

# El Riachuelo, Buenos Aires, Argentina

The Riachuelo basin is located in the Southern region of Buenos Aires. More than 3,500 factories operate on the banks of the river. Many of these factories do not have systems set up to dispose of



their waste properly. Therefore, it flows directly into the basin. There are also numerous illegal sewage pipes and open garbage dumps leading into the river. On the shores of this river are some of the poorest neighborhoods in Buenos Aires. This part of the city does not have an adequate sewage system, which adds to the problem of pollution in the basin. The Riachuelo river basin has been called one of the most polluted sites in the world.

## Who are the Winners and Losers?

The countless factories operating on the shores of the Riachuelo benefit from the lack of environmental standards. They are able to freely dump their waste into the river, without many repercussions. This is much less expensive than disposing of the waste in a safe manner.

The people living in the slums on the Riachuelo are affected most. Although these people live on the banks of a river, about 35% of them have no access to drinkable water. Their only source of water comes from this highly polluted river, but they have no other options. Drinking this water can lead to serious health problems for them. Many people living near the Riachuelo also experience health effects, such as skin and throat problems, just from breathing in the polluted air.

## Actions being Taken

The Argentine government has made many promises and attempts at cleaning up the river basin.

However, not much progress has been made. In the past few years, some of the factories have been closed down. This year a new clean-up plan was presented to the government. The people of the neighborhoods on the Riachuelo have attempted to organize, but the government continues to make empty promises.

