

IMPACT CASE STUDIES 1

Ekurhuleni

February 2019

Six hundred thousand informal settlement residents will receive better quality sanitation services as a result of community-led monitoring and engagement in Ekurhuleni

In 2018, the International Budget Partnership South Africa (IBP South Africa) and the Social Audit Network (SAN), started partnering with Planact and 13 informal settlement communities in Ekurhuleni to conduct a **social audit on the provision and maintenance of portable toilets**. A social audit is a community-led process of engaging government about poor services by monitoring service delivery on the basis of government commitments contained in budgets and other official documents.



An estimated ten million South Africans still do not have access to sanitation facilities.

Government contracts out most basic services provided to informal settlements in South African cities, including sanitation, to private companies. The social audit that Planact implemented in partnership with the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, has contributed to substantial improvements in one of the city's new contracts for the provision of good quality sanitation services.

The contract serves 119 informal settlements and could benefit close to 600 000 people.

The social audit itself involved 20 000 informal settlement residents, 157 community volunteers, and seven ward councillors, and was done in close partnership with the city's Water and Sanitation Department. A team from the Auditor General's office observed the process.

The two main problems identified by the social audit were:

- (1) vague tender specifications and,
- (2) poor monitoring of the delivery of the service.

Both of these problems, as well as other secondary problems, were addressed in the new tender specifications.

A new contract based on the findings of the social audit

After the social audit, and after extensive preparation with IBP South Africa, community representatives and Planact discussed the findings of the social audit with officials from Ekurhuleni's Water and Sanitation Department. With the current sanitation contract due to expire in June 2019, the specifications for a new contract were released earlier in 2019.

The specifications for the new contract improve significantly on the old contract – drawing largely on the recommendations of the social audit.

If properly executed, the tender will provide dramatically improved sanitation to 600 000 informal settlement residents.



Improvements in the new contract

In terms of this new contract, informal settlement residents will know, for the first time, who is responsible for cleaning and maintaining their chemical toilets and exactly when this should happen. Contractors will be required to provide a weatherproof service delivery schedule on both the front and back of each toilet door.

During the social audit, residents reported that the poor ventilation in the toilet units makes them unusable because of the unpleasant smell and unbearable heat inside. **All toilet units are now required to have a ventilation pipe and air vents to ensure the flow of fresh air.** Many residents also complained of health issues caused by the strong chemicals used to clean the toilets. **The new contract requires that chemicals be tested by a laboratory to confirm their safety and suitability.**



Disabled residents will have access to suitable toilets, as the specifications of the new contract provide clear guidelines for the provision of toilets designed for use by disabled residents.



The working conditions of toilet cleaners are also set to improve significantly, with contractors required to provide workers with contracts, to pay them at least the gazetted minimum wage, and provide them with a range of protective clothing and equipment.

How sure can we be that this will really happen?

To ensure implementation of the terms of the new contract, Planact, SAN, and IBP South Africa have built a strong and growing network of informal settlement residents and organisations, ward councillors, and key actors in the Ekurhuleni Metro. This network is driven by community members themselves, and not by external actors. This makes the network more sustainable and scale-able, as can be seen from the fact that communities and ward councillors have already turned their new skill and confidence towards other services like housing and pedestrian footbridges.

What is even more impressive is that residents have not just improved services, but they have also unblocked the procurement systems that provide these services.

While this makes these improvements more sustainable, it also shows that community driven campaigns can go beyond localised service delivery improvements and improve broader government service delivery systems.