

Public urged to help

STAFF REPORTER

GIFT of the Givers have set up a disaster management and distribution site in Kya Sand and the public are urged to help them assist the residents who were affected by the fire that gutted hundreds of shacks.

Imtiaz Sooliman of Gift of the Givers said their teams had been on site since the incident occurred and praised city firefighters for doing a magnificent job in controlling the fire and preventing a far greater disaster. He said they had the total co-operation of the MEC of human settlements in Gauteng and the City Disaster Management.

"Blankets and food were handed out by our teams on Wednesday night. We have set up a facility from where all assistance will be facilitated in a controlled, organised manner."

The organisation also provides two meals a day.

A tent has been provided to assist pupils who are writing exams.

Sooliman said the public's response had been overwhelming and the organisation was mobilising to accept and distribute donations.

"The following items will be of value to the victims: blankets, clothes, baby clothes, towels, linen, various food items, bottled water, baby milk powder, sanitary pads, disposable nappies, plastic utensils (plate, bowl, cup, spoon), bin bags and hygiene items. Building material will also be highly appreciated," said Sooliman.

The organisation is appealing to citizens to drop off donations at the Lifestyle Image Centre on the corner of Mint and Carr Road, Fordsburg, Call Mustafah on 082 602 9854.

Or at the Gift of the Givers Logistics Centre at 22 Orchard Road, Bramley View (off Corlett drive), Contact number 011 346 1087.

Please deposit donations into Gift of the Givers, Standard Bank, Pietermaritzburg, Account Number 052137228, Branch Code 057525. Please send the deposit slip with full contact details for acknowledgement purposes.

For tax Section 18A Certificates, please contact lalla@giftofthegivers.org



SUSTENANCE: People from the Msawawa informal settlement queue to receive breakfast sponsored by Shoprite. Here little Mpho Nkosi clutches her soup and bread.

PICTURES BOXER NGWENYA

Fire victims rebuild their lives

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Help pours in for informal settlement residents

STEPHINA Masebe lost everything in the fire that scorched the Msawawa informal settlement near Kya Sand in Randburg on Wednesday.

She said that when she realised her shack was on fire, she went towards it, hoping to save something, anything, before the blaze destroyed all she owned. She felt the intense heat as she got closer and realised it was already too late. She decided to save herself instead.

She turned and ran.

Masebe watched from a distance as flames engulfed her home. The fire reportedly started because of an unattended paraffin stove, and by the time firefighters managed to put out the inferno, an unprecedented level of damage had been done.



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"We've had fires in Msawawa, but not this big," said spokeswoman for Johannesburg Emergency Management Services, Nana Radebe. She estimated 200 shacks had been destroyed. Other reports went as high as 1 000.

The Department of Human

Settlements was still working on an official tally, but all could agree the area had never seen a fire this bad.

Though some of Masebe's neighbours carried the loss of their homes on their faces yesterday morning, she smiled broadly after she made her way through the Shoprite

mobile soup kitchen line. She held a cup of soup in one hand and several slices of bread in the other.

She said she hadn't eaten since the fire, but even that fact didn't seem to bother her.

"I'm a survivor," she said. "I'm still alive, I'm happy." Her clothes and furniture,

she said, could be replaced. Masebe said her son Andrew didn't feel the same way. He's in Grade 12 and already had exams to worry about. Now his books and uniforms were gone. She said Andrew was overwhelmed by the situation.

They stayed at a church up the road from Msawawa on Wednesday. Yesterday, Andrew went to school while his mother sifted through the debris with her neighbours.

Gift of the Givers, an organisation that also provided food for the victims, said it was working with the government and other non-profit organisations to set up a study centre for matrics.

The new MEC for Social Development, Molebatsi Bopape, stopped by to thank organisations such as Gift of the Givers and EDS Projects for their quick response to the disaster.

REBUILDING:
Msawawa residents try to rebuild their homes after a fire destroyed them.