

Women are caregivers, but does government care for them?

Women are the bedrocks of their communities across South Africa and indeed globally.

In informal settlements women are active in building their communities and participating in initiatives like Asivikelane. They take on numerous responsibilities to the benefit of everyone around them. Asivikelane Western Cape #5 shows that women are significantly more likely to collect water for their household than men with an average of 59.5% of women reporting to be responsible for water collection. They are also primarily responsible for the washing, care-giving, and cooking needs of their families. Municipalities can ease part of the burden carried by women by providing better water services and including women in decisions about basic services.

Women living in informal settlements are particularly vulnerable to harm. Asivikelane #5 reports that women across all informal settlements are too scared to visit communal toilets after dark, with 64.87% of female residents reporting feeling unsafe using municipal toilets at night and 40.8% feel unsafe doing so during the day. Toilets that are located far away, have broken or no doors and the lack of sufficient lighting all contribute to women being unsafe and at risk.

Women's rights are human rights. Municipalities can protect these rights by putting the safety of women in informal settlements first. It can start by increasing the number of communal taps and toilets provided, fixing broken ones and improving lighting. Everyone benefits when we care for women.

GOOD NEWS

- In **Bitou**, most residents reported connecting water from the main source to install taps within their structures, thus reducing the time taken to collect water.
- In **Knysna**, the Contractors and Consulting Engineer responsible for the installation and assessment of the shared communal services recommended that the cisterns currently installed, be replaced with better quality products.
- In **Stellenbosch**, residents reported that there is enough public lighting.
- In **Witzenberg**, 80% of the residents have indicated there is enough public lighting.

HOT SPOTS

- In **Cape Agulhas**, residents reported that there were no lights in the new block in Napier.
- In **George**, residents have reported not having access to water and having to ask for water from the nearby RDP houses.
- In **Knysna**, there is not enough public lighting in the area.
- In **Stellenbosch**, the time taken to get water is more than 20 minutes.
- Residents in **Witzenberg** stated that there was no water in one of the informal settlements in Die Gaatjie. They fetch water in the nearby informal settlement of Chris Hani.

A total of 92 residents across 7 municipal areas, 8 wards and 24 informal settlements responded over the last week. Detailed results and comments from residents themselves are available at www.asivikelane.org/western-cape-releases.

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