

SPATIAL DATA AND ADEQUATE FAULT REPORTING CAN IMPROVE MAINTENANCE OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENT TAPS AND TOILETS



ASIVIKELANE
LET'S PROTECT ONE ANOTHER

One of the biggest challenges affecting access to basic sanitation in informal settlements is poor repairs and maintenance. While there are informal settlements with no access to taps and toilets – several settlements have fewer taps and toilets to the ratio of residents – what is worse is that majority of these are unusable because they are either broken or blocked.

In addition, taps and toilets are also often used by more residents than metros realize, increasing the need for routine maintenance. There are various contributing factors to the failure of repairs and maintenance: for example, almost all municipalities have no specific budget allocations for repairs and maintenance in informal settlements, there is poor monitoring and oversight of contractors, and a deep culture of reactive rather than proactive basic maintenance of communal taps and toilets.



Through the Asivikelane Campaign, we know these issues are made worse because many municipal fault-reporting systems do not work optimally for informal settlement residents. Residents often do not have access to appropriate smartphones or the airtime and data needed to use these systems. Where metro fault reporting systems do exist, they are biased against informal settlements since they require municipal accounts or street numbers that informal settlements often do not have.

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. In some instances, metros do not know where taps and toilets are located within the settlements making it difficult, if not impossible, to respond and plan for adequate maintenance.

In our efforts to improve fault reporting, we conducted a GIS training and mapping exercise with residents and community leaders in eThekweni with our partner Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC) of the SA SDI Alliance. The purpose of the training was to use spatial data to strengthen fault reporting and service delivery responsiveness in informal settlements. As part of this pilot exercise, we collected GIS data from ten informal settlements namely: Mallaca; Simplace; Chappers; Magwaveni; Havelock; Mathambo; Harry's Farm; Johanna Road; Pumperhouse and Tropika.



The main objective is to improve the turnaround time for repairs and maintenance of taps and toilets in informal settlements; improve the functionality and access to municipal fault reporting systems for informal settlements residents; improve the response turnaround time to reported faults where there is no physical address (no municipal accounts, street numbers or infrastructure unique ID). The idea is to ensure that when a service delivery fault is reported/logged, the municipality maintenance teams can accurately locate the facility within the settlements and respond speedily. We want systematic changes that will speed up response time once faults are reported.

With a successful pilot now in place and 10 informal settlements mapped with GIS data, IBP South Africa proposes working with metros to extend the project across South

Africa. As we already work in over 400 informal settlements and have developed strong relationships with resident community facilitators, IBP South Africa is well-placed to support such a scaling up.

Working alongside the municipality who embraces innovation is key to the success of such a project. We collaborated with eThekweni Municipality who shared their spatial information to support our preparation and the rollout of the work. The lessons drawn from this pilot offer a unique opportunity to scale-up this work; develop a more refined system; strengthen collaboration and the role of communities while improving basic service delivery in informal settlements.

This exercise, done in parallel with other efforts like ensuring there are adequate budget allocations, policy, proper supply chain management and accessible fault reporting mechanisms, could improve municipal repair and maintenance systems, deliver faster repairs and save contractors time. Most importantly, the project will help ensure informal settlement residents are provided with the basic water and sanitation services integral to human dignity.

For more information please contact: www.asivikelane.org

