

Summary of key sanitation results for Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality's informal settlements

October 2024

Introduction

In July and August 2024, the Asivikelane Campaign¹ in the Metro mapped communal flush toilets, communal taps with basins, and communal standpipes in informal settlements to determine the extent of infrastructure damage, such as broken flush toilets, which has resulted in residents not having adequate access to water and sanitation.

Asivikelane has collected evidence in the Metro since its inception in March 2021, which has led to the campaign taking a key interest in the state of taps and toilets in the Metro's informal settlements. The data has highlighted that there are insufficient taps and toilets available to residents, and where these have been provided, they are in dire need of repairs and maintenance.

Significant issues include broken, leaking, and dirty toilets, as well as toilets that cannot be locked from the inside. Issues with the taps include broken or leaking taps, or taps with low water pressure. Asivikelane mapped² the key infrastructure interventions provided by the municipality to ensure that informal settlement communities have access to basic water and sanitation. Most communal flush toilets are installed with a basin fitted with a tap, alongside a communal standpipe.

Key trends of the mapping include:

- Most toilets had an issue, with just 2 of 57 toilets in good working order.
- Leaking taps and the absence of drainage below taps were the most common issue with standpipes
- Just 2 of 35 basins with taps had no fault, with taps missing, broken or leaking, and in some cases, there was no water.
- The majority of faults with the toilets, taps with basins, and standpipes had been reported to the municipality.
- Residents did not use the Metro's official fault reporting telephone line.

¹ In March 2020, the International Budget Partnership South Africa (IBP South Africa) and its civil society partner organisations launched the Asivikelane Initiative. Common Cause and IBPSA represent the campaign in the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality. This initiative gives a voice to informal settlement residents in South Africa's major cities who face severe basic service shortages. It supports informal settlement communities to monitor the delivery of water, sanitation, and refuse collection services, and to engage with their municipality about these services. For more information: <https://asivikelane.org/about/>

² Asivikelane community facilitators used the Survey123 tool to map communal flush toilets, communal taps with basins, and communal standpipes in 10 settlements in the Metro. A total of 20 standpipes, 35 taps with basins, and 57 communal flush toilets were mapped. The community facilitators logged and physically verified the state of the toilet, tap with basin, or tap and engaged with residents on their approach towards fault reporting, as well as established whether residents felt too many people were using a tap or toilet. The full interactive dashboard can be accessed at: <https://1to1.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/a47dbe974002476c830e89f91c2b869f>.

Summary

Community facilitators mapped 57 communal flush toilets, 35 taps with basins, and 20 standpipes in the following settlements:

Settlement	Ward
Aconey Valley	44
Nompumelelo Bay	15
Nondula	12
Ramaphosa	11
Scenery Park	5
Slovo Park	20
Sonwabile 1	11
Sonwabile 2	11
Sophakama	5
Winnie Village	30

Communal flush toilets

The evidence collected in July and August highlighted a number of issues impacting access to sanitation, health and safety.

The most prevalent issue, found in 70% of toilets mapped, was that the **flushing mechanism** was broken.

Other key issues were dirty toilets, toilet doors with no locks or that could not be locked from the inside, and too many people sharing toilets.



What is wrong? (could tick more than one)	Number of toilets with the issue	% Share of total toilets mapped
Nothing is wrong	2	4%
No door	2	4%
No lock on door	22	39%
Door cannot lock from the inside	20	35%
Broken door	16	28%
Too many people sharing it	31	54%
Toilet is blocked	14	25%
Toilet is vandalised	12	21%
Flushing mechanism is broken	40	70%
No Water	17	30%
Toilet is dirty	26	46%
Cistern is leaking	15	26%
There is trash in the toilet	14	25%
No seat	19	33%
Broken seat	6	11%
Other	21	37%
Total number of toilets mapped	57	

In some cases, a single toilet had a number of faults, rendering it unusable. Residents in some settlements locked unusable toilets that were blocked or broken to prevent additional faults. 25% of toilets mapped had trash inside the bowl. This initiated community facilitators to check if there were waste bins nearby where residents could dispose of waste when using the communal toilet facility.

Only 11% of toilets mapped had bins close to the toilet where waste, such as nappies and feminine hygiene products, could be disposed of in a hygienic and safe way.

Is there a bin for waste close to the toilet?	Number of toilets mapped	% of total number of taps mapped
Yes	6	11%
No	51	89%
Total number of toilets mapped	57	100%

Communal standpipes and taps with basins

Key issues with communal standpipes:

- Broken tap(50%)
- Leaking tap (45%)
- No drainage under the tap (35%)
- Too many people sharing the tap (35%)
- Other (35%)
 - **Other** included: no water in the area, blocked drains, drains without lids, and no tap at all.
- No water (5%)
- Trash in the drain under the tap (5%).



Key issues with taps with basins:

- Other (37%)
 - **Other** included: No drainage system, blocked drains, leaking pipes under the basin, pipes below the basin had been cut, no pipes below the basin, no water connection to the tap, and issues with stench.
- No tap (31%)
- Broken tap (29%)
- No water (23%)
- Low water pressure (11%)
- Blocked basin(11%)



Too many people use the taps and toilets

Insufficient provision of taps and toilets is a major issue faced by residents. More than half of toilets mapped were used by too many people, which led to overuse, causing toilets and taps to break more frequently.

Type of infrastructure	% mapped which were used by too many people
Communal flush toilet	54%
Standpipe	35%

The urgent need for repairs and maintenance of taps and toilets

98% of faults to toilets, standpipes, and taps with basins, were reported by the residents using the infrastructure.

A key takeaway from Asivikelane’s collected data is that residents do not report the faults via the municipal fault reporting call centre, with only 15% of faults reported through official fault reporting mechanisms. Most residents report faults directly to their ward councillors, ward committee members, or municipal officials. This does not result in ongoing repairs and maintenance, nor do residents get reference numbers when reporting this way, so they have no way of following up on reported faults.

To whom was the fault reported?	Number of taps and toilets mapped where fault was reported to this channel	% of total number of taps and toilets mapped
Ward councillor	96	87%
A ward committee member	56	51%
A municipal official	51	46%
Municipal fault reporting system	16	15%
Asivikelane	7	6%
Other	7	6%
Total number of taps and toilets mapped where faults were reported	110	

The call centre model is not user-friendly for informal settlement residents. There is no clear indication on the website which number to call to report a broken tap or toilet. Residents also need airtime to use the call centre. It is critical that the Metro addresses the reasons residents do not use the official fault reporting mechanism, as the route currently followed depends heavily on having access to persons in a position of authority, which stifles access and delays repairs.