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inssesssss DROUGHT

Mbuyiseni Mazibuko (18 months) lies near death from masmarus at the Charles Johnson Memorial Hospital at Nquthu, kwaZulu. Drought

has aggravated suffering in these regions.

Mounting toll of the

Mbuyiseni Mazibuko (18 months) is a victim of the kwashiokor/masmarus disease which is wreaking havoc along the length and breadth of kwaZulu, especially in the Nquthu district, where the drought has exacerbated the suffering of the local populace.

Mbuyiseni is a shocking sight -â\200\224 a _grotesque-looking creature of shrivelled flesh, spindly limbs, bulging eyes and oversized head.

His chances of survival are slim. If he does live, he stands to suffer side effects,

In 1968, I wrote a poem entitled â\200\234The Face Hungerâ\200\235 for the Mbuyiseni Mazibukoâ\200\231s of this world:

I counted ribs on his concerting chest
Banes protruding as if chiselled

by a sculptorâ\200\231s hand of famine.

He looked with glared pupils
seeing only a bun on some sky high shelf.

The skin was pale and taut
like a glove on a doctorâ\200\231s hand.

His tongue darted in and out
like a chameleonâ\200\231s

snatching a confetti of flies.

O! child
your stomach is a den of lions
roaring day and night.

Talking to Dr Bill Foster (26) the
Gloucestershire-born acting superintendent of
Charles JOhnson Memoria] Hospital, where

drought

Mbuyiseni is a patient, one gets a sense of
helplessness among the dedicated medical
staff fighting to alleviate suffering in the
whole drought-Stricken Nquthu district.

There are so many factors invelved which
compound the problem in this community.
Grantedly, famine is a Third World problem,
but here the most crucial factor is water and
how it is utilised to improve the agricultural
cOnditions of this part of the world.

This is the most contributory factor to the
poverty and disease around this region, but
the worst area is around Nondweni in the

nub of the whole conSolidation scheme for
the kwaZulu homeland.

The socio-economic and political issues ar
&ggravated by bureaucracy. There is much
passing of the huck between departments.

Mondlo Township, near Vryheid, is a rural resettlement area
falling under the kwaZulu Government. Thirty-five thousand
people live there in an atmosphere of smouldering resentment.
OSWALD MTSHALI, award-winning poet and a staff writer on
The Star, and ALF KUMALO, award-winning photographer and
also a Star staffer, have just returned from Mondlo. This is their

stor_v. it

One would expect to

find gu

erillas there

About 30 km from the
town of Vryheid and
13 km south-east of
Blood River lies Mond-
lo Township, a depress-
ing dustbowl of pov-
erty, disease, crime
and violence. In March
this year two suspect-
ed ANC guerillas,
Boyce Bogale and Tho-

mas Mngadi, were arrested there.

It is not too difficult to understand why guerillas should choose Mondlo.

The residents of this drab and dreary place were resettled there as pawns in Pretoria's game of chess: known as consolidation. They were fitted into a little patch of the Jigsaw that makes up the

bits of kwaZulu scattered all over the map of Natal.

The dream is a viable, independent homeland. There's little sign of viability or independence at Mondlo.

The town is governed by the administration of

Chief Gatsha Mangosuthu.

Buthelezi. from the capital of Ulundi. Inkatha is the instrument used by Ulundi for local governance.

Mr Paul Nhlapo, former mayor of the town and regional secretary of-Inkatha, had this to say:

"I'm thinking of resigning from Inkatha.

"Mondlo has about 35000 residents, but only about 500 are known and active members. People

around here don't seem to care about Inkatha even though one reads in the Press about its inflated membership of 300 000.

"This is a hotbed of hatred. People resent the fact that they were brought from their homes in more fertile areas and dumped * in this wasteland."

The people of Mondlo also resent the fact that they have been forced by the township council, under the chairmanship of Mr Nhlapho, to pay increased rents and

property rates which, they say, do not benefit them, but go to the coffers of the kwaZulu Government.

Mr Nhlapo can vouch for his unpopularity. He has been shot at four times and wounded in the arm. But, he says, he was only doing what he was required to do in his office. He has since resigned from his mayorship.

The roads are unlit at

night and dusty. The local clinic reports a large number of patients suffering from respiratory ailments such as tuberculosis, bronchitis, asthma and sinusitis. The dust and poor diet are among the chief causes.

" Robbery, rape, murder and theft are common. A police station has been built at the western entrance to the town . but it is seen less as a symbol of protection than of oppression.

Stock theft from the surrounding white farms
do you expect it to be different? is one of the station's main areas of

concern. And the farmers have formed commando-like groups to protect their animals.

Mondlo residents complain of harassment both from the police and the farmers.

The situation, as resident

one

commented, is

volatile.

Two new schools on the western side of the township remain unfurnished and pupils have to sit on the bare and cold floors because the regional authority and some indus-

trialists have withdrawn
their sponsorship,

The . kwaZulu Governe
ment stands aside because
it is not responsible for
building the schools, elee-
trifying the township or
tarring the streets.

Nobody, it seems, is res-
ponsible for improving
the quality of life in this
bleak place.

When Mildred
Khumalo (33) of
Mondlo Township -
heard of her mother's
death at the Charles
Johnson Memorial
Hospital, she collapsed
sobbing. "I've no '
money to bury my
beloved mother; who
will help me?" she
moaned. The hospital
authorities have
informed her that as
she is unemployed they
will help give her
mother a pauper's
funeral. But she would
like to give her mother
a decent burial. Her
mother was a victim
of malnutrition and
bronchitis, and Mildred
herself is a TB suspect.