



Article Details

Post urgent CEM media briefing, 22 March 2018

The loss of an innocent young child is a truly painful experience, we share in the pain, suffering and trauma associated with the death of our young Lumka Mkhethwa. It has again drawn our attention to the challenges we face in the area of sanitation and ablution in general and the safety and well-being of our learners in particular.

We have, as a collective, looked inward and had to urgently assess the extent of delivery and provisioning of safe and adequate sanitation within our existing plans.

This would entail reviewing our plans and working collaboratively with provinces to enhance and accelerate the provision of adequate and safe sanitation and ablution facilities.

Today at a special extended CEM, all MEC's, Heads of Departments and the officials responsible for infrastructure in the various provinces have come together to discuss how we will work together to provide a sector response to ensure that we provide safe and dignified ablution facilities to all of our schools as a matter of urgency.

After a discussion with President Cyril Ramaphosa last week, I have committed our Department to provide a detailed audit of sanitation facilities, with costed emergency plans and timelines to address this challenge.

CEM received a presentation on the current state of sanitation and ablution provisioning.

We have some schools without any sanitation; schools with pit toilets; schools provided with sanitation but with pit toilets not demolished; schools with inadequate sanitation; sanitation not fit for purpose (age appropriate); schools with insufficient sanitation, given increasing learner numbers.

The current situation with sanitation in schools in terms of the preliminary report is as follows:

Site Type : Ordinary Operational Schools

Province Name	Number of Sites	Pit	Bucket	Enviro Loo	VIP	Flush Toilet Septic Tank	Flush Toilet Municipal	Mobile Toilets	Chemical Toilets	Without Facilities
Western Cape	1445	4	0	1	9	207	1380	3	0	0
Eastern Cape	5359	1912	0	139	2585	254	1040	8	5	37
Northern Cape	541	55	0	41	84	127	343	5	1	0
Free State	1166	275	0	36	126	134	728	5	1	0
KwaZulu Natal	5840	2607	0	200	2359	550	1583	63	65	0
North West	1468	461	0	43	307	483	696	16	8	0
Gauteng	2070	7	0	13	25	152	1939	100	8	0
Mpumalanga	1715	835	0	90	546	458	496	0	0	0
Limpopo	3833	2523	0	1294	1391	669	400	1	3	0
Total	23437	8679	0	1857	7432	3034	8605	201	91	37

One site can have a combination of different types of ablution facilities
Projects are at different stages of implementation for the schools without sanitation

Provinces have reported that in some instances these numbers may vary, as some have been addressed already. However, the MECs have committed to verify and

update these figures within 10 days.

The Free State MEC, for example reported to the meeting that they have already set up a unit in the provincial department to deal with sanitation in schools. He urged colleagues to ensure that our plans on sanitation and ablution should include hygiene, which forms an important component of the health, care and well-being of our learners.

The Western Cape and Gauteng indicated for instance that notwithstanding the fact that the phenomenon of pit latrines have been eliminated the increased number of learners migrating to these provinces, present new challenges in the **adequate** provision of sanitation.

One of the big challenges that affects roughly half of the schools that are still reported to have pit latrines is that alternative ablution facilities have been constructed, but that the old pit latrines still remain.

We already have an existing plan in place that is intended to eradicate these unsafe and inadequate toilets. We need to confirm the information we already have and fast track our existing plans. Our priority is safety.

I have always stressed that restoring dignity to the education system and to learners and ensure that their human rights are upheld.

We know that especially in our rural provinces such as the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo bulk water supply is not supplied and installing a flushing toilet and is not a viable option. However we have been using alternative technology such as the enviroloos to great success. We need to continue to utilise advanced and innovative technological solutions to our challenges in such areas where water is scarce.

The meeting resolved to do the following:

- Conduct a rapid audit of all sanitation and ablution facilities in our schools.
- All schools without any sanitation are to be addressed as a matter of urgency;
- Demolition of pit toilets where facilities have been provided to commence with immediate effect.
- To progressively and urgently eliminate pit latrines.
- Provinces to prioritise the provision of age appropriate seats for grade R learners in all schools, recognising that the Grade R classes were only introduced into the school

landscape in recent years. As a temporary measure, consider the retrofitting of existing facilities to cater for Grade R learners or alternatively provide temporary facilities.

- Schools with inadequate or insufficient sanitation to be addressed with urgency.
- School toilets will be adequately maintained.
- In the meantime all unsafe and unhygienic sanitation and ablution facilities must be secured.
- A comprehensive costed plan, informed by the audit report of all the needs identified for sanitation and ablution facilities for schools, will be submitted to the President within three months.

In order to give effect to these resolutions the budget reallocation and reprioritisation, as well as a review of ASIDI allocations and interventions from treasury are required.

The demands in education which include, infrastructure, teacher provisioning, LTSMs, nutrition and other health, care and safety measures, are huge; and our plans must be looked at in the context of the comprehensive demands of the sector.

We will work with the South African Police Service, parents and broader civil society to ensure that a thorough investigation into the circumstances surrounding the tragic death of Lumka Mkhethwa is conducted.

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Date Posted: 3/22/2018

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