

Limpopo school toilets a health hazard

20 November 2018, 5:24 PM | Shibu Mamokgere | @SABCNewsOnline

According to Section 27, more than 40 schools in Limpopo have unsafe dilapidated toilets.

A report by rights organisation Section27 on the state of sanitation in Limpopo schools has revealed that more than 40 schools have unsafe and dilapidated pit toilets. The report, which was released on Monday, shows statistics from May to July this year.

Section27 says only 22 of these schools have been included in the Limpopo Education Department's official list of schools with pit toilets, compiled in August.

Walking into the learners' toilets at [Bolotswi High School](#) in Bolobedu outside Tzaneen, you are met by an unbearable stench. More than 150 learners share the four pit toilets, which are in a bad state. The toilet seats are falling apart and very little privacy is offered as the doors don't close properly. The overall appearance of the toilets shows that they are not cleaned. This has left learners with no other choice, but to relieve themselves in the bushes.

Bolotswi is amongst 19 schools that have been excluded from the Limpopo Education Department's list of schools that need urgent intervention on sanitation. According to Section27's report, the school will only be provided with proper toilets in 2024.

Learners, Arnold Bosetje and Rasebilo Ramahlo say they fear for their health and safety.

"I started schooling here at Bolotswi Secondary School in the year 2015. I got these toilets here just like that, nothing has changed. They are not fit to be used by school learners because they are not safe. You can go there and find a snake and you will go out and go to the bushes to get help and when you get there you may be hurt or maybe be killed by some sort of animals. We are suffering because when we are pressed we have no choice but to go to the bushes because our toilets are not working."

Another learner Makoma Kgatla, says as females, they feel their dignity has been stripped off.

"This affects us negatively because we can't use the toilets and even when we go to the bushes, we are forced to choose a spot where people cannot see us. I'm unhappy about this situation because it is impossible for me to wait until I get home to relieve myself."

Some of the parents have also expressed disappointment that nothing is being done to change the situation at the school.

"These toilets smell badly and the odour affects houses next to the school. The learners are forced to go to the bush, which is not safe. They might be attacked by snakes. As parents, we don't know what to do...The school itself is in a bad condition. The kitchen doesn't even have doors and food is cooked in a dusty area."

Member of the School Governing Body at Bolotswi High School, Tshepo Selowa says they have made numerous attempts to get learners proper toilets since 2015.

"From 2015 we had some several meeting as the SGB and tried to compile the report and make a submission to the department of education in Ben Matsana's office, but they promised us several times that they would send people to conduct the inspection but they couldn't take any action. Lastly we went to the Department of Public Works they came in our school and tried to do inspection and they said they would communicate with the Department of Education, but nothing has happened ever since then."

Section27's report emerges from an ongoing legal battle between the organisation and education authorities in relation to the death of five-year-old [Michael Komape](#) in 2014. Komape fell into a pit toilet at Mahlodumela primary school at Chebeng outside Polokwane.

His family is appealing a high court judgment that denied them R3 million in compensation.
– ***Additional reporting by Kgaugelo Napo.***