

WHY DO METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITIES NOT MAINTAIN TAPS AND TOILETS IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS?

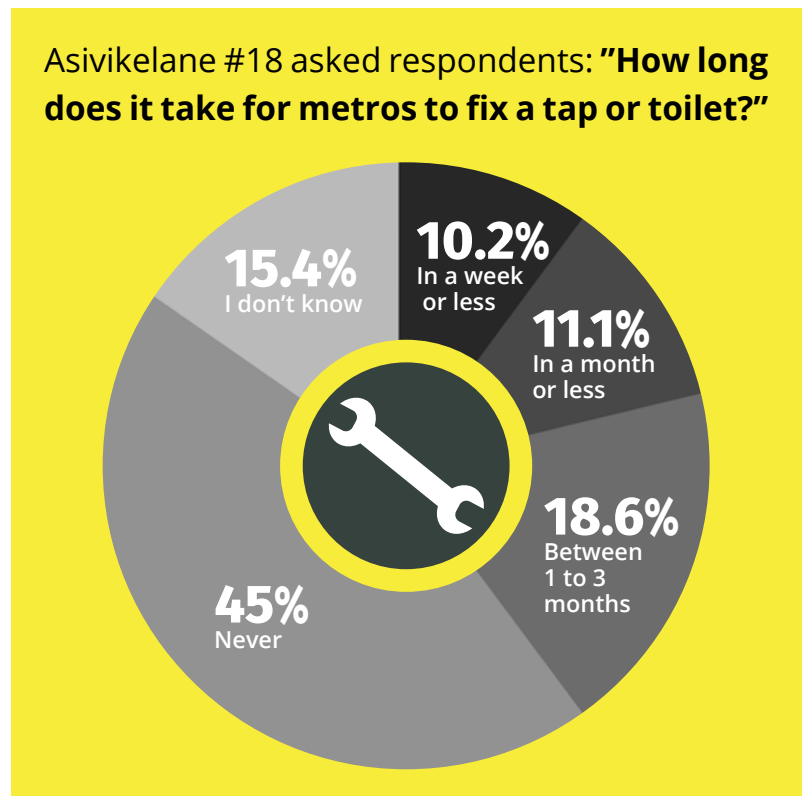


1. Metros do not maintain communal taps and toilets¹ in informal settlements

More than ten million people live in informal settlements in South Africa. Since March 2020, the Asivikelane campaign² has collected evidence which shows that in many settlements, residents have no or inadequate access to water and sanitation. Over the same period, residents have consistently reported that the lack of maintenance of communal taps and toilets is one of the main contributors to this inadequate access.

In June 2021 (Asivikelane #18), 45% of residents participating in Asivikelane and living in informal settlements in metropolitan municipalities (metros) said that when taps or toilets break, they are *never* fixed. Another 30% said it takes longer than a week for maintenance to happen, despite many metros targeting a 48-hour response time for fixing faulty taps and toilets. In some cases, municipal officials might come to assess the fault, but the fault is never fixed. Residents also reported that they often end up fixing broken taps and toilets themselves.

An additional contributing factor to the poor state of communal taps and toilets in informal settlements is that more people use these taps and toilets than municipalities realise. In July 2021, 75% of residents who use a communal tap reported that more than 25 households share that tap. In addition, more than 80% of residents who use municipal-provided sanitation reported that 6 households or more share their toilet. The result is that taps and toilets soon break due to overuse. And when they break, they are not repaired.



1. Taps and toilets include communal flush toilets, standpipes with taps, and communal ablution blocks.
2. Asivikelane is an initiative of the International Budget Partnership South Africa and its civil society partners, which gives a voice to informal settlement residents in South Africa's major cities who face severe basic service shortages. By responding to three questions monthly about their access to water, clean toilets and waste removal, residents offer us a window into their daily experiences. The detailed results are published monthly and shared with the relevant municipalities and national government departments to enable swift government response.

2. Why do metros not repair informal settlement taps and toilets?

- 2.1** In line with the National Treasury Guidelines³, all metros should budget 8% of the value of their Property, Plant and Equipment (PPE) for maintenance and repairs of infrastructure. Our research suggests that they do not.
- 2.2** Our analysis suggests that metros *spend* even less than they *budget* for repairs and maintenance.
- 2.3** The Auditor-General does not currently incorporate this issue in their 'audit scope' – i.e., it does not assess whether metros are spending their budgets as required and meeting their targets regarding maintenance and repairs.
- 2.4** It must be noted that we do not, at present, know whether the 8% target is sufficient in the first place or even which analysis it is based on. We intend to do further research in this regard.
- 2.5** The national conditional grants for informal settlement services and upgrading (e.g. USDG or ISUPG) only provide for capital spending and not repairs and maintenance. The result is greater expenditure pressure on metros because their capital stock increases while their funding available for repairs and maintenance does not.
- 2.6** Our initial analysis suggests that informal settlements do not get a fair share of the money the metros allocate to and spend on repairs and maintenance. Unfortunately, it is the case that formal areas are receiving the bulk of resources.
- 2.7** Another cause for concern is that many metros do not currently have effective and efficient procurement systems for informal settlement maintenance and repairs, and the result is unnecessary delays. Their systems for quality control and monitoring of service providers is also poor.
- 2.8** Where metro fault reporting systems do exist, they are biased against informal settlement fault reporting as they require municipal accounts and street numbers that informal settlement residents don't have.
- 2.9** In many informal settlements, taps and toilets are also not numbered. This makes it difficult for residents to report faults and for maintenance teams to locate broken infrastructure. This also raises the question of whether all taps and toilets in informal settlements have been recorded on the relevant metro's asset register.
- 2.10** As metros do not know how many taps and toilets there are in informal settlements, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to plan for adequate maintenance. Taps and toilets are also often used by more residents than metros realize, increasing the need for maintenance.



3. See <http://mfma.treasury.gov.za/Circulars/Pages/Circular71.aspx>

3. Supporting evidence

3.1 Insufficient budgeting for and spending on the maintenance and repairs in general

As mentioned above, municipalities have to spend 8% of the carrying value of their PPE on maintenance and repairs. The table below shows that metros budget on average about half that share. In fact, while the average budgeted share was 4.5% in 2020/21, this is set to decline to 3.9% in 2021/22. What is more, metros also appear to spend even less than the budget allocation, as can be seen by the forecast for 2020/21 being only 4.0% (in comparison to the budgeted 4.5%).

The table below also shows a relatively large variation between the metros. Cape Town and eThekweni budget and spend about 7% and 6% respectively on repairs and maintenance as shares of their PPE. In contrast, Buffalo City budgets and spends less than 2% of the value of their PPE on repairs and maintenance.

Expenditure on Repairs and Maintenance as % of PPE: 2021/22 adopted metro budgets					
Description	2020/2021		2021/22 Medium Term Revenue and Expenditure Framework		
	Budget	Full Year Forecast	Budget Year 2021/22	Budget Year +1 2022/23	Budget Year +2 2023/24
Buffalo City	1,9%	1,9%	1,9%	1,8%	1,7%
Cape Town	8,20%	7,60%	7,20%	6,90%	6,40%
Ekurhuleni	4,40%	3,40%	3,10%	3,30%	3,50%
eThekweni	7,30%	5,60%	6,10%	6,20%	6,20%
Johannesburg	5,60%	4,60%	4,70%	4,60%	4,60%
Mangaung	2,60%	3,00%	2,40%	2,30%	2,30%
Nelson Mandela Bay	2,40%	2,70%	2,70%	2,90%	3,00%
Tshwane	3,20%	3,30%	3,20%	3,30%	3,30%
Average all metros	4,5%	4,0%	3,9%	3,9%	3,9%

3.2 Spending on maintenance and repairs in informal settlements might be crowded out by spending on maintenance and repairs in general

While we can see if metros are spending 8% of the value of their PPE on maintenance and repairs, the lack of disaggregated budget information makes it impossible to see how much metros are allocating to and spending specifically on the maintenance and repairs of taps and toilets in informal settlements.

All metros do disaggregate their repairs and maintenance budgets by asset class. This means that we can, for example, see how much is budgeted for and was spent on sanitation infrastructure and water supply infrastructure respectively. The standard municipal budget tables also include sub-asset class budget lines. Many metros, however, do not complete these sub-asset class lines or seem to lump all spending for a specific asset class into one asset class. It should be noted that there is a sub-asset class called 'toilet facilities', but only eThekweni and Mangaung completed that line in their 2021/22 budgets and they did not provide any additional information on the type of facilities included. And, despite this disaggregation, there is still no indication of what is spent in informal settlements specifically.



It is therefore impossible to assess whether metros budget enough for repairs and maintenance to taps and toilets in informal settlements. Anecdotal evidence suggests that spending on maintenance and repairs in formal areas crowds out spending on maintenance and repairs in informal areas. Some metro officials told us that there are budget constraints, with one official specifically saying there are trade-offs between maintenance in informal settlements and other water and sanitation maintenance. Another official admitted that budget constraints prevent that metro from conducting proactive inspection of facilities in informal settlements and doing preventative maintenance.

3.3 Challenges with the delivery of repairs and maintenance in informal settlements

A number of challenges have also been identified with the actual delivery of repairs and maintenance in informal settlements.

In eThekweni, the procurement of maintenance services is often responsible for significant delays in maintenance and repairs. Minor faults are attended to by a small in-house team, but the majority of maintenance and repairs is done by outsourced contractors. Three quotes have to be requested for these jobs, resulting in substantial delays. The process is first managed by the supply chain department and then final approval is needed from the finance department.

However, other metros use a combination of in-house teams and a panel of contractors appointed for a specific term (often three years) that speeds up the process significantly. Even so, monitoring of these contractors and poor-quality service have also been highlighted as challenges. The result is often poor-quality work, with taps and toilets breaking again shortly after being fixed.



3.4 Metro fault reporting systems are biased against informal settlement fault reporting

Metros' fault-reporting systems do not work optimally for informal settlement residents. Residents often do not have access to appropriate smartphones, airtime or data needed to use the fault-reporting system.

For example, an assessment of the City of Cape Town's C3 notification system identified a number of additional challenges. In some cases, a resident needs a municipal account to log specific faults and in other cases a resident needs a street address. The system makes use of drop-down menus of 'faults' but none of these options are specific to informal settlements (for instance, the options do not include 'broken communal tap' or 'chemical toilet has not been cleaned').

It must also be noted that in some metros, residents and civil society organisations have indicated that, if they do manage to report a fault, they find it difficult to track the progress with repairing the fault.

For more information please contact: www.asivikelane.org

