

# NEWSLETTER

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*FIGURE 1: THE SPACE THAT WAS USED FOR THE COMMUNAL GARDEN*



*FIGURE 2: IMAGE OF COMMUNAL TAP*

## A WALK THROUGH KHAYELITSHA

During a recent site visit to Khayelitsha, several ongoing challenges and grassroots efforts were observed. One promising initiative is the establishment of a small community garden, which aims to provide both food and employment opportunities for residents. However, the project remains stalled due to a lack of essential resources, including fencing, seeds, and tools. While there is a connection with the Surplus People's Project, further support—both financial and material—is needed to make the garden sustainable and fully operational. With adequate investment, the garden has the potential to enhance food security and foster community engagement.

Access to basic services, particularly water, remains a critical issue. In some areas, between 50 and 80 homes are reliant on a single communal tap. This level of strain has led many residents to create illegal water connections, which offer very low pressure, so low that it can take up to 30 minutes to fill a 2-liter bottle. A supplementary water tank is delivered to the community, but its arrival is irregular and unpredictable. These conditions constitute a clear violation of the Basic Services Act and have a significant impact on the health and daily functioning of households.

Sanitation infrastructure is severely lacking. Many front yards are equipped with portable toilets, but a number of these units are non-functional and do not flush. As a result, waste often remains visible and uncontained. Runoff from both the toilets and surrounding homes flows directly into the streets, creating unsanitary and unsafe conditions, particularly during wet weather. Drainage throughout the settlement is inadequate. Because the township is located on or near wetlands, rainfall regularly results in widespread flooding. Streets become muddy and waterlogged, and many homes—particularly informal shacks—flood, forcing families to relocate temporarily. This instability contributes to ongoing health concerns, including increased exposure to waterborne illnesses.

Environmental health is further compromised by disruptions in waste collection. A garbage pile has remained in the street for over three weeks following the breakdown of the community's waste removal truck. The pile sits close to residential homes and is often disturbed by roaming dogs, which scatter the waste into adjacent areas. The community also suffers from a near-complete lack of vegetation. With no shade or tree cover, the streets are left hot, exposed, and dusty.

Despite the proximity of a large power station at the entrance of the township, many homes do not have formal access to electricity. Residents rely on informal workarounds such as satellite dishes for access to news and communication. Streetlights throughout the area were

a donor from the United Kingdom, responding to concerns about darkness and safety at night.

Livestock is kept within the community in a pen that houses cows and sheep. This pen is located in the center of the residential area, and waste from the animals accumulates nearby. The lack of waste management in this area poses serious sanitation and health risks to nearby households.

Khayletisha faces a number of overlapping challenges related to service delivery, environmental conditions, and infrastructure. While residents continue to demonstrate resilience through grassroots initiatives like the community garden, systemic and structural support is urgently needed to address the widespread shortfalls in basic services, sanitation, and sustainable development.

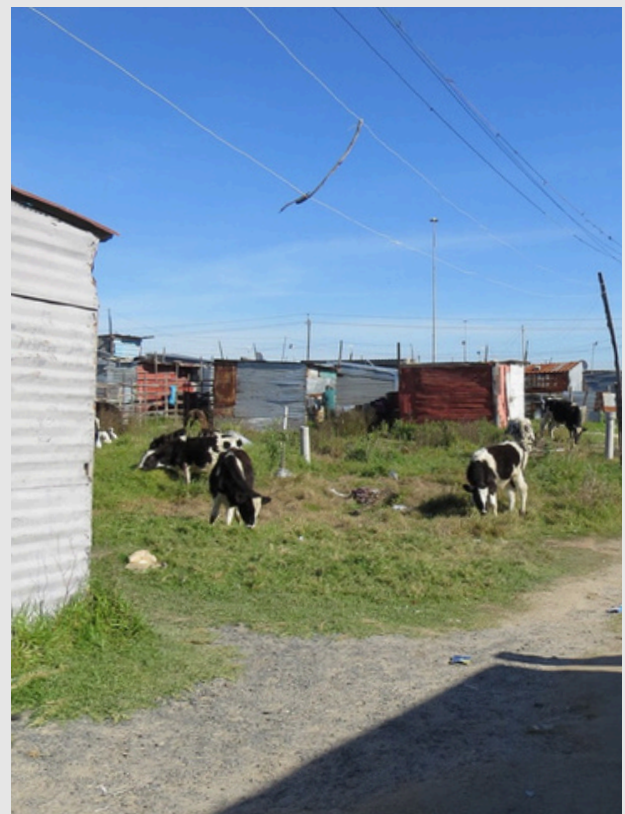


FIGURE 3: LIVESTOCK LIVING BETWEEN HOMES

## Zonga Energy Initiative

An off-grid energy company, Zonga Energy, a for-profit social enterprise, is currently undertaking an electrification project in the informal settlement. The company was selected in part due to the unique challenges posed by the area's geography, particularly the wetlands, which have made traditional infrastructure projects difficult to implement. This initiative is supported by funding from the ISHAK program, with the overarching goal of demonstrating that Free Basic Electricity (FBE) is both necessary and feasible for communities living in townships across Cape Town.

The project is being positioned as a working demonstration to prove that FBE can be effectively delivered even in challenging and underserved environments. If successful, the model will include 20 connections, each designed to serve approximately 16 families. Construction and installation are already underway, with a focus not only on service delivery but also on local economic empowerment. Community members are actively involved in the building process, which has created short-term employment opportunities and enhanced local capacity. Zonga Energy offers a range of subsidized electricity packages, allowing households to choose according to their needs. The cheapest package costs R230 but is offered to residents at a subsidized rate of R70. A package that includes a fridge costs R390, while a combined TV and fridge package is available for R180 to R200. General electricity access is priced at R300, also subsidized.



FIGURE 4: ZONGA ENERGY PROJECT

These packages aim to make energy access affordable while supporting household stability and safety.

The project is expected to span approximately two years, and its broader hope is to act as a model that encourages government adoption and scaling. Zonga Energy and its partners believe this demonstration can shift public perception and policy by proving that informal settlements are not unserviceable, and that dignified infrastructure—beginning with electricity—is both possible and necessary.