

'Dump' people abandoned

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Thousands of destitute people - including hundreds of children - living on a Gauteng dump are being left by the provincial government to fend for themselves.

This comes as the provincial department of local government and housing are refusing help to the residents on the landfill site, as the settlement is "not permanent", even though it has been there for 12 years.

The residents are also faced with possible eviction, as the land on which the site is situated is owned by mining company Gold 1 and has been earmarked to be sold to the municipality.

West Rand regional head for the department of local government and housing, Lesiba Sekele, said: "No services can be offered as they do not seem to be permanently settled. According to the municipality the dump site is on privately owned land.

"The council says those people are not permanently residing there, but only come to scavenge for waste to sell. They have been offered settlement in Zenzele in the West Rand, but they refuse."

Zenzele is more than 10km from the dump.

Scores of volunteers yesterday descended on the tiny community to provide warm meals, clothes and blankets.

Last week The Times exposed the appalling conditions under which the residents are living.

An estimated 85% of the residents are HIV positive.

People from across South Africa have been scrambling to provide aid.

Volunteers under the auspices of Gift of the Givers yesterday bathed children as doctors and nurses examined people.

Until last week the 4000 residents were surviving with one tap and five long-drop toilets.

Until the NGOs arrived, mothers and children were forced to fend for themselves, scavenging for food, clothing and rubbish from the dump. The rubbish is sold to recycling companies.

The Times has learnt from a Randfontein Council source that plans are being made to evict the community and discussions on the eviction are to be held this week.

Gold 1 property manager Henk Jooste did not comment on planned evictions.

Lauren Royston, coordinator for Urban Landmark, a think-tank on urban land issues, said the refusal to provide the settlement with basic services violated their constitutional rights.

"What is happening at this settlement is not unique, with large numbers of informal settlements having no access to basic services or tenure security. One of the biggest challenges is getting information from municipalities on settlements. If the municipality does not list the settlement it cannot access its budget and without this they do not get services they are entitled to," she said.

Kate Tissington, a researcher at the Socioeconomic Rights Institute, said it was unlawful to deny people access to basic services.