

Religious leaders shown squalor

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By Zara Nicholson



INLSA Archbishop Thabo Makgoba holds his nose as the stench of rubbish among the shacks gets to him. Photo: Jeffrey Abrahams

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Unhygienic toilets, no running water, refuse in pathways and exposed electricity lines – this is the grim reality thousands of Khayelitsha residents experience daily.

During a “walk of witness” in the RR section and Taiwan in Khayelitsha yesterday, religious leaders were told about the basic needs of these communities.

A stench coming from the toilets filled the air as children ran through the pathways, dodging puddles of dirty water and running between heaps of uncollected refuse.

The Social Justice Coalition (SJC) led leaders from a number of churches, mosques and synagogues through the area.

Archbishop Thabo Makgoba was also part of the visit and said it was the second time he and many of the other leaders were visiting the area.

There are about 3 000 households in RR. There are 280 toilets with no running water.

Gavin Silber from the SJC said about 12 households had to use one toilet but not all the toilets were functioning properly so the statistics are a lot worse.

Adelaide Ngogwana, 77, sat outside her shack holding tablets for her asthma.

At the entrance to her shack stood a temporary toilet.

The plight of inadequate toilets and sanitation in townships has been highlighted for the past two years with many residents saying sharing toilets is a big health risk.

Residents also have to walk far to get to the nearest toilet and this exposes them, especially woman, to crime at night.

Last year while walking to the toilet Ngogwana was accidentally shot in her thigh by police who were busy chasing a criminal.

Ngogwana could only say that life with her sickness was a struggle in the unhygienic conditions before she broke down.

Archbishop Makgoba said: “This is the second time I am walking through the area and it’s a sad coincidence that I just came from the Kader Asmal memorial. When he was minister (of Water Affairs and Forestry) he fought for water and sanitation and even today we are still fighting for it and being exposed to the ills related to lack of sanitation and water.”

After looking at the toilets, an even more shocking sight was revealed when SJC members took the crowd to a refuse container.

The container stores all the refuse and is supposed to be cleared out twice a week.

Residents said the contractors sometimes only came to clean the toilets and clear the refuse every second week.

Makgoba said: “Again this is hurt, its pain and it’s disappointing that so many years into democracy, there are still such living conditions. We hope the city council and national government will work with the community to provide them their constitutional right.”

The new ward councillor for the area, Monde Nqulwan, said he has been meeting with stakeholders who can provide water, sanitation and toilets.

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