

Community Mapping in Kliptown

By Tsepiso Raseboku

Release date: 18 August 2023

Beginning from 5 April 2023, Khanya College sent out a team of six organisers to begin the mapping of Kliptown, in Soweto. The team was paired in twos, ensuring that of each pair at least one person was familiar with Kliptown.

Kliptown was first settled in 1891 and is the oldest part of Soweto and was named after a farm. The farm was named after the nearby Klipspruit, on a rocky stream. It was a squatter camp in 1903, but today is made up of RDP and subsidized housing. Kliptown accommodates people of all colours and it's a sprawling collection of informal settlements with a thriving informal business sector. The township is known for its historical setting, that is, Walter Sisulu Square, where the Freedom Charter was signed on 26 June 1955.

The mapping by the organisers started on Beacon Road where there was not much happening but only people shopping and busy going about their day. The street boasts a lot of shops and street vendors.

When the team proceeded to Fourth Street, it became clear that many people in Kliptown were unemployed, the streets were full of people hanging around street corners. The people in the streets were a combination of youth, children, and older residents. This serves as an indicator of the high rate of unemployment in the area. It is easy for some people to resort to crime because they have idle hands with nothing for them to do the whole day. Some people mind their small businesses selling fruit and vegetables.

The organisers spoke to one woman who cares for five children in her neighbourhood, her daycare is small and not registered but helps parents who must go to work.

.

There are a lot of spaza shops, early childhood development centres, and taverns along with liquor stores in the area. These businesses are the means of survival for some of the people living in Kliptown which is where they source income.

One significant disadvantage that Kliptown has is that there are no recreational activities taking place - there is only one sports field which is strictly for soccer. This means young youth interested in other sports are not catered for at all, especially girls. There are no gym facilities and there are no cultural groups according to our research. The parks are vandalised and have become unsafe because they are used as spots to smoke or where the homeless live. This can be a cause for substance abuse because there are no activities to keep youngsters busy and to help reduce young going to taverns for fun.

The assets within the area are not utilised for their original purposes, instead they lie damaged. There is a community centre that is vandalised it has become a shortcut

to pass through, it is no longer a place where children in the community can go to have fun and play and develop themselves.

The Walter Sisulu Square is also in a bad state, the whole building has become a haven for the homeless, but it is still used as a tourist attraction site. The underground parking at the Square is flooded and filled with dirt and has also become a health hazard because children pass there on a day-to-day basis and poses a risk of children drowning.

Kliptown is an area with a lot of potential as there are centres like KYP Kliptown Youth Program that serve as a home to the youth that wants to better themselves and their community.

More analysis and more findings will be added as a survey will be conducted to get more and direct information from the residents of the area.

Kliptown does not have many facilities, members of the community usually must go to Eldorado Park to access facilities like schools, clinics, the library, old age homes, health forums, etc.

There mapping team found seven taverns, 10 spaza shops, and six churches at the end of the work. There are some organisations that are orientated towards assisting youth with after-school classes, art and culture, and so on, like the Kliptown Soweto Youth (SKY), and the abovementioned KYP, but not many like them.

While there is the visibility of active political parties in the area, like the ANC, EFF, and DA, who are always campaigning in the area, the ward counsellor is ANC and has not done much to help with service delivery in the area. There is mostly no proper sanitation, there's water running in the streets and no electricity.

The Square embraces a unique historical background, South African culture at its best and attracts both national and international attention with its broad variety of outlets suitable for local tourists.

The area has a high rate of interest in sports, to this fact, there are many football clubs and netball teams linked to the surrounding organisations dealing with Orphaned and Vulnerable Children, namely PUSH, Khayaletu, KYP, Arekopaneng, and other sporting teams that are not under any organisation. There are also cultural groups that are affiliated with organisations that specialize in dance, music, and art.

Kliptown is a township that has a lot of talent but also a high rate of crime, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, and poverty. These factors contribute to the behavior and mindset of many in the township, shaping their interests.

The children of Kliptown lack positive role models. The organisations around the area are the only places where children can be developed holistically and be in a space where they can learn and receive psychosocial support. In addition to that, they get to engage in sports, get care guidance and have role models whom they call caregivers.

This article was submitted on 10 August 2023. You may republish this article, so long as you credit the authors and Karibu! Online (www.Karibu.org.za), and do not change the text. Please include a link back to the original article.