Tshedimošo mo dikolong tša go hloka seriti

Limpopo school visits

Plain pit-latrines are illegal

#FixOurSchools
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Glossary of abbreviations

ASID  Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Development Initiative
COVID-19 Coronavirus disease 2019
DRE Department of Basic Education
EE Equal Education
EELC Equal Education Law Centre
EMS Education Management Information System
LDDe Limpopo Department of Education
MEC Member of the Executive Council
NEDIS National Education Infrastructure Information System
SAFE Sanitation appropriate for Education
SGB School Governing Body

Front cover: Sibongile Teffo, former Limpopo Community Leader, outside the Limpopo High Court for the Michael Komape court case in which EE was an amicus curiae (friend of the court). Photo taken by Sihaa Sibanda.

Executive summary

In July 2017, Equal Education (EE) visited 18 schools in Ga-Mashashane in the Capricorn District of Limpopo. These school visits were prompted by calls from school-going members of the movement (Equalisers) who highlighted poor water and sanitation conditions at their schools. During these school visits, EE found that 11 of the 18 schools had no access to water. Three years later, the 2020 findings showed that the number of schools with plain pit toilets as their only form of sanitation had reduced to six from nine in 2017, and schools without water access had reduced to two from four in 2017. In 2017, it was found that nine of the 15 schools that had plain pit toilets as their only form of sanitation, while four of the schools had no access to water. Three years later, the 2020 findings showed that the number of schools with plain pit toilets as their only form of sanitation had reduced to six from nine in 2017, and schools without water access had reduced to two from four in 2017.
Improvements notwithstanding, the status of sanitation at the schools observed in 2020 was particularly concerning given that by 2016, schools were supposed to have access to basic services such as water, electricity, and sanitation; and by 2020, adequate/sufficient services must have been provided according to the school infrastructure law. Infrastructure and hygiene data collected from 67 sanitation blocks, comprising of 274 toilet facilities, across the 15 schools revealed some appalling conditions. See box below.

Although these findings capture the state of water and sanitation pre-COVID, it is now more critical than ever that the DoE provides relief to all schools lacking sufficient water and proper sanitation.

While some individual schools have seemingly improved in the last three years (2017-2020), many learners in Limpopo are forced to endure unsafe and undignified water and sanitation conditions at their schools. The water and sanitation realities of the 15 schools are microcosms of a much bigger crisis of inadequate, unsafe, and poor maintenance of facilities in schools. The findings of this report highlight that having access to water and sanitation contributes to the learning experience of learners in school. The lack of access, or even limited access, to safe and sufficient water and sanitation facilities can have negative consequences, including learning time lost to absenteeism; feelings of discomfort, particularly for girl learners; and the inability to perform key hygiene practices. The realities uncovered in these schools are also indicative of a broader unequal schooling experience that places some learners at a great disadvantage. As the third school infrastructure provisioning deadline looms (November 2023), it is a matter of utmost urgency that affected schools in the country are provided with relief.

A sorry state of affairs

Our survey found the following numbers:

- **Toilet facilities were inappropriate** (i.e. plain pit toilets or broken VIPs): 145/274
- **Toilet facilities were not functional** (i.e. plain pit toilets or broken VIPs): 81/274
- **Toilet facilities offered no privacy** (i.e. had no doors at all): 108/274
- **Toilet facilities posed safety hazards to users** (i.e. classified as dangerous): 92/274
- **Sanitation blocks did not promote hygiene or health** (i.e. no soap inside or nearby for handwashing): 36/67
- **Water taps found at the schools were broken and not functional.**: 26/56

**Introduction**

Water and sanitation are essential considerations for healthy living and the enjoyment of other rights. In the schooling context, water and sanitation have serious implications for children’s enjoyment of the rights to health, dignity, and basic education. Despite being a human right, water and sanitation conditions in South Africa, schools included, are unequal and remain a reflection of the uneven infrastructure prioritisation of both colonial and apartheid spatial planning.

Apartheid schooling policies such as the 1953 Bantu Education Act supported the greater apartheid agenda and cemented the under-resourcing of black schools. The apartheid government’s unequal funding for schools based on race meant that spending on black learners was significantly lower than that spent per white learner. This systematic under-resourcing and underfunding of schools with non-white learners deeply entrenched a system that left black schools with substandard infrastructure, including water and sanitation facilities. These schools, which are mostly in rural provinces such as Limpopo and the Eastern Cape, remain underdeveloped and continue to battle immense inherited historical infrastructure backlogs.

Recognising the infrastructure crisis, the post-apartheid government has introduced several policy and programmatic interventions—including the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure (school infrastructure law), the Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Delivery Initiative (ASIDI), and the Sanitation Appropriate for Education (SAFE) programme—to address the challenges. Despite these efforts and interventions by the government, South Africa still has a significant number of schools without decent and safe sanitation facilities or access to reliable water supply. According to a recent DBE report—the 2021 National Education Infrastructure Management System (NEIMS)—nearly a quarter (5,167) of the 23,276 public schools in the country have plain pit toilets on their premises, with 2,130 schools solely reliant on plain pit toilets as their only form of sanitation. Likewise, a quarter (5,836) of public schools have an unreliable water supply, despite having access to some sort of water source.

Given the lingering impact of apartheid, it is not surprising that schools situated in previously marginalised communities, including rural areas and townships, still bear the brunt of the school infrastructure crisis in the country. The three mostly rural provinces—Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo—account for the bulk of the historical school infrastructure backlogs. Of the 5,167 schools nationwide with plain pit toilets, Limpopo alone has 2,144, or 41%. At the provincial level, these 2,144 schools account for more than half of the 3,844 public schools in Limpopo, with plain pit toilets being the only source of sanitation at 219 of these schools. The 2021 NEIMS also reveals that 819 schools in the province have inconsistent water supply.

Although the 2021 NEIMS data shows that all schools in Limpopo supposedly have water supply and access to sanitation, the reality is quite different. For instance, in the same year, a report by the South African Human Rights Commission found that there are still about 113 schools without water in the province. The conflicting data alone highlights the complexity of the water and sanitation challenges in Limpopo and the need for detailed information.

**Schools with plain pit toilets**

Nationwide there are 5,167 schools with plain pit toilets - 219 of these are in Limpopo.

![Diagram showing the distribution of schools with plain pit toilets in Limpopo and nationwide.](image-url)
One of the initiatives implemented by the post-apartheid government is the the Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure law.

This is the main law outlining the minimum requirements for providing infrastructure, like access to a sufficient supply of water and sanitation facilities in schools, to ensure learning takes place in a healthy environment.

Since the law’s publication in 2013, plain pit toilets are not permitted at schools.

Legal framework and policy interventions

In an effort to clear the historic infrastructure backlogs, the post-apartheid government has implemented a number of interventions. One of these initiatives is the school infrastructure law, which was released in November 2013. This is the main law outlining the minimum requirements for providing infrastructure, like access to a sufficient supply of water and sanitation facilities in schools, to ensure learning takes place in a healthy environment. Since the law’s publication in 2013, plain pit toilets are not permitted at schools.

The school infrastructure law also, among other things, sets clear deadlines within which schools should have received key infrastructure and related services. In this regard, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and provincial education departments are required to:

- replace all schools entirely made of inappropriate material such as mud, asbestos, metal or wood, and provide schools without access to water, electricity and sanitation with these basics by 29 November 2016;
- provide all schools with an adequate supply of class-rooms, electricity, water, and sanitation, as well as internet connectivity and perimeter security by 29 November 2020;
- provide all schools with libraries and laboratories by 29 November 2023; and
- provide all other infrastructure, including school halls, sports fields, walkways, parking lots and disability access by 29 November 2030.

The tragic death of a learner at a Limpopo school two months after the school infrastructure law was passed reaffirmed the need for immediate intervention to address the province’s infrastructure issues. Five year-old Michael Komape tragically died in January 2014 after he fell into a plain pit toilet at his primary school in Chebeng Village, Limpopo.

The Komape case

The family of Michael Komape, represented by SECTION27, launched a case in the Polokwane High Court in 2015 against the DBE and LDoE for compensation for their suffering and grief. EE was admitted as amicus curiae (a friend of the court) in the case, arguing that the DBE had not fulfilled its constitutional obligation to provide safe and adequate infrastructure for learners in Limpopo. In April 2018, a judgement was handed down, recognising that as tragic as the death of Michael Komape was, the case was also about the plight of thousands of learners attending schools in rural Limpopo who are without basic sanitation at schools under the administration of the LDoE. This prompted the court to make an order in which it required the LDoE and DBE to develop and provide the court with a reasonable plan for the eradication of pit toilets in schools in the Limpopo province (the structural order). The LDoE and DBE had until July 2018 to submit a thorough report back to the court, but they only did so in August 2018. This report, which included its implementation plan, was completely insufficient and significantly out of compliance with the structural order that the court had issued.

However, the implementation plan that LDoE filed in August 2018 highlighted that 1,489 schools in Limpopo still had plain pit toilets on their premises, with 765 of these schools having pit toilets as their only form of sanitation.
The plan also claimed that due to budgetary restrictions, work could only start in 2026 and that removing these unacceptable structures would cost an estimated R1.6 billion. The DLoE further estimated that all plain pit toilets would only be removed from schools in the province by March 2031, which is 15 years after the 2016 deadline specified in the school infrastructure law.  

While the schools that we visited the previous year did not report any school that relies solely on plain pit toilets (priority 1), or whether it has inadequate appropriate sanitation (priority 2), or only needs minor refurbishments (priority 3);  

While the schools that we visited the previous year appeared on three priority lists of the DLoE, four of the schools do not appear on the cost breakdown annexure which details the water and sanitation projects planned for the school. We found in 2020 that all the schools we visited belonged to either priority 1 or 2 which means that the toilets were in a very bad condition and have been wrongly classified with regard to the priority tiers. The DBE and DLoE plan listed all the primary and secondary schools in Limpopo and provided the following information:  

During the Komape court hearing, the DLoE counted that one of the reasons for not demolishing unused pit toilets in schools was for girls to dispose of their menstrual towels. This rationale was provided by the DLoE for its failure to eradicate plain pit toilets in schools is problematic and worrisome. Girls learn the most from the social and psychological effects of poor sanitation in addition to the environmental and health risks that are common to all.  

Quite often, menstrual health and hygiene for girl learners is only considered to be the provision of sanitary towels in schools—however, there is more to menstrual hygiene. Issues such as having toilets with no doors; toilets without toilet paper or sanitary bins; having no hand washing facilities inside or near toilets; and having to use toilets as sanitation bins impact negatively on the management of menstruation in the school environment. This does not only put the health of girl learners at risk; it exposes them to physical and social discomfort, embarrassment, and vulnerability to bullying. This could, in turn, compromise their school attendance and academic performance. This contributes to the entrenchment of existing patriarchal power relations and gender inequality in the broader society.  

Research conducted in 10 public schools in Gauteng showed a relationship between the quality of sanitation facilities and girl learners’ school attendance and participation, and highlighted the psycho-social outcomes of using inadequate, unsafe, or undignified sanitation. It was found that girl learners may miss school due to their period for a number of reasons, including physical symptoms, shame, lack of privacy, and fear of leakage, lack of access to products and/or ability to manage menstruation at school. The challenges experienced by girls in managing their period can also work to reinforce gender inequalities and further marginalise girls from poorer communities. Thus, girls attending school in these schools would be most affected by poor sanitation facilities.  

This highlights the need to re-imagine and implement sanitation projects that go beyond the provision of a toilet seat, and that is not merely a service delivery token but rather a commitment to fostering and preserving the safety and dignity of learners, particularly girl learners. That is, sanitation that is accessible, dignified, and safe. The 2017 and 2020 school visits have shown that if sanitation conditions are improved in schools, it would positively affect the schooling experiences of girls. Therefore, as has always been argued, a person’s right to dignity and the right to an education cannot be compromised because they are born poor or female. This is what must inform the building of infrastructure for people, communities and schools, otherwise any attempt will fail short of protecting such human rights.

Sanitation Appropriate for Education (SAFE) Initiative

Four years after the death of Michael Komape, a similar tragedy struck again when five-year-old Lumka Mkhethwa died after falling into a plain pit toilet at her school in March 2018.

President Cyril Ramaphosa launched the Sanitation Appropriate for Education (SAFE) initiative in August 2018 in response to the loss of yet another young life, with the goal of accelerating the replacement of basic pit toilets with appropriate sanitation in line with the school infrastructure law. As a requirement of the SAFE initiative, the DBE conducted a nationwide audit of school sanitation backlogs and found that 3,898 schools in the country had poor sanitation facilities. The DBE reduced the initial number to 2,918 schools after discovering that some of the initial schools had been incorrectly labelled as having poor sanitation and that others had been merged or closed as a result of the rationalisation of schools. It is also worth noting that, aside from SAFE, another intervention—the Accelerated School Infrastructure Delivery Initiative (ASIDI)—contributes to the provision of water and sanitation in schools. Furthermore, provincial education departments receive funds through the Education Infrastructure Grant (EIG) to address infrastructure backlogs, including providing water and sanitation in schools across their province. Despite these interventions, progress in reducing water and sanitation backlogs in schools has been slow.

For instance, the DBE’s most recent progress update reveals that only 991 schools have received sanitation upgrades since SAFE’s launch, leaving 1,927 schools on the waiting list. In addition, the DBE indicated that of the initial 457 Limpopo schools under SAFE, just 127 have received sanitation upgrades thus far. Data gaps can be partially blamed for the slow progress being made in providing schools with water and sanitation as well as the necessary upgrades.

There is a lack of comprehensive information on backlogs in school infrastructure. For instance, the 2021 NEMS report reveals that only 219 schools in Limpopo rely solely on plain pit toilets for sanitation, while all schools in the province have access to water. But according to the DBE’s 2020 Norms and Standards progress report, 523 schools in the province still rely solely on plain pit toilets, and 151 of them still have no water supply at all. Conflicting data makes identifying, planning for, and addressing school water and sanitation backlogs difficult. This is because compliance with the infrastructure targets in the school infrastructure law requires sufficient and reliable information. Due to the inaccuracies in the official data, it is necessary to conduct additional analysis and verification of data to determine the extent of the infrastructure problems in South African schools.
Background to the report: Dikolotša go hloka seriti

In July 2017, EE conducted school visits to 18 schools in Ga-Mashashane in the Capricorn District of Limpopo, to assess water and sanitation conditions at these schools. These visits were prompted by calls from high school-going members of the movement (Equalisers) who shared the water and sanitation challenges they faced at their schools.

Equalisers narrated the challenges they faced at school with regard to infrastructure, including having to use toilets that could collapse at any moment; using plain pit toilets; having to wait in queues to use the only functional toilet in their school; having toilets with no doors and thus no privacy; and, in some instances, going days without having access to water.

The introduction of the school infrastructure law, after years of campaigning and litigation by EE, was a victory for learners across South Africa. The law sets a standard for the infrastructural conditions that make a school a school and sets clear deadlines for when different kinds of infrastructure should be provided. The law required all provincial education departments to submit implementation plans and concrete plans to the DBE by November 2014 about how they would address school infrastructure backlogs. It specified that all schools made entirely of inappropriate materials such as mud, wood, asbestos, or zinc had to be removed and replaced by November 2016. In addition, this law required schools with no access to water, electricity, or sanitation to be provided with these basic services by the same deadline. Plain pit toilets are considered illegal by the law and do not count as a form of sanitation.

EE was concerned about the state of Limpopo schools, particularly because the LDoE had delayed releasing its implementation plan many times. Following a number of actions carried out by EE members, including a picket outside the LDoE’s office, the department released its plan in November 2015. Upon scrutiny, EE found that the plan had a number of inconsistencies and that it was, on the whole, vague. It appeared that the LDoE lacked the sense of urgency and political will necessary to improve conditions at schools. It was therefore important to visit schools in Limpopo to monitor the conditions on the ground.

Of the 18 schools visited in July 2017, EE found that 11 had only plain pit toilets for sanitation. Additionally, four schools had no water supply at all, six had unreliable access to water, and only eight had reliable access to water. These and other findings, including a lack of capacity and mismanagement within the LDoE that led to poor project planning, were detailed in EE’S Dikolotša go hloka seriti (“schools without dignity”) report.29

For the Michael Komape court case, in which EE served as amicus curiae (a friend of the court), EE and the Equal Education Law Centre (EELC) went back to the schools in February 2020 to see if any changes had been made since the initial visits. EE and the EELC were denied access to two of the schools, and it was discovered that two of the schools visited in 2017 had merged into one. As a result, we could only visit 15 of the original 18 schools. A month after the school visits took place, South Africa was forced into a hard lockdown as the coronavirus (COVID-19) reached our shores.

In March 2020, schools in South Africa closed in an effort to contain the virus, and EE’s campaigns began to take on a new light. Suddenly, the stakes of many of these campaigns—particularly the water and sanitation as well as overcrowding campaigns—became higher given the COVID-19 protocols that required increased hygiene and social distancing. EE continued to monitor infrastructure conditions at schools and conducted numerous surveys in Limpopo, as well as the four other provinces in which EE is organised—Eastern Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly changed the trajectory of water and sanitation provision in schools across the country. In Limpopo, the pandemic meant that the education department had to think creatively about its response to the pressing water and sanitation needs of schools in the province. At a DBE school infrastructure roundtable discussion in 2021, the LDoE reported that it had to redirect 7% of its 2020/21 infrastructure budget towards COVID-related projects.30 Specifically, the LDoE, with help from the DBE, provided schools with temporary sanitation facilities in the form of 689 chemical toilets.31 The LDoE also collaborated with Rand Water to provide 522 schools with water storage tanks, which Rand Water filled regularly. Although these interventions provided much-needed temporary relief for the schools, they did not critically address the water and sanitation challenges facing schools in Limpopo.

Equalisers narrated the challenges they faced at school with regard to infrastructure, including having to use toilets that could collapse at any moment; using plain pit toilets; having to wait in queues to use the only functional toilet in their school; having toilets with no doors and thus no privacy; and, in some instances, going days without having access to water.
The research sought to assess and monitor any progress in the provision and condition of water and sanitation facilities in the previously visited schools in Ga-Mashashane, Limpopo, ahead of the second school infrastructure law deadline—November 2020.

3

Methodology

The research findings outlined follow on EE’s 2017 report on the provision of water and sanitation at Limpopo schools. The research sought to assess and monitor any progress in the provision and condition of water and sanitation facilities in the previously visited schools in Ga-Mashashane, Limpopo, ahead of the second school infrastructure law deadline—November 2020. In addition, the findings emanating from this follow-up investigation were filed as supplementary evidence in the Michael Komape case, in which EE was involved as an amicus curiae.

Sampling, method, and measures

The follow-up data collection occurred in February 2020 by a team of EE and EELC staff members. Attempts were made to revisit the same 18 schools in Ga-Mashashane, located in the Capricorn District of Limpopo, that were initially visited in 2017. However, two of the schools refused access, which reduced the sample to 16 schools. Moreover, it was discovered that two of the schools visited in 2017 had merged into one, further reducing the sample to 15 schools. Thus, the final sample for this report constitutes a total of 15 schools, comprised of eight secondary schools, six primary schools, and one pre-school. It is worth noting that only eight of these 15 schools consented to the use of their names alongside the data. To ensure consistency, all schools have been renamed in this report using proxy nomenclatures such as “S1”, “S2”, “S3” and so on. However, the annexure outlining the sanitation of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EE revisits schools in Ga-Mashashane in 2020</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In 2017:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 schools were visited</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 refused access</td>
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<td>2 had merged into one</td>
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<tr>
<td>In 2020:</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 secondary schools</td>
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<td>6 primary schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 pre-primary</td>
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individual schools contains the names of the schools, except in cases where names are redacted to protect the anonymity of those schools that requested it.

A research approach—a combination of structured interviews and observations—was used to collect and corroborate the data of interest in this report.10 Firstly, general information on each school—including the school’s IMSIS number, its contact information, the type of school it is (primary, secondary, or combined), and the number of learners enrolled—was obtained through surveys conducted with principals and other school officials. Then a structured interview was conducted with respondents (i.e., a principal, a deputy principal, or an educator) at each school to gather information regarding the school’s water and sanitation conditions, access to maintenance staff, the respondent’s knowledge of the school’s infrastructure law, as well as infrastructure upgrades in that school. The structured interview involved several closed-ended questions assessing respondents’ knowledge and perceptions of the state of water and sanitation conditions in their respective schools.

The reported information was then verified and supplemented through a physical observation exercise—checking and recording information on the actual water and sanitation conditions at each school, by means of inspecting 67 toilet blocks containing 274 toilets. In each toilet block, the number of toilets, the type of toilets, the number of broken toilets, the number of toilets with locking doors, the number of toilets with water points, and the number of toilets with ventilation pipes were recorded. Each toilet block was checked and categorised according to functionality.

Finally, the information obtained from the respondents and observations was recorded and analysed. Findings are presented using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentages) and graphics (charts and tables). Where possible, findings from the 2017 report are given alongside the current results for comparative purposes—to show any improvements or deviations in the area being discussed.

**Operational definition of key terms**

Before presenting the 2020 findings, it is important to explain how certain terms or concepts referred to in this report are described, measured, and used (what they mean outside of their ordinary meaning). Thus, some key terms or words bear the specific meaning assigned to them in this report, unless otherwise stated and in the context in which they are used.

It is worth noting that, based on the 2017 findings, some of the variables or measures were slightly refined or changed for the 2020 data collection. For example, the term “usability” from 2017 was changed to two more nuanced terms: “broken” or “dangerous.” Further, in 2017, there was no distinction between very old, improved pits and E-loos but this report distinguishes between the two. See the following spread for a description of the various types of toilets.

**Typology of water and related terminology**

The availability of or access to water in a given school is measured using the following sources of water: borehole/well on site; mobile tanker; rainwater harvesting, municipal/communal tap; or municipal yard supply. Thus, a school is described to have access to water supply if it can reach one or more of these water sources on the school site or nearby. Consequently, the absence of any of these sources or a school having to fetch water from a dam or river and/or buy water from elsewhere in the community is considered a lack of access to water.

- **Specifically**, mobile tankers refer to the regular provision or delivery of water to a school by a truck (tankers). It often involves a water storage tank/barrel (e.g. loo tank) within the school yard being refilled by the tanker.
- **Municipal water supply** refers to the provision of water through a tap that is connected to a municipal water source and usage is paid for. A school can access municipal water in one of two ways: either directly from a tap on the school premises or from a tap outside of the school yard. The former is for private use, while the latter is communal and used by multiple members of the community.

**Typology of sanitation and related terminology**

Access to sanitation infrastructure relates to both the type and condition of sanitation facilities available. In this report, sanitation facilities are classified according to their infrastructure technology and functionality based on their intended purpose.

Concerning the types of sanitation facilities, a flush toilet refers to a toilet that disposes of human waste by using water to flush it through a drainage pipe to another location for disposal. An enviro-loo (E-loo) is a waterless, on-site, dry sanitation system with a pipe and spinning ventilation, as well as a lid at the back that can open for the removal of waste. Unlike a plain pit toilet, an enviro-loo has a solid base or a solid pit, not just a hole dug in the ground. A ventilation improved pit (VIP) toilet is the most common alternative to plain pit toilets; a VIP has a vent pipe fitted to the pit for better or improved ventilation, and a screen (flyscreen) fitted to the top outlet of the pipe. Thus, a VIP toilet differs from a plain pit toilet in that it allows for ventilation through an added pipe. Therefore, if there is no vent pipe or the pipe is broken, the VIP practically functions like a plain old pit toilet. Finally, a plain toilet is a type of makeshift sanitation facility that collects human waste in a hole in the ground.

The condition or functionality of existing facilities is crucial in determining adequate sanitation infrastructure. In this report, the usability and structural integrity of the facilities are assessed using three main indicators. Firstly, a functional toilet is one with four walls and a door (made of any material) and is, at the most basic level, able to fulfil its function. For a flush toilet, this means that it must be able to flush. For a pit toilet, this means that there must be a hole that is not completely obstructed by objects such as bricks and is not completely full of human waste.

Secondly, a toilet that cannot fulfil its basic function and, therefore, people cannot reasonably be expected to use it is deemed broken. Lastly, a dangerous toilet is a facility that poses a real physical danger or safety hazard to its users, in that it could collapse on or under a user, or a user could fall in or be physically injured while using it.

It is worth noting that plain pit toilets have been counted as a form of sanitation in this report. This categorisation, however, does not represent the opinion that plain pit toilets are acceptable, but rather has been included to provide richer data analysis. In addition, it is important to note that when a VIP’s ventilation pipe has broken, it is effectively rendered a plain pit toilet. Therefore, if a school has only plain pit toilets or only broken VIPs, then it has no access to sanitation. Lastly, it is important to note that statistics for old and unused toilets are not counted or included in each school’s sanitation profile table. However, these have been mentioned where applicable in each school’s introductory paragraph to ensure that each school’s sanitation data is up to date.

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10 Equal Education Limpopo school visits.
Types of toilets

Plain pit toilets

Plain Pit toilets are toilets that collect human waste in a hole in the ground. If any parts of the structure are broken, then the plain pit latrine will be counted as a broken plain pit latrine. (Like in photo's 2 and 3).

The toilets in photo 1 do not have doors. Doors play a part in the privacy of learners that use the toilets.

Enviro-loos

An enviro loo (or E-loo) toilet has a pipe, a spinning airflow fan, and a lid at the back that can be opened to remove waste. In order to function as an E-loo, it must have an intact pipe and spinning ventilation system. If the pipe or spinning airflow system is broken, then the E-loo is counted as a broken E-loo.

Photo 9 has an example of an unbroken pipe. Pictures 7 and 8 have broken pipes. Because the pipes are very important for air to flow in VIPs, broken pipes mean that the VIP turns into a plain pit toilet.

VIPs are a type of plain pit toilet that has a pipe extending from the pit to allow for air to flow in the toilet. In order to work as a VIP, the pipe must be intact. If a pipe is broken, then the VIP effectively serves as a plain pit latrine.

Photo 11 shows the drainpipes that are important for a flush toilet to work. Water and human waste must flow through these pipes when it works. Photo 10 shows the inside of a flush toilet.

A flush toilet disposes of human waste by using water to flush waste through a drainpipe to another place. In order to work as a flush toilet, it must flush water to dispose of waste. If it does not have water, then the flush toilet is counted as a broken flush toilet.

Photo 11 shows the drainpipes that are important for a flush toilet to work. Water and human waste must flow through these pipes when it works. Photo 10 shows the inside of a flush toilet.

Urinals

A urinal is a bowl that is usually on a wall in a toilet building. It is usually only used by boys. Photo 12 is an example of urinals. In order to be usable, there must not be anything inside the bowl that would block the urinal.

Types of water sources

A school only has access to water if it has a borehole/well on site, a mobile tanker, rainwater harvesting, municipal/communal taps, or municipal yard supply.

- **Borehole:** A borehole or well on the school site is the school’s source of water (Photo’s 14 and 16).
- **Mobile Tanker:** A truck that delivers water to the community (including the school) on a regular basis.
- **Rainwater:** Jojo tank within the premises of the school (Photo’s 14, 18 and 19).
- **Municipal/communal:** Tap outside the yard, where people can access water (Photo 15).
- **Municipal yard supply:** A tap located within the premises of the school (Photo 17).
- **No Water:** Collecting water in a dam or river or buying water from a community.

Photo 13 is an example of water that is not safe enough for drinking.
In the context of education, water can affect the enjoyment of quality basic education.

A lack of a reliable supply of clean water can negatively affect children’s attendance rate and academic performance because of school days lost due to preventable water-related illnesses.

Water and sanitation conditions in Limpopo schools
Findings from 2020 school visits

Water facilities and supply in school

Sufficient access to water is a basic human right that has serious implications for all areas of life. In the context of education, water can affect the enjoyment of quality basic education. A lack of a reliable supply of clean water can negatively affect children’s attendance rate and academic performance because of school days lost due to preventable water-related illnesses. Yet, access to a reliable water supply in South Africa is highly unequal, with mostly rural communities, like those in Limpopo, comparatively worse-off because of a lack of proper water infrastructure. Even within the same community, people have unequal access to water. This is made clear in the findings from our 2020 school visits.

Of the 15 schools that were successfully surveyed in 2020, only six schools reported having consistent (always having) access to water, while seven schools reported having unreliable (sometimes having) access to water (see figure 1). A small but significant proportion (two) of the sampled schools reported having no access to water.

The overall reported availability of water in 2020 indicates marginal progress from what was reported in the 2017 survey, albeit the level of access differed somewhat (see figure 2). Interestingly, when comparing the same 15 schools from 2017 and 2020, the findings from the visits show a general decrease in the number of schools that reported having no access to water – four schools in 2017 versus two schools in 2020. Specifically, two of the schools that reported no water access in 2017
Source and quality of water supply

A closer look at the sources of water supply showed significant variations in the types of water facilities across the schools. Findings from the 2020 observations of the 15 schools showed that a significant proportion of the schools had access to some recognised water source, although the sources varied. Specifically, more than half (8) of the schools exclusively relied on boreholes as their sole source of water supply, and two schools had to buy water from their community because of a lack of a physical water facility at or near the school premises (see Table 1). Of the schools with just boreholes on site, only five reported consistent supply or availability of water, with the remaining three reporting unreliable supply.

Interestingly, a few of the schools reported having access to more than one water source, but a reliable supply was not always guaranteed. For instance, two schools reported having both access to a communal municipal tap and a borehole, yet only one of these schools had a consistent supply of water. Also, one of the schools indicated reliance on a combination of a communal municipal tap and harvested rainwater, although supply was not consistent. However, there were slight improvements in access to water for three schools in 2020, including S1, S8, and S13. These schools did not have access to water source facilities in 2017, in that they had to buy water from the community, but they all had boreholes on the school premises by 2020. However, there is also one school, S15, that regressed from having municipal water supply in 2017 to having to buy water in 2020.

Several factors affect access to and the availability of sufficient water, some environmental and others structural in nature. A closer look into the potential causes or explanations for unreliable water access experienced by some schools revealed issues ranging from uncontrollable natural forces such as dried up and/or blocked boreholes to easily preventable problems like broken connecting pipes, being unable to pay municipal bills, and the lack of electricity to pump water. Whatever the reason, the water profiles of the schools do not reflect the provisions of the school infrastructure law that clearly states "all schools must have a sufficient water supply… which is available at all times for drinking and personal hygiene; and sufficient water-collection points and water-use facilities must be available at all schools to allow convenient access to, and use of, water for drinking and personal hygiene."(10)

While physical access, in the form of a water source and supply, is crucial for the enjoyment of the right to water, the quality of the water itself is equally important because of the health implications of unsafe water. Thus, the right to access to sufficient water, as enshrined in the Constitution, arguably goes beyond quantity to include the quality of the right in question. Regarding water quality, 10 of the 15 schools surveyed explicitly reported that their water was clean. The remaining five schools either provided conflicting answers or reported being unsure about the quality of their water supply (see summary in Table 1).

<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
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<td>*Borehole</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2</td>
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</tr>
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<td>S4</td>
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<td>Clean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5</td>
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<td>Buy water</td>
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<td>Borehole</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>S7</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Borehole &amp; communal municipal tap</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>*Rainwater harvesting &amp; communal municipal tap</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>*Rainwater harvesting &amp; communal municipal tap</td>
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<tr>
<td>S12</td>
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<td>Sometimes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>S13</td>
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<td>Sometimes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>S16</td>
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<td>Always</td>
<td>Borehole</td>
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<tr>
<td>S15</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>**Buy water</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*Access to water source facilities at these schools improved from having to buy water from the community in 2017 to owning their own water source in 2020.
**Changed from relying on a communal borehole in 2017 to having their own water source in 2020.
***Access to a water source regressed from having a municipal water tap in 2017 to having to buy water from the community in 2020.
School sanitation

Adequate, sufficient, and safe sanitation facilities in schools are critical for realizing the right to quality edu-
cation, as sanitation is linked to school attendance and learner performance. In South Africa, access to sanita-
tion infrastructure in schools is largely determined by geography and the availability of water in the physical 
environment. Rural communities, such as those in Limpopo, the Eastern Cape, and KwaZulu-Natal, of-
ten face huge sanitation challenges. Where sanitation facilities do exist in rural communities, they are often inadequate in both quality and quantity.

As schools are located within a larger community, this also affects the type of toilet facilities available or accessible to learners at their schools. This is demon-
strated by the fact that some sanitation facilities or structures include plain pit toilets—which are not al-
lowed at schools according to the school infrastructure law. By law, schools must have access to a sufficient number of sanitation facilities for learners and teach-
ers. These must not only be in good working condition but also provide privacy and security as well as promote health and hygiene standards. Therefore, school sani-
tation in this report is assessed on two levels—both in terms of the physical availability (the existence of sanita-
tion) and the nature and condition of the available facilities (the quality of sanitation).

For this report, toilet facilities, including 67 toilet blocks, containing 274 in-use toilet facilities, were evalu-
ated across the 15 schools to determine the availability, type, and condition of facilities. Regarding the type of facilities available, the 2020 findings showed that a sig-
nificant proportion of the facilities assessed were plain pit toilets (120 out of 274); just over a third (100) of the toilets were E-loos, 38 were ventilated improved pit 
(VIP) toilets, and only 16 were flush toilets (see figure 3). Similarly, an assessment of the number of urinals revealed that there were only a total of 31 urinals across all the schools. Of these 31 urinals, nine were broken. Thus, there was some form of sanitation facility in each of the sampled schools. However, the type of facilities varies considerably. It is worth noting that because plain pit toilets at schools are illegal, schools that rely solely on this form of facility are deemed to have no sanitation infrastructure.

The 2020 findings showed that only four of the schools had flushing toilets on-site as part of their ablation fa-
cilities. Eleven out of the 15 schools had plain pit toilets on their premises. Specifically, three of the 15 schools surveyed relied solely on plain pit toilets as their only form of sanitation and are, therefore, considered to have no sanitation at all. A fourth school had only VIPs that were broken upon further inspection, making them plain pit toilets. A further two schools had both plain pit toilets and E-loos but access to the E-loos was reserved for teachers’ use only. Therefore, in at least six of the schools, learners could only access plain pit toi-
lets (see summary in Table 2).

Compared to the same schools from the 2017 re-
port, the 2020 findings show a slight improvement in the sanitation profile across the board and in specific schools (see figure 4). For instance, in 2017, eight of the 15 schools had only plain pit toilets as their sole form of sanitation; this dropped to three in 2020, with five of the schools getting other forms of sanitation to com-
plement the plain pit toilets. Similarly, only two schools had flushing toilets on-site in 2017, this number dou-
bled in 2020.

Functionality, privacy and security

The availability of facilities alone is not enough as far 
as access to sanitation infrastructure is concerned. The conditions of the available facilities are impor-
tant because the state of such infrastructure not only poses health and safety risks to users but determines the structural integrity and actual functionality of the facilities. Analysis of the conditions of the inspected toilet facilities found showed that 81 out of 274 toi-
lets were broken, leaving 193 toilets functional or in a usable state (see figure 5). If the physical condition of facilities is taken into account, the nature of sanitation facilities available across the schools changes slightly. In 

- VIPS become basic pit toilets in principle, so if a school has a broken VIP, it can then be counted as a plain pit toilet. In this regard, 25 of the initial 38 VIPs 
found in the schools were determined to be broken and, as such, functioned as plain pit toilets in reality.
- Another significant consideration of the condition of toilet infrastructure at school relates to facilities that promote privacy and dignity of users. Sometimes, the 
filthy, unhygienic, and unsafe conditions of toilet facil-
ities not only present serious health and safety hazards; they also limit learners’ need for privacy and invari-
ably harm their right to dignity. Concerning privacy, 
inspections of the existing ablation facilities revealed that 108 of the 274 toilet structures had no doors at 
all—meaning these facilities provide no privacy to us-
ers. Of the 166 facilities that had doors, only 52 had 
doors that could lock, leaving 114 with doors that could 
not lock, and so offering very little privacy. Sanitation 
facilities that do not promote privacy and dignity can 
make both teaching and learning very difficult. Girl 
learners are more affected than boys because the lack of 
separate, private, and secure toilet facilities means 
that they cannot attend school during menstruation.

Above: Figure 3. Sanitation facility types found in the 15 schools, 2020

Left: 3. Toilets with no doors S5.
The presence of inappropriate sanitation facilities at schools, such as plain pit toilets, not only contravenes the school infrastructure law but also violates the rights to sanitation, health, and dignity and threatens the rights of children daily. In this regard, our evaluation of the conditions of sanitation facilities showed that 92 of the 274 structures were unsafe and appropriately classified as “dangerous” because they were structurally unsafe, posing a real danger to users. That is, some of these “toilets” or structures—with a broken floor, unstable pedestal or loose seat—would collapse and cause the user to fall into the pit below—a serious safety risk. The safety implications of inappropriate sanitation facilities, particularly pit toilets, at school are typified by the tragic deaths of five-year-olds Lumka Mkhethwa and Michael Komape, who died in pit toilets at their schools in the Eastern Cape and Limpopo provinces, respectively.

Appropriate school sanitation infrastructure is critical for the enjoyment and full realisation of the right to basic education. The importance of safe and appropriate sanitation in schools is recognised in government policies and interventions, including the school infrastructure law, the SAFE, and the ASIDI initiatives. Despite the national focus on improving sanitation infrastructure across South African public schools, the progress to replace or upgrade inappropriate sanitation facilities has been very slow. The generally dire sanitation conditions across the 15 schools, as seen in Table 2 above, reflect the extent of the sanitation crisis in Limpopo and the country at large.

Oddly enough, observations in some of the schools discovered some existing (additional) ablation facilities that were unsafe but could prove useful in addressing the sanitation challenges in those schools (see summary in Table 3). In 11 out of the 15 schools, 17 toilet blocks, comprising a total of 76 toilets, were found to be unused. Schools provided different reasons for this, including that the toilets were dangerous, toilet blocks did not have walls, schools were unsure about the safety of the toilets, the toilets were full, the toilets were old or only new toilets were being used by learners.

### Health and hygiene promotion in schools

A significant part of safe and appropriate water and sanitation infrastructure in schools relates to appropriate hygiene conditions that promote good health. This is because water and sanitation facilities are used as resources to promote hygiene practices. In schools, learners are able to learn many important hygiene skills and behaviours that may not be promoted or possible in the home. Therefore, hygiene standards—the availability of water, soap, handwashing facilities, and other hygiene supplies such as toilet paper—are vital to protect the health of learners in schools. Thus, it is important for schools to provide adequate water and soap in or near sanitation facilities for handwashing after going to the toilet and before handling food. However, such hygiene promotion can be considerably limited where water and sanitation facilities are inadequate or nonexistent in schools.

#### Handwashing facilities

Regarding handwashing facilities, results of an assessment of the 67 toilet blocks (comprising 274 toilet facilities) identified across the 15 schools showed that less than half (31) of the blocks (comprising 114 toilet facilities) had at least a water tap at or near the entrance to the toilet block. In particular, a total of only 56 water taps were found across the 31 blocks across the 15 schools. This means that a large number (36) of the 67 toilet blocks (comprising 160 toilet facilities) examined had no water taps within or near them (see summary in Table 4).

Furthermore, it was discovered that in more than half (17) of the 31 toilet blocks with taps, the taps were broken, rendering them completely tapless; only 14 toilet blocks had a working tap. Specifically, nearly half of the taps (26 of 56) were broken. Concerning other relevant hygiene resources, only one of the 67 toilet blocks examined had soap, five had toilet paper on the day of observation, and none of the toilet blocks had a sanitation bin in the vicinity.

These findings show that most Limpopo schools do not protect the health of learners, as hygiene promotion is far from adequate. Moreover, it is difficult for learners to develop good hygiene habits, such as handwashing, if there is no soap or access to taps near toilets in the school.

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**Table 2:** Summary of hygiene measures in selected toilet blocks across 15 schools in Limpopo.

The number of toilet blocks in the table is random and does not represent any chronological order ranking.
Sanitation upgrades and maintenance in Limpopo schools

In terms of implementing the school infrastructure law, all provinces are required to have plans indicating how they would meet the targeted infrastructure deadlines. These plans must include the intention to replace or upgrade any unsafe and inadequate toilet facilities in schools. In addition, the DBE has developed a policy document—the Guidelines for General Upkeep and Maintenance of Education Facilities (the “GU&M Guidelines”)—that outlines guidelines to follow as well as the roles and responsibilities of various role-players involved in the general upkeep and maintenance of education facilities, including all existing and new sanitation facilities.11 Table 5 shows the summary of schools’ responses to questions related to sanitation upgrades, facility maintenance, and their knowledge of the existing school infrastructure law.

Upgrading sanitation facilities

Firstly, the findings from the 2020 school visits demonstrate, on a micro scale, the degree of sanitation backlog in the province and the need for facility upgrades to bring most of the schools in line with the law. In this respect, the inquiry for this report asked schools to indicate whether they had received any sanitation upgrades or new toilet facilities in the year preceding the visit. Only one (S14) of the 15 schools reported having had any upgrades at all. The only school that reported the affirmative had a new toilet block built, but the facility had not been officially handed over to the school because of a dispute with the implementing agent and the contractor in charge of the project.

Schools that responded in the negative—that is, reported no sanitation upgrade the year before—were asked to indicate whether they had been contacted by any official from the LDoE about possible infrastructur e upgrade(s) at their school. Of the 14 schools that reported no upgrade(s), more than half (8) of them indicated that they had not been contacted by any department official; five schools reported having been contacted or visited by the department, while one school was unsure about any such contact (see Table 5). However, the mere fact that a department official contacts or visits a school about possible sanitation upgrade(s) does not always guarantee that such a school will receive the expected or promised upgrades. This became apparent in our investigation as three of those five schools lamented that, despite being contacted by the LDoE about infrastructure upgrade(s), no real change ever occurred.

Nonetheless, schools have a role and responsibility in resolving sanitation challenges confronting them if they have primary knowledge of sanitation needs. Thus, they are actively required to communicate issues with the LDoE that put their concerns on the department’s radar—education departments are often geographically removed from the school environment. In this regard, principals or relevant managers of the schools were asked whether their school had contacted the LDoE or District office for assistance with any sanitation challenges.

Nearly all (13) of the 15 schools reported having raised concerns with the department and having requested assistance or relief. Eight of these schools indicated they had not received a response to their request yet; one school believed its request was still being processed, while one other school was unsure of the status of its request.

The remaining three schools that requested assistance from the department had very different responses. Only one school reported having received the new sanitation structures requested. One school reported that it had been assigned a contractor to build new toilets; the other school indicated that department officials visited the school and promised to provide assistance, but the situation remained unchanged.

The above experiences of schools when communicating sanitation needs and issues to the education department are concerning as the department has a legal and moral duty to these schools and learners. The collective experience of most of these schools suggests that even when education departments know of infrastructure challenges in schools, very little relief is offered.

Maintenance and upkeep of sanitation facilities

According to the DBE’s GU&M Guidelines, all existing and new school facilities, including sanitation facilities, must be looked after and maintained. In implementing the national guidelines, schools must have plans to address maintenance.11 A clear way to ensure the general upkeep and maintenance of school facilities is to have roles and responsibilities assigned to specific individuals or departments.

Accordingly, schools were asked to indicate whether there was a full-time maintenance staff for repairs and cleaning and to explain how maintenance for repairs and cleaning was carried out in their schools. Of the 15 schools surveyed, one reported having at least one maintenance staff member for repairs, while three reported having a maintenance staff member for cleaning; no school had both. It became clear that the maintenance of sanitation facilities was not the primary concern of schools as the majority (11 out of 15) of the schools had no dedicated person responsible for maintaining school facilities, including sanitation facilities (see Table 5).

However, a probe revealed that most schools outsource their maintenance requirements as the need arises. Regarding maintenance for cleaning, six schools reported that learners did the cleaning. In four schools, educators reportedly did the cleaning. The remaining one school contracted its cleaning needs out to an external organisation.

For maintenance for repairs, seven schools contract ed out the work to an external person when needed. In one school, teachers were reportedly responsible for maintenance and repairs, while the SGB was responsible for repairs in another. One school also reported that it had a committee of teachers and volunteers that focused on repairs at the school. Another school reported having a maintenance plan in place but did not elaborate further.

Knowledge of school infrastructure law

Knowledge of rights is important for the full enjoyment of those rights. In the context of this report, there is a legal obligation—in terms of the school infrastructure law—on the DBE and provincial education departments to provide sufficient, safe, and appropriate water and sanitation facilities in all public schools across the country. Where the government fails, schools and learners have the right to enforce their rights. However, knowledge of an existing right is the first step in enforcing the said right. It was, therefore, necessary to ascertain whether schools had any knowledge of the existence of the school infrastructure law that contains vital water and sanitation provisions.

In this regard, representatives from each school were asked whether they knew of or about the school infrastructure law. Shockingly, most respondents (11 of the 15 schools) reported having no knowledge of this important law (see Table 5 below). A further probe revealed misconceptions as some of the respondents confused the school infrastructure law with another regulation of a similar name—the National Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure (with another regulation of a similar name—the National Norms and Standards for School Funding).

Knowledge of school infrastructure law

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<th>School</th>
<th>S1</th>
<th>S2</th>
<th>S3</th>
<th>S4</th>
<th>S5</th>
<th>S6</th>
<th>S7</th>
<th>S8</th>
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<th>S10</th>
<th>S11</th>
<th>S12</th>
<th>S13</th>
<th>S14</th>
<th>S15</th>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>Has been contacted by LDoE about upgrade(s)</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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The first round of Limpopo school visits in 2017 was prompted by calls from high school members of the movement, Equalisers, who found themselves subject to inadequate, unsafe, and undignified water and sanitation conditions at their schools. Findings from this initial visit revealed that the LDoE was in clear violation of the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure – which required all provincial education departments to provide public schools with some form of water and sanitation by no later than November 2016. It was apparent that the LDoE suffered from numerous internal issues, including a lack of capacity, severe mismanagement, a lack of urgency, and a lack of the political will necessary to improve conditions for affected learners. In addition the LDoE has, over the years, cited financial constraints as an issue in relation to the slow pace of infrastructure delivery.

When EE revisited these schools in February 2020, the situation had not changed much. Six of the 15 schools still had access to only plain pit toilets as their form of sanitation, and two of the schools did not have access to any water—use facility or collection point.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic—despite temporary sanitation and water relief that were provided to several schools—showed the extent of the water and sanitation crisis in the basic education sector clearly and the need for an urgent concerted effort to address the historical backlog. Until the pandemic, many schools had gotten by with poor water and sanitation facilities without much notice.

Unsafe water and sanitation conditions have robbed learners of their lives and ability to learn in safe and conducive environments.

Unsafe water and sanitation conditions have robbed learners of their lives and ability to learn in safe and conducive environments. It is therefore imperative that the LDoE provides schools with permanent appropriate sanitation facilities urgently. The department must ensure that these facilities meet necessary hygiene and safety standards that contribute to a dignified and safe school environment.

It is therefore imperative that the LDoE provides schools with permanent appropriate sanitation facilities urgently. The department must ensure that these facilities meet necessary hygiene and safety standards that contribute to a dignified and safe school environment.
In addition to the structural order, the judge granted an appeal, taking the case to the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA). In December of 2019, the SCA overturned the Polokwane High Court’s refusal to award the family damages for emotional shock and grief.

### Endnotes


3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.


7. Ibid.

8. In addition to the structural order, the judge granted some damage claims, but dismissed the family’s claim for emotional shock and grief. In 2018, the Komape family filed an appeal, taking the case to the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA). In December of 2019, the SCA overturned the Polokwane High Court’s refusal to award the family damages for emotional shock and grief.


11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.


15. Ibid.


19. Ibid.


21. Ibid.

22. A mixed-methods approach is where researchers make use of both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Quantitative research methods ask questions that can usually be answered with numbers, such as, “How many toilets does school X have?” Quantitative research methods ask questions that are usually answered with thoughts, opinions and feelings such as, “How do you think bad sanitation in schools impacts your ability to learn?”. A mixed-methods approach allows for better research, because while quantitative research allows us to look at the numbers and facts for statistical analysis, qualitative research gives a voice to those who experience the issue and makes sure that the findings of the research are grounded in real life experiences.

23. This is an individual number assigned to a school on the Education Management Information Systems (EMIS). EMIS is a government system that is used to collect and record information about schools.


25. Section 19(1)(b) of the Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure.


28. Ibid.

### ANNEXURES: School sanitation profiles

#### S1: Botsikana Secondary School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sanitation Block</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

This school is a secondary school that has a total of 288 learners, comprising 168 boys and 120 girls, and one learner with disabilities. It has five toilet blocks housing 19 toilet facilities, consisting of eight flush toilets, four plain pit toilets and seven VIPs used by both learners and teachers. The majority of the toilet facilities are broken (17 of 19) and are therefore not functional. Specifically, all seven of the VIPs are broken and, therefore, effectively serve as plain pit toilets. Likewise, all eight flush toilet facilities are broken, and two of the plain pit toilets are broken.

Regarding privacy and security, only nine of the 19 toilet facilities have doors that actually lock; five have no doors at all. Safety-wise, two of the 19 toilet facilities can be classified as dangerous, posing a serious safety hazard to users. Lastly, there are two functional urinals at the school. It is worth noting that while the school reported having one learner with disabilities, there is no wheelchair-accessible toilet facility anywhere on the premises.

#### Table 6.1 Sanitation profile. *The floor in block 1 is cracked.*
This secondary school has a total of 246 learners, made up of 150 boys and 96 girls. There are no learners with disabilities. The school has four sanitation blocks housing nine toilet facilities, consisting of seven E-loos and two flush toilets. A third (3) of the nine toilet facilities are broken, including both of the flush toilets and one of the E-loos. It is important to note that only teachers have access to the flush toilets. In addition, the school has eight urinal facilities, two of which are broken.

Regarding privacy and security, only three toilet facilities have doors that properly lock; three toilets have no doors at all. One of the toilets, an E-loo, posed a safety hazard to users and, therefore, is classified as dangerous. Although the school has no learners with disabilities, it has a sanitation block that is wheelchair-accessible.

Surprisingly, there are three sanitation blocks, consisting of 12 toilet facilities, that are not in use anymore. The school stopped using these toilets once E-loos were built on the premises. However, these old blocks are not properly cordoned off. Learners reportedly throw away their sanitary waste at these old toilets.

This secondary school has 151 learners, consisting of 74 boys and 77 girls, with no learners with disabilities. The school has six sanitation blocks housing 21 toilet facilities: 14 VIPs, five plain pit toilets, and two flush toilets. In addition, there is one urinal at the school, which functions well. It is worth noting that female learners only have access to the plain pit toilets and male learners have access to the VIPs, while the flush toilets are reserved for teachers’ use.

Regarding functionality, 15 of the 21 toilet facilities are broken. Specifically, 10 of the 14 VIPs at this school are broken and effectively serve as plain pits; one of the flush toilets and four of the plain pit toilets are also broken. Concerning privacy and security, three of the toilet facilities have no doors at all, only five of the toilet facilities have locking doors. Over half (11) of the 21 toilet facilities are dangerous as some have already collapsed, while some do not have walls at the back, and others have broken pipes.

Moreover, there are two additional sanitation blocks with four E-loos and VIPs each at the school. These toilet facilities are older and no longer in use. The school has no wheelchair-accessible toilet facility.

This pre-school caters to 43 children, 25 boys and 18 girls, ranging from 6 months to 4 years; there are no children with disabilities. The establishment has two sanitation blocks of six toilet facilities, all of which are plain pit toilets. There is no separate urinal facility. Four of the six toilet facilities are for the children, and the remaining two are reserved for teachers. None of the toilets are wheelchair accessible. All six toilet facilities are functional and have locking doors. However, the four toilet facilities used by the children are dangerous.
S6: Name Redacted

This secondary school has 294 learners, comprising 153 boys and 141 girls; no learners with disabilities. The school has two sanitation blocks housing eight toilet facilities, consisting of four VIPs and four E-loos, with no separate urinal facility. All of the toilet facilities are functional, but none of the toilet facilities are wheelchair accessible. Regarding privacy, two of the eight toilets have no doors at all, while the rest have doors that do not lock. Notably, none of the toilet facilities posed a safety hazard to users.

Below: Table 5.6 Sanitation profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sanitation Block</th>
<th>Block 1</th>
<th>Block 2</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of toilet facilities</td>
<td>VIPs</td>
<td>E-loos</td>
<td>VIPs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of toilet facilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of broken toilet facilities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of toilets with locking doors</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of dangerous toilet facilities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of urinal(s)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of broken urinal(s)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Users of the facilities</td>
<td>girl learners &amp; teachers</td>
<td>Male learners &amp; teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

S7: Mashianoke Primary School

This primary school has 253 learners, comprising 129 boys and 124 girls; no learners with disabilities. The school has two sanitation blocks housing 13 toilet facilities, all of which are plain pit toilets with no separate urinal facilities. All the plain pit toilets function as they should, but none of the toilets are wheelchair accessible. However, 10 of the 13 facilities have no doors at all, while the rest have doors that do not lock. Notably, none of the 13 plain pit toilets posed a safety hazard to users. However, since plain pits are banned in schools, this school essentially has no sanitation facilities.

Below: Table 5.7 Sanitation profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sanitation Block</th>
<th>Block 1</th>
<th>Block 2</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of toilet facilities</td>
<td>Plain pit</td>
<td>Plain pit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of toilet facilities</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of broken toilet facilities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of toilets with locking doors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of toilets with no doors</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of dangerous toilet facilities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of urinal(s)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of broken urinal(s)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Users of the facilities</td>
<td>girl learners &amp; teachers</td>
<td>Male learners &amp; teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

S8: Matshelana Primary School

This primary school has 566 learners, comprising 288 boys and 278 girls; no learners with disabilities. The school has two sanitation blocks housing eight toilet facilities, all VIPs, with no separate urinal facilities. All eight VIPs are broken and effectively serve as plain pit toilets. In addition, five of the eight VIPs have no doors at all, and the rest have no doors that lock. Four of the eight VIPs are dangerous, as the seats are not age appropriate. There is a third sanitation block with E-loos at the school that is completely full and unusable but serves as a storage unit. None of the toilet facilities are wheelchair accessible.

Above: Table 5.8 Sanitation profile. *Toilet seats in block 2 are not age appropriate, posing a safety hazard to users.

Below: Table 5.9 Sanitation profile. *Block 3 has holes in the back, and the toilets are situated in an unsafe area surrounded by long grass. One toilet is locked, and there is no running water.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sanitation Block</th>
<th>Block 1</th>
<th>Block 2</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of toilet facilities</td>
<td>VIPs</td>
<td>E-loos</td>
<td>VIPs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of toilet facilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of broken toilet facilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of toilets with locking doors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of toilets with no doors</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of dangerous toilet facilities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of urinal(s)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of broken urinal(s)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Users of the facilities</td>
<td>Male &amp; female teachers</td>
<td>Male &amp; girl learners</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

S9: Name Redacted

This secondary school has 384 learners, comprising 202 boys and 182 girls, and no learners with disabilities. The school has five sanitation blocks housing 24 toilet facilities, consisting of four flush toilets, seven plain pit toilets, eight E-loos, and five VIPs. There are no separate urinal facilities, and none of the toilets are wheelchair accessible. It is worth noting that the use of the flush toilets is reserved for teachers only. Only two of the 24 toilets are broken. However, half (12) of the 24 toilet facilities have no doors at all, while just five of them have locking doors. Moreover, 11 of the 24 toilet facilities pose safety hazards and, therefore, are dangerous.

In addition, there are two sanitation blocks that are no longer used at the school. The first unused block consists of four flush toilets that no longer work, so the toilet doors are locked but the block is not locked. The second unused block consists of six dangerous plain pit toilets; the roof of the block has fallen but it is not cordoned off properly.

Above: Table 5.10 Sanitation profile. *Toilet seats in block 2 are not age appropriate, posing a safety hazard to users.

Below: Table 5.11 Sanitation profile.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sanitation Block</th>
<th>Block 1</th>
<th>Block 2</th>
<th>Block 3*</th>
<th>Block 4</th>
<th>Block 5</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of toilet facilities</td>
<td>Plain pit</td>
<td>E-loos</td>
<td>VIPs</td>
<td>Flush toilet</td>
<td>Plain pit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of toilet facilities</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of broken toilet facilities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of toilets with locking doors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of toilets with no doors</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of dangerous toilet facilities</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of urinal(s)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of broken urinal(s)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Users of the facilities</td>
<td>girl learners</td>
<td>Male &amp; female teachers and girl learners</td>
<td>Male learners</td>
<td>Male &amp; female teachers</td>
<td>Female NSNP staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This primary school has 310 learners, comprising 162 boys and 148 girls, and no learners with disabilities. The school has two sanitation blocks housing 18 toilet facilities, consisting of 14 plain pit toilets and four E-loos; with no separate urinal facility. It is worth noting that the use of the E-loo is reserved for female teachers only; learners only have access to the plain pit toilets. Two of the E-loos are broken, and all 14 pit toilets have no doors at all; only the four E-loos have locking doors. None of the toilet facilities pose a safety hazard, and none are wheelchair accessible. In addition, there is a third unused sanitation block containing two plain pit toilets.

**S10: Name Redacted**

This secondary school has 157 learners, comprising 99 boys and 58 girls; and one learner with disabilities. This school has three sanitation blocks housing 11 toilet facilities, all E-loos. There are three urinals at the school, all in good shape. Seven (7) of the 11 E-loos are broken; two E-loos have no doors at all, and only one E-loo has a locking door. Six of the 11 E-loos are dangerous and pose a safety hazard to users. In addition, there is a fourth unused sanitation block containing four broken VIPs—which effectively serve as plain pit toilets. Interestingly, one of the toilet facilities is wheelchair-accessible; it has extra space and a ramp, but no roof.

**S11: Name Redacted**

This primary school has 434 learners, comprising 228 boys and 206 girls, and no learners with disabilities. The school has five sanitation blocks housing 26 toilet facilities, consisting of 12 E-loos and 14 plain pit toilets, but no separate urinal facilities. The use of the E-loos is reserved for teachers only, while only the plain pits are accessible to learners. None of the toilet facilities are wheelchair accessible. Four of the 26 toilet facilities are broken—all broken toilets are locked. More than half (14) of the 26 toilet facilities have no doors at all, and the rest have no locking doors.

Although none of the toilet facilities pose a safety hazard to users, two of the sanitation blocks are located in a dangerous area outside the school premises where individuals from the community can access them. Furthermore, one sanitation block containing four E-loos had no toilet seats. In addition, there is a sixth unused sanitation block containing nine plain pit toilets. The block is old and cordoned off, but learners reportedly continue to use it because the toilet facilities are insufficient for the number of learners.

**S12: Napo Primary School**

This primary school has 211 learners, comprising 119 boys and 92 girls, and no learners with disabilities. The school has seven sanitation blocks housing 30 toilet facilities, consisting of nine E-loos and 21 plain pit toilets. There are also four urinals at the school, all in good shape. None of the toilet facilities are wheelchair accessible. Four of the 30 toilet facilities are broken; two toilet facilities have no doors at all, while only four have locking doors. Nine out of the 30 toilet facilities, all plain pits, pose safety hazards and are, therefore, dangerous. In addition, there is an eighth unused sanitation block, containing 12 toilet facilities, that was never fully built, so the school uses zinc sheets to close the holes so learners do not use them.

**S13: Name Redacted**
This secondary school has 1,238 learners, comprising 596 boys and 642 girls, and no learners with disabilities. The school has 12 sanitation blocks housing 45 toilet facilities, consisting of 26 E-loos and 19 plain pit toilets. There are also eight urinals, all in good shape. Only one of the 12 sanitation blocks can be classified as wheelchair accessible as it has extra space and a ramp. About a quarter of the 45 toilet facilities are broken; 14 have no doors at all, and only 15 of them have locking doors. Alarmingly, 23 out of the 45 toilet facilities pose safety hazards and are, therefore, dangerous. In addition, there is one urinal at the school, which is in good shape. None of the 17 plain pit toilets are broken and function as they should. However, 12 out of the 17 toilet facilities have no doors at all, while the rest have no locking doors. There is no wheelchair accessible toilet facility at the school. Safety-wise, a large proportion (16) of the 19 plain pit toilets are dangerous as they pose significant safety hazards to users. Since all the toilet facilities at this school are plain pits—structures that are not allowed at schools—this school does not have any sanitation facilities. Alarmingly, there are four additional toilet facilities at the school that are old and unused. These structures have been demolished and the holes have been filled with stones, but they pose a safety hazard as learners could trip while playing.

**S14: Tlakale Mashashane Secondary School**

This primary school has 360 learners, comprising 176 boys and 184 girls, and no learners with disabilities. It has five sanitation blocks that house 17 toilet facilities, all of which are plain pit toilets. In addition, there is one urinal at the school, which is in good shape. None of the 17 plain pit toilets are broken and function as they should. However, 12 out of the 17 toilet facilities have no doors at all, while the rest have no locking doors. There is no wheelchair accessible toilet facility at the school. Safety-wise, a large proportion (16) of the 19 plain pit toilets are dangerous as they pose significant safety hazards to users. Since all the toilet facilities at this school are plain pits—structures that are not allowed at schools—this school does not have any sanitation facilities. Alarmingly, there are four additional toilet facilities at the school that are old and unused. These structures have been demolished and the holes have been filled with stones, but they pose a safety hazard as learners could trip while playing.
Equal Education demands:

- Eradicate all illegal pit toilets and supply schools with proper toilet facilities according to the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure.
- Provide schools with a reliable and clean water supply.
- Ensure that there is enough money allocated for the maintenance and hygiene of toilet facilities in accordance with the Department of Basic Education's Guidelines for General Upkeep and Maintenance of Education Facilities.

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