

VOICES FOR CHANGE STORY REPORT FORM

This form should accompany the stories of challenge / change that you collected from your partners, stakeholders, staff, community members and volunteers (one form for each story). The stories themselves can be written up or take the form of photos, short videos, drawings, poetry, etc.

Name of the organisation and person collecting the story:

The story was collected by Kamogelo Mangwane from South Africa Volunteer Work Camp Association (SAVWA) in Soshanguve Block NN, Pretoria, Gauteng Province, South Africa.

Who provided the story and in which form:

The story was provided by Kagiso Thabethe, a resident of Soshanguve Block NN. He provided his story based on an image showing a local illegal dumping site, located dangerously close to homes and play areas for children.

When and where did the challenges/changes illustrated in the story take place:

According to Kagiso, the challenges began around 2017, when frustrated by the lack of regular waste collection, local residents began creating a makeshift dumping site in an open space near their homes in Soshanguve Block NN. Over the years, this area has grown into a large, uncontrolled landfill, where household waste, hazardous materials, and even dead animals are regularly disposed of. The problem escalated to a critical level by 2024, when at least 20 children were hospitalized due to illnesses believed to be caused by exposure to unsanitary conditions at or near the site. The dumping ground now emits toxic smells, attracts disease-carrying pests, and contributes to air and water pollution. Kagiso described how this site has not only become a health hazard but is also affecting local climate conditions, with increased heat and reduced air quality being observed in the area.

What kind of projects were implemented by your organisation in the place the story refers to :

In response to these alarming issues, SAVWA began working actively in 2024 to confront the environmental and health dangers posed by the dumping site. With support from local volunteers and international partners, SAVWA initiated a climate education program in Soshanguve Block NN aimed at empowering local residents with knowledge about environmental sustainability, waste management, and climate change.

Workshops were conducted to explain the dangers of creating dump sites near living areas and the benefits of waste separation, recycling, and proper disposal. SAVWA also organized community clean-up campaigns and began lobbying local authorities for better waste collection infrastructure. A highlight of this effort was a

peaceful march involving children from the SAVWA After School Programme, who carried handmade placards with messages like “Stop Littering” and “Protect Our Community,” while picking up garbage in the streets. The aim was not just to clean, but to spark a cultural shift toward valuing a clean and safe environment.

Future projects under planning include:

- A Community Recycling Hub
- Composting demonstrations for organic waste
- A “Clean Block NN” youth ambassador program
- Continued engagement with the municipality for regular waste removal services

What does the storyteller believe is the significance of the events described in the story?

Kagiso Thabethe expressed strong emotions about the impact of the dumping site, noting that every household near the site is affected, either through illness, degraded living conditions, or the psychological toll of living in a polluted environment. He stressed that it is everyone’s responsibility to act now not wait for the government to keep their environment clean.

He believes the efforts by SAVWA have started a critical conversation within the community, and although the issue is not solved yet, the awareness created, especially among young children, is laying the foundation for long-term change. Kagiso sees the protest march and workshops as a turning point, showing that the people of Soshanguve, especially the youth, are not willing to accept living in filth and neglect.

He also warned that if nothing is done, other communities will continue to copy these harmful behaviours, leading to a broader environmental and health crisis. However, he remains hopeful and committed, emphasizing the need for collective action, education, and ongoing volunteer involvement to reclaim their community from pollution and restore dignity to Soshanguve Block NN.

PHOTOGALLERY

