eTHEKWINI INFORMAL SETTLEMENT RESIDENTS REPORT SLOW METRO RESPONSE AFTER FLOODS

Almost 86% don't have enough water and 83% don't have enough toilets.

78% said the metro has not come to assess the flood damage.

34% received emergency water services.

Almost NO emergency sanitation services were provided.

71% said water quality has worsened.

KEY FINDINGS

AFTER the floods

Most important reasons cited for inadequate water access are broken tanks and taps that have run dry.

Almost all residents said that flood-damage to taps and tanks has not been repaired or even assessed.

In most cases, flood-damage to toilets has also not been repaired or even assessed.

Just one third of residents indicated that the metro delivered emergency water services to their settlements.

Almost no emergency sanitation services have been provided. Residents now have to suffer the indignity and health risks of using nearby bushes.

Where water is available, 71% of residents indicated that water quality has deteriorated.

“We had to walk 15km for water after the floods.”
Introduction

In April and May of 2022, floods in eThekwini had a disastrous impact on informal settlements in the metro. This special edition of Asivikelane asked informal settlement residents for feedback on Thekwini Metropolitan Municipality’s response to those floods.

Abahlali BaseMjondolo and the SASDI Alliance, with support from IBP South Africa, engaged with 417 informal settlement residents in 81 informal settlements about the Metro’s response to the flood. The data was collected between 8 and 15 June — about two months after the first floods — and covers access to water and sanitation, emergency responses and repairs of flood damage.

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<th>Settlements</th>
<th>Residents</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
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<td>81</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
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Note: data collected between 8 and 15 June 2022

“We have self-connected water in the community and self-dug toilets. All of that was washed away by the floods and we have nothing right now.”
While the floods made things worse, the underlying problems were already severe.

16% of residents indicated that they didn’t have water and 24% had no access to sanitation.

A further 344 of the 417 residents told us that their settlements are five years or older (i.e. not temporary) giving the metro ample time to provide some level of service.

Perhaps more serious is that, already in March 2022, 42% of residents reported that when taps and toilets break, the metro never repairs them. Another 20% said it takes the metro 1 – 3 months to fix taps and toilets. This indicates that before the floods the metro already could not cope with basic repairs and maintenance of taps and toilets in informal settlements.

“The floods have left us with no homes and there has not been anyone from government to address the situation.”

“There has not been water for days in our area.”

“We have not received any form of assistance from the municipality.”

While we focus on water and sanitation in this report, residents face many more challenges:

“[A] lot of houses were washed away, and others were damaged, and roads were blocked with sand. There [was] no way to go out, no water, no toilets. We [didn’t] have access to go to town to buy food for our children.”

The situation before the floods
Repairs to taps and water tanks after the flood

78% of residents told us that the metro has not even come to assess the flood damage.

The main reasons cited for lack of access to adequate water are that communal taps have run dry (49%) and that water tanks are broken (16%). Only 16% of residents indicated that their lack of adequate access to water existed prior to the flood. As the majority of residents had water access before, this means the broken tanks and taps that have run dry are a result of the flood. 86% of participating residents told us that they don't have enough water after the flood.

Of greater concern than the initial flood damage is the metro’s response to it. Where the damage has been assessed, most residents (87%) told us that their broken taps and tanks have not yet been fixed.

In addition to poor access, **71% of residents told us that water quality has worsened** since the flood. This has left many residents with diarrhoea, a condition that can be life-threatening to babies and small children.

Sanitation repairs

92% of residents said that the metro had not even assessed the damage to their toilets or communal ablution blocks.

In addition to the 24% who had no sanitation even before the floods, the main reasons for lack of access after the floods are that toilets were blocked or broken and that toilets have been washed away. 83% of residents told us that since the floods they don't have enough toilets.

Only 5 of the 417 residents indicated that repairs to toilets had been done.
Emergency water services after the flood

Only 34% of residents indicated that the metro had delivered emergency water to their area.

6% of residents said that water tanks have been delivered to their settlements since the floods. Another 39% indicated that water trucks have been coming to their settlement since the flood. Of the 39% who said that water trucks have been delivering water to their settlements, almost 88% said that there is not enough water for all residents in their area. The main problem here seems to be that the trucks don't deliver water often enough, with some residents reporting that the truck hadn't come to their settlement at all in the previous seven days.

“The local Cllr. knows about this and no action. As the ablution closed, we used the bush for toilets. The water is not enough. We don’t have allocated water trucks.”

Emergency sanitation services since the flood

Only 4 residents from 3 settlements told us that emergency sanitation (in the form of chemical toilets) has been delivered to their settlements since the floods.

So while repairs lag, residents have no access to services.