

Fix Our Schools!

# *the* SCHOOLS SOCIAL AUDIT SUMMIT



## 16 MAY | YMCA, RATHEBEST, ORLANDO

Gauteng Schools Social Audit Report

Equal Education

Gauteng Education Crisis Coalition

16.05.2015

Executive Summary



## **BACKGROUND**

In March and April, Equal Education (EE) and the Gauteng Education Crisis Coalition conducted a social audit on the school conditions of 200,000 students in more than 200 schools in over 20 different communities in Gauteng, representing 10% of township schools. The social audit was carried out by 500 students, teachers, parents and grandparents belonging to a broad range of churches, civics and community organisations. The audit represents the next step in EE's Gauteng School Sanitation Campaign and its Michael Komape Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure Implementation Campaign.

Minimum Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure is a law that EE won in November 2013. It sets out binding timeframes and standards for items like water, sanitation, electricity, libraries, laboratories, and other essential physical infrastructure for schools. Michael Komape is the name of the six-year old, Grade R learner from Chebeng Village, Limpopo who died when he fell into a pit latrine toilet at his school in January 2014.

The Gauteng School Sanitation Campaign started in August 2013, when Equal Education members in Tembisa conducted an audit of about two thirds of the high schools in the area, or 11 in total. The audit revealed that at over half of the schools more than 100 students had to share a single working toilet.

Despite repeated attempts to engage the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE), little had changed by September 2014. By then, EE high school members from Daveyton, Kwa-Thema and Tsakane had joined the campaign. On 13 September, about 2 000 EE student and parent members marched to the offices of the Gauteng Department of Education to demand action. In response, Gauteng MEC for Education Mr. Panyaza Lesufi promised to spend R150 million to upgrade the sanitation conditions at 580 schools serving over 500,000 students.

In order to monitor this promise, EE worked with the following structures:

- Faith-based communities like the South African Council of Churches Gauteng and the Moral Regeneration Movement
- Civic organisations such as the South African National Civic Organisation, Gauteng Civic Association and the Alexandra Civic Organisation
- Community organisations including Sidinga Uthando and Bua Funda
- Progressive teachers across Gauteng

At a meeting in February 2015, leaders from these structures met to establish the Gauteng Education Crisis Coalition and resolved to carry out a community-led monitoring of the education system in Gauteng: The Schools Social Audit.

## **THE SOCIAL AUDIT PROCESS**

The Social Audit was conducted in March and April in more than 200 schools in the following communities:

- Ekurhuleni: Tembisa, Daveyton, Tsakane, Kwa-Thema, Etwatwa
- Tshwane: Atteridgeville, Jeffsville, Lotus Gardens, Saulsville,
- Johannesburg: Alexandra, Diepkloof, Meadowlands, Orlando, Orange Farm
- Sedibeng: Bhopelong, Boipatong, Evaton, Sebokeng, Sharpeville
- West Rand: Carltonville, Khutsong, Kokosi

The Social Audit followed a rigorous process to ensure accuracy. All EE organisers and community auditors were trained in how to conduct the audit before they began. This training included a

background on the laws governing the provision of school infrastructure, basic research methodology and a detailed review of the Schools Social Audit. EE also created an audit packet for each auditor to take with them when they visited schools. The packet included a letter to the principal explaining the purpose of the Social Audit as well as a list of the 580 schools slated for sanitation improvements.

An experienced trainer supervised auditors' first school visit so as to immediately correct any errors in their approach. Having completed training, auditors went in teams of 2-5 to spend 1-2 hours surveying schools, interviewing students, teachers and principals and recording data. Before being captured, all audit sheets were scrutinized for potential errors. Where necessary, EE organizers called auditors or schools to clarify comments on the audit sheets. The data was then captured digitally to allow for easy analysis.

## **RESULTS**

The results below represent our findings in those primary and secondary schools for which data was available. For indicators like water and electricity, auditors were able to collect data from almost all of the 200 schools visited. For indicators like classrooms, auditors were only able to collect data from about 77 schools as both the auditors and principals were concerned about interrupting classes. To paint an accurate picture of the schooling situation, we only consider these 77 schools when describing classroom conditions. The same principle applies to all other results. Unless otherwise noted, all data is for both primary and secondary schools.

**There is a sanitation crisis in our schools:** We found that:

- **Over 100 students per working toilet:** At about 30% of high schools we audited, more than 100 students share a single working toilet. By comparison, according to the Wits Justice Project, 65 men share a single toilet at the unacceptably overcrowded Johannesburg Medium A prison
- **Broken toilets:** One out of every five school toilets is locked or broken
- **No soap, toilet paper or sanitary pads:** Nearly 70% of students do not have soap in their schools while more than 40% of students do not have any access to toilet paper or sanitary pads in their schools. This problem is particularly acute in secondary schools, where funds are stretched due to overcrowding
- **Not enough maintenance staff:** Over a quarter of schools have over 400 students for one single maintenance personnel. Maintenance staff are overwhelmed at schools.

Though there is a continued sanitation emergency, the audit indicates that EE's Gauteng Sanitation Campaign has yielded tangible victories for students. Many schools reported that MEC Lesufi's R150 million sanitation investment had helped and that significant upgrades and repairs had been completed at their schools. (However, some were concerned about the quality of work performed). At the start of our campaign, 50% of high schools in Tembisa had over the 100 students per working toilet. This audit puts the figure at around 30%. Though far from ideal, it is proof that activism can win results. And, it shows that government can fix the problem – if it is willing to act.

**The audit identified other urgent issues that impact on students and teachers alike:**

- **Overcrowding:** About half of all schools have a class with 50 students or more in it; Some schools have over 1500 students even though they were built for far fewer
- **A shortage of desks and chairs:** Around 80% of schools have a shortage of proper desks or chairs

- **Unsafe schools and classroom conditions:** Half of all schools have a classroom with a hole in the ceiling or floor; 20% of schools have over five broken windows. About 40% of schools are considered usually unsafe or only sometimes safe because they do not have an adequate fence or sufficient security guards
- **Mass exclusion of students with disabilities:** Schools have almost no provisions for the blind and many do not have a toilet big enough for a wheelchair. There are children with disabilities in every community at home because schools do not cater for them
- **Limited labs:** About half of secondary schools do not have a proper lab with the necessary equipment. We will lose a generation of scientists
- **Shortage of sports fields:** About one in seven schools has no access to a sports field. Others rely on sports fields in disrepair
- **Not enough libraries:** About 80% of schools do not have their own functional library – a library with quality books and a librarian
- **Lack of ICT:** Over 15% of schools lack any access to internet and some remain without telephones

**The audit also found some bright spots, even though challenges remain:**

- **Water and electricity:** All schools have access to water and 98% of schools have access to electricity. Still, periodic water and electricity shortages severely affect students. Schools without access to electricity must be addressed urgently and we need to ensure that water and electricity flows to schools at all times
- **Nutrition Centres:** 97% of schools have a nutrition centre. The rest must be addressed urgently so that students don't go hungry

## **DEMANDS**

MEC Lesufi has stated that “there is clear political will from my side” to fix the sanitation crisis.<sup>1</sup> We expect that this political commitment extends to the other issues the audit found. The MEC must demonstrate his political commitment by meeting these five demands:

**Demand 1: Increase the number of toilets, improve maintenance and access to the supply of toilet paper, soap and sanitary pads in schools by Youth Day, 16 June.** The following five progressive steps should be taken by the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) and Gauteng Provincial Government to fix the school sanitation crisis:

- I. **Establish a Gauteng appropriate standard for sanitation, particularly with regards to the ratio of students per toilet:** The GDE should also release timelines for when schools will reach these standards. The Norms and Standards state that a secondary school with 1,200 students - like those in Tembisa - can have up to one toilet per 43 girls and one toilet plus one urinal per 100 boys. This is almost double the World Health Organisation (WHO) standard of 25 girls per toilet and 50 boys per one toilet plus one urinal.
- II. **Establish a standard for the ratio of maintenance staff per students:** This is a recommendation that the GDE's own consultants have endorsed.<sup>2</sup> Conversations with schools during our audit suggest that allocating cleaning staff per ward is not effective as they are overstretched. School-based maintenance staff is the only long-term solution.

<sup>1</sup> [www.702.co.za/articles/2211/i-feel-deeply-embarrassed-i-ll-fix-it-mec-lesufi-on-gauteng-school-toilets](http://www.702.co.za/articles/2211/i-feel-deeply-embarrassed-i-ll-fix-it-mec-lesufi-on-gauteng-school-toilets)

<sup>2</sup> [www.equaleducation.org.za/file/2015-03-17-gde-consultants-report](http://www.equaleducation.org.za/file/2015-03-17-gde-consultants-report)

- III. **Publicly provide a model budget for how schools in townships like Tembisa can afford to purchase critical items like soap, sanitary pads and toilet paper:** The GDE has acknowledged that the lack of toilet paper in schools is a major challenge.<sup>3</sup> This is in terms of both students' health and the condition of sanitation infrastructure. In the absence of toilet paper, students use other items which clog the toilets. The GDE has stated that schools must use their own money to purchase items like toilet paper. Yet, many school principals state that they do not have enough money to do so. The GDE should therefore release a model budget that demonstrates how schools could afford to buy a sufficient supply of these necessary items.
- IV. **Publicly begin blacklisting contractors who under-perform:** The GDE's own consultants have indicated that the Department must do more to hold its contractors to account.<sup>4</sup> MEC Lesufi has stated that he will do this.<sup>5</sup> This list should be available publicly so that principals and communities can guard against contractors who do not deliver and misuse public funds.
- V. **Fully fund the GDE's request for R350 million to maintain school toilets:** The GDE has indicated they need R350 million for school sanitation maintenance alone.<sup>6</sup> This money must be ring-fenced. In tandem, the GDE should increase its oversight of school spending.

**Demand 2: Fix the specific, urgent issues identified in the audit by Youth Day, 16 June.** Our audit identified specific schools facing urgent issues like a lack of electricity, sanitation, classrooms, teachers, desks and chairs; inappropriate building material; poor school security; and the lack of provisions for students with disabilities. These issues must be addressed immediately.

**Demand 3: Release a costed plan for implementing Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure, with Gauteng appropriate standards and timeframes today.** The provincial implementation plans for the Norms and Standards were submitted to the Minister of Basic Education by 29 November 2014. These plans, including Gauteng's, have not been made publicly available. The plans are critical to implementation, and schools and communities should be able to view them so that they can hold the GDE and private contractors accountable. We therefore demand the immediate release of Gauteng's implementation plan for the Norms and Standards.

**Demand 4: Establish Gauteng-appropriate standards to deal with critical shortages of desks and chairs, overcrowding and ICT by Youth Day, 16 June.** This should include a plan for ensuring the supply of qualified teachers to township schools.

**Demand 5: Address the mass exclusion of students with disabilities by Youth Day, 16 June.** Many students with disabilities are excluded by the school system. This must stop immediately lest we lose a generation of young people with tremendous talent. Inclusion will require engaging with, training and supporting teachers to accommodate students with disabilities. It will also require improving schools' physical infrastructure to accommodate students with disabilities.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.equaleducation.org.za/file/2015-03-17-consolidated-toilet-intervention-report](http://www.equaleducation.org.za/file/2015-03-17-consolidated-toilet-intervention-report)

<sup>4</sup> [www.equaleducation.org.za/file/2015-03-17-gde-consultants-report](http://www.equaleducation.org.za/file/2015-03-17-gde-consultants-report)

<sup>5</sup> [www.702.co.za/articles/2211/i-feel-deeply-embarrassed-i-ll-fix-it-mec-lesufi-on-gauteng-school-toilets](http://www.702.co.za/articles/2211/i-feel-deeply-embarrassed-i-ll-fix-it-mec-lesufi-on-gauteng-school-toilets)

<sup>6</sup> [www.equaleducation.org.za/file/2015-03-17-gde-correspondence-with-equal-education-sanitaton](http://www.equaleducation.org.za/file/2015-03-17-gde-correspondence-with-equal-education-sanitaton)