

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 408.**

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**408. Mr M Shikwambana (EFF) to ask the Minister of Basic Education: to ask the Minister of Basic Education:**

What (a) number of schools still lack (i) flushing toilets and (ii) clean running water in each (aa) province, (bb) district and (cc) municipality and (b) plans does her department have to ensure that all schools in the Republic are provided with the specified basic facilities?

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 408.**

**Response**

(a) (i) Ablution Facilities

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) has advised that the following table provides a breakdown of the number of public schools with different types of sanitation facilities per province:

Province	Pit	Enviro Loo	VIP	Flush (Septic)	Flush (Municipal)	Mobile Toilets	Chemical Toilet	Alternative Sanitation
EC	340	172	3,237	286	1,087	9	3	41
FS	0	8	122	133	735	13	0	0
GP	0	10	9	140	1,897	98	6	0
KZN	170	352	2,702	642	1,581	73	61	14
LP	77	1,604	1,604	761	565	0	9	6
MP	3	561	582	792	668	3	3	0
NC	0	67	62	198	313	2	1	0
NW	0	45	362	858	638	7	2	7
WC	0	1	4	232	1,336	3	0	0
National	590	2,820	8,684	4,042	8,820	208	85	68

**Definitions in terms of the different types of sanitation facilities:**

**Pit Latrine (Least Safe – Being Eradicated)**

## **NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

### **WRITTEN REPLY**

#### **QUESTION 408.**

- *A dry toilet system consisting of a simple hole in the ground, often covered by a slab with a drop hole.*
- *Safety Risks: Pit latrines pose a significant danger to young children, who may fall into open or unstable pits, leading to fatal accidents.*
- *The Sanitation Appropriate for Education (SAFE) initiative is actively working to eradicate unsafe pit latrines.*
- *The total number of pit latrines captured in the table above includes the identified pit latrines covered by the SAFE initiative, as well as additional pit latrines identified for replacement outside of the SAFE initiative.*

#### **Enviro Loo**

- *A waterless, odourless dry sanitation system that uses natural airflow to dehydrate and break down waste.*
- *Safety Features: These toilets are fully enclosed with sturdy structures, reducing the risk of children falling in.*
- *Ideal for areas where water supply is limited.*

#### **VIP (Ventilated Improved Pit Latrine)**

- *An upgraded version of the traditional pit latrine with a ventilation pipe to reduce odours and improve hygiene.*
- *Safety Features: Unlike regular pit latrines, VIP toilets have sturdy slabs and properly enclosed structures, significantly reducing the risk of accidents.*

**Flush (Septic Tank)** *A flushing toilet connected to a septic tank, which collects and processes waste.*

- *Safety Considerations: While safe for use, poor maintenance can lead to overflow and contamination risks.*
- *Requires regular emptying and servicing to ensure hygiene.*

#### **Flush (Municipal Connection)**

- *A flushing toilet connected to the municipal sewage system.*

## NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

### WRITTEN REPLY

#### QUESTION 408.

- *Safety Features: These toilets are designed like standard household toilets, providing the highest level of safety, hygiene, and ease of use for children.*
- *However, not all schools have access to municipal sewage services.*

#### **Mobile Toilets**

- *Temporary sanitation units that can be relocated as needed.*
- *Safety Concerns: Mobile toilets may lack proper handwashing stations and structural stability if not secured properly.*
- *Best used as a short-term emergency solution.*

**Chemical Toilets** *Portable toilets that use chemicals to break down waste and control odours.*

- *Safety Risks: These toilets must be cleaned frequently to prevent chemical exposure and hygiene issues.*
- *Best used only as an interim solution while permanent infrastructure is installed.*

#### **Alternative Sanitation**

- *Includes composting toilets, biogas toilets, or hybrid models designed for water-scarce environments.*
- *Safety Features: These toilets are enclosed and stable, preventing accidents.*
- *Some models may require regular maintenance training for schools.*

Regulation 10(2) of the *Regulations Relating to Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure* provides for different sanitation technologies based on factors such as urban/rural location, availability of bulk services and terrain conditions. The DBE has advised that not all public schools are suitable for full flushing toilets due to a lack of available water or sewage infrastructure within the vicinity of those schools. Public schools with pit latrines are part of either the Sanitation Appropriate for Education (SAFE) programme or provincial initiatives aimed at eradicating pit latrines.

## NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

### WRITTEN REPLY

#### QUESTION 408.

##### (ii) Water Facilities

The DBE has advised that all public schools have been provided with at least one form of water supply, whether through boreholes, municipal connections or rainwater harvesting.

The DBE has advised further that the following table provides a breakdown of the number of public schools with different water supply sources per province:

Province	Borehole	Mobile Tankers	Municipal Yard Supply	Municipal Communal	Rainwater Harvesting
EC	421	241	1,749	816	4,040
FS	166	66	727	99	35
GP	297	90	1,949	0	80
KZN	1,510	537	2,535	645	3,045
LP	2,699	321	1,150	575	224
MP	948	289	972	0	22
NC	311	28	230	227	35
NW	1,090	158	424	383	42
WC	233	69	1,363	65	7
National	7,675	1,799	11,099	2,810	7,530

The DBE is implementing multiple infrastructure programmes to address backlogs and ensure that all public schools meet basic facility standards. These initiatives are funded through different sources, including:

1. Education Infrastructure Grant (EIG) and Equitable Share – Implemented by Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) to provide infrastructure for new schools, maintenance and upgrades.

## NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

### WRITTEN REPLY

#### QUESTION 408.

2. Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Delivery Initiative (ASIDI) – Aimed at replacing public schools built entirely of inappropriate materials and providing water, sanitation and electricity to schools without these services.
3. Sanitation Appropriate for Education (SAFE) – A programme specifically targeting identified public schools that still rely on unsafe pit latrines.
4. School Infrastructure Backlogs Grant (SIBG) – Funding for urgent infrastructure needs, which will be integrated into the EIG from the 2026/27 financial year.

In terms of the South African Schools Act, read with the Government Immovable Asset Management Act, provinces are responsible for the provisioning, management and maintenance of public school infrastructure.

The DBE is responsible for setting norms and standards for public school infrastructure. The DBE provides support and oversight to PEDs and, in some instances, implements projects through programmes such as the ASIDI programme and SAFE initiative.

As MECs for Education and their respective PEDs are responsible for the provisioning of public school infrastructure in their respective provinces but do not report directly to the Minister and Deputy Minister of Basic Education or the DBE, heightened collaboration and oversight between the national and provincial education departments is required to ensure that national priorities are effectively implemented at the provincial level. PEDs should not be returning funds to the National Treasury while public school infrastructure backlogs persist.

*The Regulations Relating to Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure* require PEDs to include their annual progress reporting information on how infrastructure backlogs will be addressed. PEDs are finalising infrastructure plans that identify outstanding backlogs and outline strategies to address them.

PEDs, in collaboration with the DBE where necessary, are continuously working to address infrastructure challenges in public schools. Plans for infrastructure improvement are prioritised based on available funding and urgency. The timelines for implementation are determined by PEDs based on their respective infrastructure delivery plans.

The Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement now outlines the integration of multiple conditional grants, including the EIG and the SIBG. While this reform aims to streamline resource allocation, it reduces the ability of the DBE to directly influence

## NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

### WRITTEN REPLY

#### QUESTION 408.

infrastructure delivery at a provincial level. Consequently, provinces will play an even greater role in the implementation of public school infrastructure projects.

Under the EIG, PEDs have submitted infrastructure plans that include the upgrading of existing facilities. These plans consider population growth, urbanisation and the distance learners travel to school.

The DBE is in the process of submitting a budget bid to the Budget Facility for Infrastructure (BFI) to supplement the EIG, assisting provinces in eliminating backlogs related to overcrowding, infrastructure deficiencies and inadequate classroom availability.

Accountability mechanisms will need to be strengthened to prevent systemic negligence and to ensure the safety and dignity of all learners. In this regard, the Minister of Basic Education intends to review the *Regulations relating to Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure* to ensure that they are clear, provide for clear oversight mechanisms and can lead to improvements in infrastructure delivery at a school level.

Once the identified sanitation projects have been completed under the SAFE initiative, the DBE will continue working collaboratively with PEDs to ensure that pit latrine toilets at public schools not identified under the SAFE initiative are appropriately and urgently replaced with suitable sanitation facilities. To assist the basic education sector to eradicate pit latrine toilets in schools, we have launched a Safe Schools app – a digital platform developed and donated by Vodacom South Africa to empower users to report unsafe toilets in schools, monitor progress on their removal and provide real-time feedback on infrastructure improvements. The Vodacom Safe Schools App is currently live and can be access via the following link: <https://safeschools.gov.za/>.

By enabling the public to crowd-source information about unsafe toilets not identified for the purposes of the SAFE initiative, PEDs, together with the DBE, will have access to current data necessary to inform budgeting, planning and implementation of school sanitation projects.