

**EQUAL EDUCATION SUBMISSION**  
**ANNUAL THEMATIC REPORT TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**  
**2014**

**Special Rapporteur on the Human Right to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation**

## **ABOUT EQUAL EDUCATION**

Equal Education (EE) is a community and membership-based organisation. It advocates for quality and equality in the South African education system and engages in evidence-based activism for improving the nation's schools. It is a leader in youth leadership development. EE's campaigns, based on detailed research and policy analysis, are aimed at achieving quality education for all.

We promote the rights to equality and education, with the firm belief that these will enable the poor and working classes to an equal opportunity in life. Led by young activists, EE seeks to improve the poor quality of education in South Africa by working together with communities, schools, teachers, principals, learners, parents, academics, researchers and the government. We build an understanding of the educational system, whilst drawing attention to problems faced by schools and their communities. Equipped with this knowledge, EE offers a new way for people to participate in the democratic system and bring change to education and society.

The organization was established in 2008, and began by conducting research in schools in Khayelitsha (a working-class community in Cape Town, with a population of approximately 400,000 people, and 54 schools). Schools in Khayelitsha, like those in other poor communities, are under-resourced, under-staffed and overcrowded - factors which have a significantly negative impact on academic performance. EE began with the aim of supporting the many hardworking teachers and determined learners within the community who are battling in difficult conditions. EE has offices in Khayelitsha, Western Cape and Tembisa, which is in Gauteng. We have members in these two provinces, as well the Eastern Cape, Limpopo and Kwa-Zulu Natal.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the advent of democracy, South Africa has seen significant improvements in access to water and sanitation. While progress has been made to eradicate service delivery backlogs in the country, at municipal levels and in the poorest areas of South Africa, service delivery remains a major challenge.<sup>1</sup> While national averages seem to indicate progress, when these statistics are disaggregated into those areas that are historically poor due to Apartheid, they reflect limited access to water, sanitation and other services.<sup>2</sup> Like many aspects of education in South Africa, access to sanitation remains very unequal. At present, most South African learners do not have access to adequate sanitation at school, a situation which has many adverse effects. **The inadequate state of sanitation in public schools across South Africa is a serious, but much overlooked national challenge.**

**Although the government's recently adopted Regulations on Minimum Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure will help address sanitation challenges, they fall short of national and international standards.** South Africa's Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF), recommends a ratio of 1:25 toilets for girls and 1:40 urinals for boys. The standards set by the DWAF reflect those set by UNICEF at 1:25 toilets for girls and the World Health Organisation at 1:50 for boys. The Norms and Standards, on the other hand, state that, for girls at large secondary schools, where enrolment is in excess of 600, only 1 toilet is allocated for every 43 girls. This figure falls below national and international standards.

**Beyond policy, the government's Accelerated School Infrastructure Delivery Initiative (ASIDI) – which seeks to eradicate and replace mud schools, as well as supply some schools with basic services such as electricity, water and sanitation – has suffered continuous delays.** The programme was implemented in the 2011/12 financial year and all projects should have been completed in 2013/14. However, due to the slow progress in the building of schools and the provision of basic services, ASIDI's allocated funds have been reduced significantly each year, and the period of completion extended by several years.

**In order to promote better policy and implementation, Equal Education has developed a few best practices to engage government on the issue of adequate sanitation provision in schools.** These include:

- Conducting a citizens audit of school infrastructure
- Conducting regular meetings and events to educate citizens about sanitation issues in schools
- Engaging media and conducting campaigns to place pressure on government to address sanitation challenges in schools

---

<sup>1</sup> South African Human Rights Commission (2014). Report on the Right to Access Sufficient Water and Decent Sanitation in South Africa. (Accessed at: [http://www.sahrc.org.za/home/21/files/FINAL%204th%20Proof%204%20March%20-%20Water%20%20Sanitation%20low%20res%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.sahrc.org.za/home/21/files/FINAL%204th%20Proof%204%20March%20-%20Water%20%20Sanitation%20low%20res%20(2).pdf))

<sup>2</sup> Ibid pg 14

EE's campaign for Regulations on Minimum Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure and the campaign to address the school sanitation crisis in Tembisa, Gauteng, illustrate how citizens can successfully engage on sanitation issues and other forms of school infrastructure.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Although advances in access to water have been made in South Africa since 1994, improving access to basic sanitation has proven to be very challenging. According to the Presidency's Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, sixteen million people living in South Africa in 2012 [did] not have access to basic sanitation facilities whatsoever.<sup>3</sup>

During Apartheid greater spending on 'white' schools meant much better quality infrastructure than that provided for 'black' schools. This included school sanitation. As a result, learners in former 'white' or 'model-c' schools today generally have access to good sanitation facilities, while learners in former 'black' or township and rural schools are often forced to use inadequate facilities that are unclean, unsafe and ineffective. This is particularly distressful in that the role of education during Apartheid era was used as a tool to oppress the black majority, and yet, 20 years after the adoption of the right to basic education for all in South Africa's Constitution, there are still enormous disparities in resources with millions of black learners being forced to learn in dilapidated schools with wholly inadequate sanitation facilities.<sup>4</sup>

Today, schools located in rural areas and townships are likely to have the worst school sanitation, where access to basic sanitation in the community is often already poor. Generally, children who live in South Africa's poorest communities also attend the country's poorest schools and are therefore forced to utilize the worst school sanitation facilities.

For its submission on the first 2013 draft Regulations on Minimum Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure, EE conducted public hearings in different provinces in South Africa to hear what learners and teachers had to say about the infrastructure conditions in their schools. With regard to sanitation, learners had the following to say,

*Learners and educators report a shortage of toilet facilities at schools. For example, Nqobese Bajabulile pointed out that at her school, 740 learners share six toilets. (Maceba Secondary School, KZN). Likewise, F. Butelezi says, "Our school has insufficient toilets, considering the enrollment of our school." (Cassino Primary School, KZN). Similar sentiment was shared by Lelethu Gavu: "[W]e are almost 3000 but we have only three toilets and two taps so that is not enough." (Mzontsundu Secondary School, EC). Andile Vingi explains, "Learners and educators depend on the bushes and open fields to relieve themselves." (Sobi L/H Primary School, EC). This is neither safe nor sanitary. Toilet facilities are vital to*

---

<sup>3</sup> Social Justice Coalition. Janitorial Servicing of Sanitation Facilities in Cape Town's Informal Settlements. Submission to the City of Cape Town by the Social Justice Coalition on 23 March 2013.

<sup>4</sup> SECTION27 (2013). Submission on Draft Regulations Relating to Minimum Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure. (Accessed at: <http://www.section27.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/SECTION27-submission-Draft-Regulations-Relating-to-Minimum-Uniform-Norms-and-Standards-for-Public-School-Infrastructure-Final.pdf>)

*satisfying basic human needs, and therefore to creating an environment conducive to learning and development.*<sup>5</sup>

## **ACCESS TO SANITATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS**

The Bill of Rights, in South Africa's Constitution, outlines the rights to equality, dignity, health and education. The provision of safe, clean and private environment in which to use a toilet at home and school is closely linked to these rights.

Section 9 (1) of the Bill of Rights states that, *"Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law"*. As such, all children are equally entitled to functioning, safe and clean toilets in school. Section 10 states that *"Everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected,"* supported by Section 24(a) which states that, *"Everyone has the right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being."* Lack of access to a functioning, clean and safe toilet is a violation of learners' dignity and rights. Adequate school sanitation is strongly linked to preserving good health and supporting educational outcomes. Furthermore, the realization of the right to basic education must be accompanied by the fulfillment of other rights including access to functioning, safe and effective sanitation.

Inadequate sanitation has many negative consequences. Dirty toilets spread diseases such as intestinal worms, diarrhea, cholera and eye and skin diseases. Lack of access to clean, safe toilets is a major cause of learner absenteeism, particularly among girls during menstruation. Furthermore, a growing body of international research shows that inadequate school sanitation has a direct impact on academic performance.<sup>6</sup>

*Poor School infrastructure, and particularly inadequate sanitation, has been linked to a decrease [in] learners' ability to concentrate and their motivation to learn, leading to increased absenteeism from school, which in turn will have a negative impact on both education and health.*<sup>7</sup>

Inadequate sanitation also has a dire and disproportionate economic impact on poor people, as well as upon the public health system and natural environment. Ultimately,

---

<sup>5</sup> Equal Education. APPENDIX TO THE COMMENT ON THE DRAFT REGULATIONS RELATING TO MINIMUM UNIFORM NORMS AND STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE GG 36062; GN 6 of 2013; 8 JANUARY 2013

<sup>6</sup>See: UNICEF Sanitation for All: The Drive to 2015. (Accessed at: [http://sanitationdrive2015.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Planners-Guide-Fact-Sheet-4\\_English.pdf](http://sanitationdrive2015.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Planners-Guide-Fact-Sheet-4_English.pdf)). A survey conducted by Innovations in Poverty Action in Kenya found that Deworming reduced school absenteeism by at a quarter, with large participation gains among the youngest children. Deworming resulted in a 25% reduction in total school absenteeism. See: Innovations in Poverty Actions 2010. (Accessed at: <http://www.poverty-action.org/project/0087>). However, while deworming programs are very effective in increasing attendance they do not confront the root cause of infestation, which is poor sanitation.

<sup>7</sup> SECTION27 (2013). Submission on Draft Regulations Relating to Minimum Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure. (Accessed at: <http://www.section27.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/SECTION27-submission-Draft-Regulations-Relating-to-Minimum-Uniform-Norms-and-Standards-for-Public-School-Infrastructure-Final.pdf>)

the lack of adequate sanitation is another barrier to quality education for South Africa's most vulnerable young people.

According to the World Health Organisation guidelines on Water and Sanitation, a school with adequate sanitation is one that has<sup>8</sup>:

- A functional and reliable water system that provides sufficient water for all the school's needs, especially for hand-washing and drinking.
- A sufficient number of toilet facilities for students and teachers that are private, safe, clean and gender segregated.
- Several hand-washing facilities, including some that are close to toilets to facilitate hand washing after defecation.
- Facilities that cater for the entire student body, including small children, girls of menstruation age and children with disabilities.

No comprehensive assessment of the quality of school sanitation has been done in South Africa. The Department of Basic Education's National Education Infrastructure Management System (NEIMS) of 2011 shows that of 24 793 public schools, 2402 schools (10%) have no access to water on site and a further 2 611 schools (11%) have an unreliable water source.<sup>9</sup>

Deep inequalities remain in the provision of sanitation facilities. Of 24 793 public ordinary schools in South Africa 46% (11 450) still use pit-latrines and 3.7% (913 schools) have no sanitation facilities at all.<sup>10</sup> The 2011 NEIMS report also highlights that the pace of school infrastructure development in rural areas has been slow. For example, 61% of schools in the Eastern Cape use non-ventilated pit latrines, which go against the provisions highlighted in the Regulations on Norms and Standards.

The challenge of unsafe sanitation structures also came into the public spotlight in January 2014, when a five-year old Grade R learner died after falling into a pit latrine toilet at his school in Limpopo. The young boy had been missing for several hours before he was found in the toilet.<sup>11</sup>

Khayelitsha has also experienced its own fair share of problems around sanitation generally and school sanitation in particular. There are 54 Primary and High schools in Khayelitsha. Efforts have been made in the area to assess and improve the quality of school sanitation. Most successful of these was the formation of a group called the Khayelitsha Task Team (KTT) which was established in 1999 in partnership with the

---

<sup>8</sup> WHO/UNICEF Guideline: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene standards for schools in Low-cost Settings (2009)

<sup>9</sup> Department of Basic Education, National Education Infrastructure Management System. (2011). (Accessed at: <http://www.education.gov.za/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=hHaBCAerGXc%3D&tabid=358&mid=180>)

<sup>10</sup> Department of Basic Education, National Education Infrastructure Management System. (2011). (Accessed at: <http://www.education.gov.za/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=hHaBCAerGXc%3D&tabid=358&mid=180>)

<sup>11</sup> Eye Witness News, Boy Dies falling into Limpopo Pit Toilet (2014) (Accessed at: <http://ewn.co.za/2014/01/21/Boy-dies-falling-into-Limpopo-pit-toilet>)

Medical Research Council. The group was comprised of the Western Cape Department of Health and Department of Education, amongst others. The KTT was established as part of a comprehensive intervention that included de-worming children; community awareness; empowerment and engagement; improvement of sanitation and hygiene; and participation by all role players to help schools to address persistent problems with sanitation.<sup>12</sup> However, KTT only operated in Primary schools, and no such sanitation research and interventions have taken place in High schools

## **GOVERNMENT POLICY AND LAW**

Equal Education's three-year campaign for Regulations on Minimum Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure came into fruition in November 2013, when the Minister of Basic Education adopted the norms. The regulations will allow principals, School Governing Bodies, learners and the general public to hold the Department accountable for the development of adequate school infrastructure, including sanitation facilities.

The Regulations state that, all schools must have a sufficient water supply that complies with all relevant laws<sup>13</sup>;

- The water supply must be available at all time for drinking, personal hygiene and, where appropriate, for food preparation.
- Sufficient water collection points and water use facilities must be available at all schools to allow access to water.

With regard to sanitation, the regulations state that all schools must have a sufficient number of sanitation facilities<sup>14</sup>;

- These must be easily accessible to all learners and educators.
- These have to provide privacy and security, promote health and hygiene standards, comply with all relevant laws and are maintained in good working order.
- The regulations prohibit the use of pit-latrines as a form of sanitation

However, the regulations fall short in some areas, namely, Annexure G of the Norms and Standards which stipulates the minimum number of toilets and urinals relative to the enrolment of girls and boys. The norms are not in alignment with the standards set by the national Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF), which recommend 1:25 toilets for girls; and 1:40 toilets and 1:1 urinals for boys. The standards set by the DWAF

---

<sup>12</sup> Johnson & Chopra, An Evaluation of a Primary Education Programme to Combat Worm Infestation in Khayelitsha, Cape Town (2002) (Accessed at: <http://www.mrc.ac.za/immunology/wormsevaluation.pdf>)

<sup>13</sup> Department of Basic Education (2013). South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act no. 84 of 1996) Regulations Relating to Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure (Accessed at: <http://www.education.gov.za/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=oyuBQ0STm4k%3d&tabid=347>)

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*

reflect international standards set by UNICEF at 1:25 toilets for girls and World Health Organisation at 1:50 toilets for boys.<sup>15</sup>

For girls at large secondary schools where the enrolment is in excess of 600, only 1 toilet is allocated for every 40 girls and 1 toilet is allocated for every 100 boys. This is far below acceptable international minimum standards. The Norms and Standards fail to account for a proportionate increase of sanitation facilities where enrolment exceeds the 1200 learners as is the case for some secondary schools in Tembisa and Khayelitsha.

In light of the above, the Norms and Standards fail to comply with DWAF and international standards on the recommended sanitation ratios for schools.

## **GOVERNMENT PROGRAMMES**

In 2011, the Department of Basic Education established a programme to address the challenge of inappropriate school infrastructure, as well as provide basic services such as electricity, sanitation and water to schools across the country. This programme is known as the Accelerated School Infrastructure Delivery Initiative or ASIDI.

With regard to the eradication of inappropriate structures, which in this case, refers to mud schools, the Department has faced various challenges in meeting its targets and spending its budget. The programme was implemented in the 2011/12 financial year and should have been completed in 2013/14. However, due to implementation delays, the completion date of the programme has been extended to the 2016/17 financial years. One of the objectives of ASIDI was to eradicate and replace of 496 mud structures across the country, within the initial time period, but thus far has only completed 44. The provision of basic services has progressed at a slightly better pace, although not by much. 226 of the 939 schools meant to be provided with access to sanitation have been completed and 203 of 1145 schools that should be provided with basic water supplies have also been completed.<sup>16</sup>

Due to the DBE's slow progress in executing its mandate on ASIDI, South Africa's National Treasury has slowly been reducing funds allocated to the programme over the years. The table below illustrates these reductions;<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry's 2008 Minimum Requirements for Ensuring Basic Water Supply and Sanitation in Schools and Clinics. (Accessed at : <http://www.equaleducation.org.za/sites/default/files/files/Annexure%20AN13.pdf> 2. World Health Organization. [http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2009/9789241547796\\_eng.pdf](http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2009/9789241547796_eng.pdf))

<sup>16</sup> Department of Basic Education, ASIDI. (Accessed at: <http://www.education.gov.za/Programmes/ASIDI/tabid/841/Default.aspx>)

<sup>17</sup> The (') refers to three additional zeros. Therefore (') = 000



<b>Financial Year</b>	<b>Estimates<sup>18</sup></b>	<b>Actual allocation</b>	<b>Financial Year</b>	<b>Estimates</b>	<b>Actual Allocation</b>
2011/12		R700 000'	2012/13		R2 315 000'
2012/13	R2 315 000'		2013/14	R5 189 000'	
2013/14	R5 189 000'		2014/15	R5 500 300'	
<b>Financial Year</b>	<b>Estimates</b>	<b>Actual allocation</b>	<b>Financial Year</b>	<b>Actual Allocation</b>	<b>Estimated</b>
2013/14		R1 955 981'	2014/15	R 2 938 503'	
2014/15	R3 169 503'		2015/16		R2 433 310'
2015/16	R2 912 310'		2016/17		R2 610 662'

Unless there is an improvement in capacity within Education departments, at both the national and provincial levels, South Africa will not meet its mandate under this programme. This will result in further extensions of deadlines or decreased funds from the National Treasury to this programme.

#### **CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT**

Equal Education has engaged with government at the National, Provincial and local levels. This has occurred either through dialogue or direct campaigns; mainly based on the need to improve the quality of school infrastructure in the country. Below, we will highlight two of EE's major campaigns and its engagement with the different levels of government.

##### *Campaign for Regulations on Minimum Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure.*

Equal Education's concern over the unacceptable state of school infrastructure in many of the country's schools prompted the organisation to initiate a sustained campaign to compel the Minister of Basic Education to promulgate legally-binding regulations for norms and standards for school infrastructure in line with her responsibilities under section 5A of the South African Schools Act. Section 5A provides for the Minister to make regulations prescribing minimum uniform norms and standards for public school infrastructure, and it specifies what the regulations must contain. The South African Schools Act also contains section 58C which imposes mechanisms to ensure that the provinces comply with the norms required under Section 5A by requiring Members of the Executive Council (MEC's) to annually report to the Minister on provincial progress.

---

<sup>18</sup> Projection of allocations over a two-year period

Since 2009, EE members have marched and picketed, petitioned, written countless letters to the Minister, gone door-to-door in communities to garner support for the campaign and have even gone so far as to spend nights fasting and sleeping outside of Parliament. EE lobbied Parliament and politicians, and on Human Rights Day in March 2011, it led 20 000 learners and supporters in a march to Parliament to demand that the Minister and the DBE keep their promise and adopt Minimum Norms and Standards that will lay down the blueprint for ensuring that all learners in South Africa, regardless of race or wealth, are able to learn in schools with adequate infrastructure.

EE's approach was to win gains politically rather than through the courts. However, in 2012 it became increasingly apparent that resorting to the courts to compel the Minister to promulgate the norms was necessary. On 2 March 2012 the Legal Resources Centre (LRC) on behalf of EE and the infrastructure committees of two applicant schools in the Eastern Cape, filed an application in the Bhisho High Court against the Minister, all nine MECs for Education and the Minister of Finance to secure national minimum uniform norms and standards for school infrastructure.

The application addressed and described the widespread results of the government's failure to provide adequate infrastructure standards for public schools in terms of section 5A of the Act, a problem that most harshly affects the poorest schools in the country by perpetuating systemic school infrastructural problems and gross educational inequalities. The application showed in vivid and personal detail how many learners and teachers have been left in unsafe environments that are not conducive to learning, and which have undermined the ability of the learners to achieve in the classroom and fully realise their rights to an adequate education, equality and dignity.

Even though EE had launched litigation this did not interrupt the public campaign; in fact it intensified it;

- **Ten Days of Action:** From 12 to 21 March 2012 EE undertook Ten Days of Action in schools across South Africa. Each day was filled with a different activity to draw attention to the campaign. These included cleaning the schools, organising a pickets, producing drama shows in order to inform learners about the case, holding door to door visit in communities, and social media.
- **Human Rights Day March:** On 21 March 2012, at the culmination of the Ten Days of Action EE held its annual Human Rights Day march, this time in Khayelitsha.
- **Write-in:** In September 2012 over 250 EE members and supporters gathered outside Parliament in Cape Town to send 51 emails, 129 letters, 20 faxes, 57 tweets and 148 pictures to Minister Motshekga: telling her to set minimum norms and standards for school infrastructure.

- **Mass distribution of posters, fliers and pamphlets:** EE distributed thousands of posters, flyers and pamphlets to members across South Africa, so that they could mobilise their communities.
- **Fix Our Schools Camp outside the Bhisho High Court:** EE announced and prepared a camp of 150 people outside the Bhisho High Court for the duration of the Norms and Standards case which was due to begin on 20 November 2012. Over 150 people from all over South Africa were scheduled to attend the camp, which would also serve as a site to host debates, seminars, pickets and marches. Whilst EE was setting up the Fix Our Schools Camp, the Minister finally capitulated and agreed to settle the case.

In January 2013 the Minister of Basic Education published the draft norms and standards. They were extremely weak and constituted a major step backward when compared with the Department's own draft regulations from 2008.

The public was given from 9 January until 31 March 2013 to comment on the draft. During the comment period Equal Education organised five public hearings across the country, in the Eastern Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and Western Cape. The aim was to educate learners, parents and community members on the draft and to collect testimonies about their schools' infrastructural needs. Over 700 individual submissions were collected from around the country. EE summarised these submissions before submitting one combined submission to the DBE. In addition, EE compiled an Appendix based on over 500 submissions made by learners, parents and teachers from across South Africa.

The second draft of norms and standards were published for public comment in September 2013, EE and the Equal Education Law Centre filed a joint submission commenting on the draft norms. The second submission identified two substantive problems that persisted in the September draft: the draft's timelines for implementation were too long, and it failed as an effective accountability mechanism.

On 29 November 2013, the Minister published the final and binding Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure. Although the regulations are not perfect, they address many of the problems that EE raised with the draft version and, as such, constitute vastly improved Norms and Standards. They are a tool with which to improve thousands of schools and change millions of lives.

#### *Sanitation Campaign in Tembisa*

Tembisa, located 20 minutes outside of the capital city of Pretoria, is one of the largest townships in Gauteng. Founded in 1957 in order to resettle black South Africans away from other areas in the province, Tembisa was a major site of student unrest during Apartheid. While some areas have improved since 1994, the majority of community members remain poor – with infrastructure stretched by the steady influx of migrants from more rural areas of South Africa. Home to approximately 500,000 people, Tembisa

houses 14 public secondary schools with over 20,000 students as well as over 20 public primary schools serving about 15,000 students. Equal Education has been organizing in Tembisa since 2012. By mid 2013 – the inception of the sanitation campaign – Equal Education had members in 11 of the public secondary schools in Tembisa.

Equal Education started engaging in informal discussions with its student-members (“Equalisers”) in late July of 2013. Based on these discussions, it was clear that school infrastructure was a key area of concern. Students reported studying in schools with broken ceilings, cracked floors, insufficient lighting, and poor sanitation facilities.

Equal Education developed a survey to determine which one of these many issues was the main priority of members. The survey listed key infrastructural issues that had been identified through informal discussions (e.g. broken ceilings, broken lights, etc.) and asked members to identify if this was a problem in their school. It subsequently asked members to count the instances of such issues in their school (e.g. number of broken lights). Based on intensive discussion analyzing the results of the survey, Equalisers agreed that sanitation was the most pressing cross cutting issue in Tembisa.

In order to ensure that members were fully driving the campaign, Equal Education held regular meetings to discuss key issues, provide feedback and ask for input. The core organizing unit of Equal Education in Tembisa is the school. School groups met twice a week. Once a week, older Youth Organisers – who are all recent graduates of schools in Tembisa – held school meetings with a core set 10-15 members from each school. Then, later in the week, Youth Organisers held Youth Groups where all school groups in the area gathered together in a mass meeting. These Youth Groups typically included 150-300 members.

During these meetings, Youth Organisers not only educated members about key issues but also asked for Equalisers’ feedback into the direction of the campaign. For example, meetings covered issues such as school sanitation budgets and the history of Apartheid education. Youth Organisers guided members through a process of writing testimonials about sanitation challenges at the school. Similarly, Youth Organisers led discussions about the latest strategic considerations in the campaign and government responses. These regular discussions enabled members to provide informed input into the direction of the campaign – as well as ensured that community members were well apprised of the latest developments. This ensured that Equalisers maintained ownership of the campaign and could sustain its momentum to ensure success.

In order to root the campaign in a solid understanding of school conditions, Equalisers in every one of the 11 schools decided to assist in executing an audit of their sanitation systems. Since discussions revealed that sanitation conditions could vary significantly day-to-day, members decided to run the audit over a two-week period.

As a first step, a Youth Organiser helped develop a simple survey sheet for evaluating school sanitation on a daily basis. The sheet asked Equalisers to draw their toilet blocks

and then use an “X” or a cross to indicate whether a toilet or tap was not functioning. Members were also asked to provide information on the water supply as well as the availability of sanitary bins, toilet paper and soap. Further space was provided to describe the condition of the toilet from a qualitative perspective (e.g. “smelly”).

In order to carry out the survey, each school organised members into research teams, with a leader taking overall responsibility for the survey. Youth Organisers trained these research teams by having them practice visiting toilet blocks and logging their results on the survey sheet. Youth Organisers reviewed and corrected research teams’ practice survey sheets until satisfied that the research teams understood how to conduct the audit. Teams then visited every toilet block in the school twice a day for two weeks in late August and early September.

The audit revealed a crisis in the sanitation system in Tembisa:

- At over half of the schools surveyed, it was commonplace for more than 100 boys or 100 girls have to share a single working toilet. By comparison, according to the Wits Justice Project, 65 men share a single toilet at Johannesburg Medium A prison<sup>19</sup>
- Approximately 90% of schools surveyed had insufficient infrastructure (not enough toilets to meet the South African Department of Water Affairs and Forestry standards of one toilet per 25 girls and one toilet plus one urinal per 40
- boys) or a dysfunctional sanitation system (not enough working toilets to meet South African Department of Water Affairs and Forestry standards)<sup>20</sup>. In some schools, there were days where there are no functioning toilets for students to use
- Many schools had broken or non-functioning taps; sometimes there was no water supply
- Many schools did not have sanitary bins. In those that did, the sanitary bins were often full, resulting in students throwing their sanitary pads on the floor.

Throughout October and early November, Equal Education sought to meet with all relevant government officials to ensure that they were aware of the problem and the need for a plan to address it. Equal Education stated that the plan should:

- Establish standards for the supply of sanitation materials, maintenance and monitoring
- Provide timelines as to when schools will reach these standards
- Include public accountability measures to ensure transparency and fairness

---

<sup>19</sup> <http://mg.co.za/article/2013-09-06-00-white-paper-promises-changes-for-those-awaiting-trial>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.equaleducation.org.za/sites/default/files/files/Annexure%20AN13.pdf>

Initially, government officials at both the education district and provincial level sought to ignore the issue. After repeated efforts to secure a commitment to address the issue failed, Equal Education issued a press release in mid-November detailing the findings of its citizens audit. The subsequent press attention on the issue seemed to push government to meet with Equal Education and commit to address the issue.

While Equalisers were dedicated to the process of conducting the audit, some were not sure about how to execute the survey. In order to provide quality control, Youth Organisers checked in regularly with members over the two week period of the audit to review their survey sheets and answer any questions. Additional training was provided as necessary.

Although principals agreed that sanitation facilities were inadequate, they were also cautious of assisting in a process that could embarrass their employer. Equal Education engaged regularly with principals to ensure that they understood that the aim of the audit was only to ensure proper sanitation for students and not to harm the job security of principals. Equal Education also kept principals updated on the campaign and the data collected through this audit. This was particularly helpful as many principals appreciated learning about the challenges at other school.

Due to Equal Education's efforts, the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) has started addressing the sanitation crisis in Tembisa. As a first step, Ms. Barbara Creecy, the Minister in the Executive Committee of Gauteng in charge of the GDE, visited Tembisa and personally helped to clean toilets. She also announced that the GDE would deliver pre-fabricated toilet blocks and send contractors to affected schools. Subsequently, the GDE has delivered over 40 total toilets in 10 pre-fabricated toilet blocks to five schools in Tembisa. In addition, contractors have helped repair taps, toilet bowls, cisterns and basins. Teachers and school workers report that the GDE has been particularly attentive to sanitation issues since the sanitation campaign began. Likely as a result, schools have increased the supply of sanitary bins for students. Equal Education continues to monitor the situation to ensure that all affected schools are assisted and that the GDE develops a long-term plan to ensure all students in Tembisa have access to quality sanitation on a sustainable basis.

## **CONCLUSION**

Civic participation is imperative in bringing about changes in the provision of sanitation in schools. As highlighted in this report, EE has not only lobbied Parliament and Government; the organization has also involved its members in its campaigns- which could not have been achieved without them. Equal Education has also developed a few best practices to engage government on the issue of adequate sanitation provision in schools. The movement has also engaged with the media in order to shed light into the challenges that learners and teachers face in their schools, with regard to sanitation.

The inadequate state of sanitation in public schools across South Africa is a serious, but much overlooked national challenge. Programmes such as ASIDI must be well capacitated in order to deliver and avoid budget cuts. Sanitation aspects of the Norms and Standards, which EE campaigned for, for several years, must also be revised in order to meet national and international standards.

EE's campaign for Regulations on Minimum Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure and the campaign to address the school sanitation crisis in Tembisa, Gauteng, illustrate how citizens can successfully engage on sanitation issues and other forms of school infrastructure.