know about this area and the conditions the people live in, they have promised the people in this area houses, more toilets, and water taps. Some have even promised to clean the dirt by the river and bring big bins that will be collected by the waste management people once or twice a week.

"My name is Nomzamo, and I have been in this place for 20 years now, I have a C form from 2004, [have] been up and down to the Department of Housing [of Human Settlements] to check my house and they tell me to wait, [but] for how long!? We have been waiting and praying for progress forever," she expressed as she concluded.

The government of this country is failing its people, how can a place next to iconic and famous attractions be this in such a manner and the government pretends not to see or be aware of it?

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