

## SPOTLIGHT ON SCHOOL SANITATION

The Minister of Basic Education has published Norms and Standards on School Infrastructure.

These norms and standards speak about school buildings, facilities and toilets.

The provincial education department must implement these norms and standards.

### What do the norms and standards say for school toilets?

- School toilets must be sufficient, accessible, safe and hygienic.
- Various sanitation systems, such as water borne sanitation and septic tank systems are permissible.
- Each school must determine which system is most suitable to meet their sanitation needs.
- Plain pits and bucket toilets are not allowed.

The information below shows improvement BUT it is not enough to note the improvements. We need to understand the reasons for the improvements, the work that still needs to be done and how it must be done.

### How the Limpopo education department is performing on school toilets

#### UNDERSTANDING THE IMPROVEMENTS

##### In 2009...

- In half of the schools in Limpopo, between 18 and 57 learners were sharing one toilet.
- 1 in 4 schools were in better position and had between 0.48 and 18 pupils per toilet.
- The other 1 in 4 schools, however, were in a terrible position: They had over 57 learners sharing one toilet!

##### In 2015...

- Half the schools in Limpopo had between 11 and 28 pupils per toilet.
  - The average number of learners per toilet was 18 learners.

Reasons for the improvements can be attributed to the department's efforts but also to external interventions, such as constant monitoring and engagement by social justice organisations.

### **An example of monitoring and engagement efforts**

In 2012 and 2013, SECTION27 sent numerous letters and meeting requests to government

**September 2012:** SECTION27 requests meeting with education departments to discuss sanitation crisis.

**November 2012:** The departments undertake to provide a plan to eradicate pit toilets by 31 January 2013. This does not happen. SECTION27 continues writing letters.

**March 2013:** After many requests for the plan, the department finally presents plan that details proposed efforts to build 215 sanitation facilities by 30 June 2013. SECTION27 comments on the plan and the department updates it.

**May-August 2013:** SECTION27 requests regular updates on plans even though the department does not respond. SECTION27 works in the meantime on a report on Limpopo school sanitation.

**September 2013:** SECTION27 finalises its report on infrastructure and sanitation in Limpopo schools.

**November 2013:** Using its report, SECTION27 meets with the Minister of Basic Education and senior officials. The national department undertakes to address the sanitation backlog by accelerating and intensifying its delivery plan.

### **What can BEFA members do to ensure that Government delivers on its promises?**

- **Read:** Read and understand the Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure, and what they say about school toilets
- **Monitor:** Inadequate sanitation facilities must be brought to the attention of those who can help as early as possible.
- **Support communities:** Support SGBs in keeping a record of the number of sanitation facilities and their condition.
- **Engage with government:** Write letters, request meetings, prepare petitions and present the information gathered during monitoring.