



**VOICES OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENT RESIDENTS DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS**

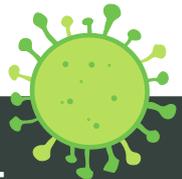
# Access to basic sanitation during COVID-19 in the **City of Cape Town**

## Overview

About 570 thousand (or 13.5 percent) of the City of Cape Town's 4.23 million residents live in informal settlements.<sup>1</sup> Many of these residents rely on shared water and sanitation facilities or have limited access to water and sanitation, making them particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. Sub-districts such as Tygerberg, Khayelitsha, and Southern – home to many informal settlements – have emerged as COVID-19 hotspots.<sup>2</sup>

Since the start of the Asivikelane initiative at the end of March 2020, informal settlement residents have told us about serious sanitation and water problems:

- In some settlements there are not enough toilets, and some residents reported that they do not have access to toilets at all.
- About a third of residents indicated that their toilets had not been cleaned in the previous seven days.
- In settlements where toilets have been cleaned, this has not been happening regularly.
- In many settlements, residents have consistently reported that toilets are broken or poorly maintained.
- Despite improved delivery of water through water trucks and Jojo tanks, some residents still report that they do not have access to clean water every time they need it, making regular hand washing impossible.
- In the most recent week, more than 80 percent of residents said that they had not received either soap or hand sanitiser from government.



### ASIVIKELANE

– Let's protect one another – asks informal settlement residents four basic questions: **(1) Is there clean water available in your settlement?** **(2) Were the toilets cleaned in the last 7 days?** **(3) Was waste collected in your settlement in the last 7 days?** and **(4) Has government provided soap or hand sanitizer to you in the last 7 days?** At present three organisations, the South African SDI Alliance, the Social Justice Coalition, and the Ingoma Choir/Denis Goldberg House of Hope, ask residents in 40 informal settlement across Cape Town these questions every two weeks. The findings below focus on what residents have said about sanitation in the most recent four surveys over the period 3 April to 15 May. Learn more about this initiative here: <https://www.internationalbudget.org/covid-monitoring/>

## Covid-19 in the City of Cape Town

Over recent weeks, the Western Cape has emerged as the epicentre of the COVID-19 virus. On 26 May, the province accounted for 65.2% or 15,829 of South Africa's 24,264 confirmed COVID-19 cases.<sup>3</sup> The Western Cape's own estimate of confirmed cases on 26 May is marginally lower at 15,756, with the City of Cape Town accounting for 13,747 or more than 87% of the province's cases.<sup>4</sup> In fact, these figures suggest that the City currently accounts for almost 60% of infections in South Africa. Within the City, the spread of the disease has made worrying progress in informal settlements.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.westerncape.gov.za/assets/departments/treasury/Documents/Socio-economic-profiles/2017/city\\_of\\_cape\\_town\\_2017\\_socio-economic\\_profile\\_sep-ig\\_-26\\_january\\_2018.pdf](https://www.westerncape.gov.za/assets/departments/treasury/Documents/Socio-economic-profiles/2017/city_of_cape_town_2017_socio-economic_profile_sep-ig_-26_january_2018.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://coronavirus.westerncape.gov.za/news/update-coronavirus-premier-alan-winde-26-may>

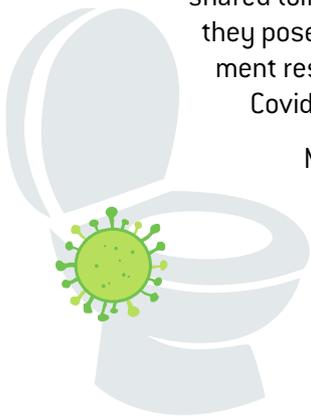
<sup>3</sup> <https://sacoronavirus.co.za/2020/05/26/update-on-covid-19-26th-may-2020/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://coronavirus.westerncape.gov.za/news/update-coronavirus-premier-alan-winde-26-may>

## Why the spotlight on sanitation?

Communal water and sanitation facilities, lack of adequate shelter, and poor living conditions mean that informal settlement residents are extremely vulnerable to infection.

Many residents living in Cape Town's informal settlements share toilets with several households. These toilets range from chemical and portable toilets, which are usually serviced and cleaned by a service provider appointed by the municipality, to full flush toilets cleaned by the City's own janitorial service. When communal or shared toilets are cleaned inadequately or irregularly, they pose a significant health risk to informal settlement residents and this is exacerbated during the Covid-19 pandemic.



Municipalities sometimes include minimum standards for the frequency of toilet cleaning in contracts with service providers, but in the context of Covid-19 this standard is unlikely to be sufficient. One significant way to mitigate the spread of Covid-19 in these communities is to clean communal toilets more frequently.



Taiwan, Khayelitsha, Cape Town, May 2020

# Key findings from Asivikelane:

*How residents in Cape Town informal settlements experience basic sanitation during COVID-19*



## 1. Some residents have no access to toilets

Residents from the settlements below indicated that either they do not have access to a toilet, or there are no toilets in their own settlements:

- **Burundi Krals**
- **E-Section**
- **Imizamo Yethu – February Street**
- **Deep Street**
- **Iraq**
- **New Rest**

Some residents said that they relieve themselves in the bush. Others said that they have to ask to use toilets in neighbouring areas, which has been a particular challenge given the restrictions on movement between areas and settlements.



## 2. Not enough toilets in some settlements

Some residents from the following settlements indicated that there are not enough toilets in their settlements:

- Esantini
- Manenberg/Tambo Backyarders – Area Greatfish
- Shuku-shukuma
- VE Section
- Island
- Ntabulele
- TR Nkqubela

## 3. About a third of residents' toilets have not been cleaned in the last seven days

After a slight decline in both week three and week four, in week five the results from Asivikelane show an improvement in the absolute number of residents who said that their toilets had been cleaned in the last seven days. Despite this small improvement, about a third of residents who submitted answers were still using toilets that had not been cleaned in the previous week. This is very concerning, given the rapid spread of COVID-19 in the City of Cape Town, and especially in informal settlements.

Were the toilets cleaned in the last 7 days (in numerical terms)?				
Week	2	3	4	5
Date of data submission	3 April	17 April	30 April	15 May
● YES	45	42	40	52
● NO	25	11	16	25
Total	70	61	56	77

Note: In week 3, 8 residents indicated 'I don't know' and the sum of the 'Yes' and 'No' responses does not add up to the total number of residents who submitted answers.

## Were the toilets cleaned in the last 7 days (in percentage terms)?



Note: For week 3, the percentage 'Yes' and 'No' responses are calculated as share of total responses (including 'I don't know').

## 4. Cleaning of toilets is irregular

Even in settlements where toilets are being cleaned, this is not happening regularly. Residents from the following settlements answered 'Yes' in some weeks, but 'No' in at least two weeks in response to the question, 'Were the toilets cleaned in the last seven days?'

- **Burundi Krals**
- **Manenberg** – Area 1 Backyarders
- **Philippi Block 6**
- **Philippi East Informal Settlement**
- **Taiwan, Khayelitsha**
- **LR Site B**
- **Manenberg/Tambo Backyarders**– Area Greatfish
- **Philippi East** – Never Never
- **School Site**
- **TR Nkqubela**

In addition, residents from Garden City, Green Park, Shuku-shukuma, and Taiwan commented that their toilets are not cleaned often enough, or that there are not enough cleaners to do a thorough job. In week three, residents from TT Section and UT Gardens expressed concern that the cleaners did not have chemicals to clean the toilets.

## 5. Many settlements have broken and/or blocked toilets

Residents have consistently expressed concern about the City not repairing blocked or broken toilets and sewerage pipes. In some settlements mentioned above this was also raised as a factor contributing to the inadequate number of (functional) toilets.

Residents from 16 settlements mentioned this as an issue at least once in the last eight weeks:

- **Allian Drive, Khayelitsha Site B**
- **California**
- **Island**
- **Philippi Block 6**
- **School Site**
- **Siyahlala**
- **TR Nkqubela**
- **Ut Litha Park**
- **Burundi**
- **Garden City**
- **K2**
- **Philippi Browns Farm Block 8**
- **Shuku-Shukuma**
- **Tambo Square Mfuleni**
- **UT Gardens**
- **VE Site B**



Toilets in the Emfuleni area of Garden City and Shuku-shukuma, Cape Town, May 2020



While the focus of this brief is access to adequate sanitation, the two points below confirm that access to sufficient water and access to soap and hand sanitiser also remain major concerns in informal settlements across Cape Town.

## 6. Inadequate access to clean water

In the first three weeks of Asivikelane, residents were asked to indicate if they have access to clean water.

Is there clean water available in your settlement?		
Week	2	3
Date of data submission	3 April	17 April
● YES	77%	80%
● NO	23%	7%
● I DON'T KNOW	0%	13%
Total number of residents	70	61

There was a slight improvement between weeks two and three in the percentage of residents who said that clean water is available in their settlement. However, in both weeks intermittent access to water was raised as a challenge, with specific issues including water outages and low water pressure.

In week 4, the question about water was adapted to gauge whether residents have access to clean water whenever they need it. While the results below illustrate some improvement in the reliability of the supply of water in informal settlements, in week five almost a third of residents still said that clean water was not available whenever they needed it.

Was water available every time that you needed it over the last week?		
Week	4	5
Date of data submission	30 April	15 May
● YES	55%	70%
● NO	45%	30%
Total number of residents	56	77

As part of its effort to curb the spread of COVID-19, the City of Cape has installed Jojo tanks and has also started to deliver water using water trucks to certain informal settlements that previously had inadequate or no access to water. However, some residents said that the trucks do not deliver water every day or that they do not deliver enough water for the whole settlement when they do arrive.



Water tanks in Burundi, Cape Town, May 2020

## 7. Very few settlements have received soap or hand sanitiser from the government

Lack of access to either soap or hand sanitiser is a major challenge for residents living in Cape Town's informal settlements. Only residents from the settlements below indicated that they received soap or hand sanitiser from the metro in either week four or five:

- Allian Drive, Khayelitsha
- School Site
- Siyahlala
- Imizamo Yethu
- Shuku-skukuma

In both weeks, more than 80 percent of respondents said that they did not receive soap or hand sanitiser from the government.

Has government provided soap or hand sanitiser to you in the last 7 days?			
	Week	4	5
	Date of data submission	30 April	15 May
	● YES	18%	16%
	● NO	82%	84%
	Total number of residents	56	77



Using hand sanitiser in Emisindweni, Cape Town, May 2020

# Some **interventions** by the City of Cape Town have improved service delivery to informal settlements

Despite the serious challenges reported above, residents have highlighted the following improvements in service delivery in their settlements:

- In week five, residents from different sections in Imizamo Yethu reported that the City of Cape Town had provided them with soap or hand sanitiser. And residents from a few other settlements also reported receiving soap or sanitiser.
- Despite the challenges noted above with the delivery of water by water trucks, respondents from Burundi, UT Sobambisana, Island, and K2 commented on the improvement in their access to clean water because they are now receiving water from the water trucks or from newly installed Jojo tanks.
- Respondents from Qandu Qandu – L Section and BM Section (both Khayelitsha) noted that their toilets are either cleaned more frequently than before the lockdown, or every day.

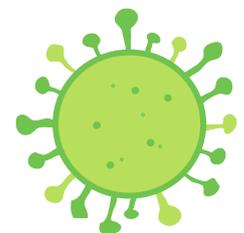


*Water provision in Azania, toilet cleaning in Marikana and delivering water from tanks in Burundi, Cape Town, May 2020*



# Recommendations: the City of Cape Town should prioritise access to clean and functional toilets, reliable and adequate water, and soap/hand sanitiser in all informal settlements

- Adequate sanitation should be provided to all residents and settlements, who currently do not have access to toilets.
- Shared and communal toilets should be cleaned at least five times a week in an effort to curb the spread of COVID-19.
- Broken and blocked toilets and sewerage pipes should be repaired.
- Every informal settlement should be provided with access to a reliable and sufficient supply of clean water.
- Soap and/or hand sanitiser should be distributed to residents of all informal settlements.
- The City of Cape Town should engage with informal settlement residents on its COVID-19 relief efforts, and should ensure that residents have reliable channels of communication to report to the City any problems around access to basic services.



International Budget Partnership South Africa <https://www.internationalbudget.org/budget-work-by-country/south-africa/>

For more information please contact: [infos@internationalbudget.org](mailto:infos@internationalbudget.org) Facebook: [internationalbudgetpartnershipsouthafrica](https://www.facebook.com/internationalbudgetpartnershipsouthafrica) Twitter: @ibp\_sa

