

# Unsafe school buildings and toilets are killing our learners

By Desiree van der Walt MP – DA Shadow Deputy Minister of Basic Education

Chairperson,

I dedicate my speech today to every learner who is still taught in an unsafe school building and to schools without proper water and sanitation facilities, after years of promises during SONA, SOPA and Budget Vote speeches.

Coding and tablets won't make a difference to the learners who have died doing something as simple as using a toilet:

- In September 2007, the six-year-old Siyamthanda Mtundu died after the walls of a toilet collapsed on him at Dalasile Primary School in the Eastern Cape;
- In March 2013, seven-year-old Lister Magongwa died after the walls of a toilet collapsed on him at Mmushi Primary School in Limpopo;
- In January 2014, five-year-old Michael Komape died after drowning in a dilapidated pit toilet at Mahlodumela Primary School in Limpopo;
- In March 2018, five-year-old Lumka Mkhethwa died after drowning in a pit toilet at Luna Primary School in the Eastern Cape.

Yet, the latest NEIMS report still paints a very bleak picture with Limpopo still having 2 524 schools with pit latrines, the Eastern Cape has 1 945 and KwaZulu-Natal has 2 607.

Why is there a difference on statistics in the NEIMS Report and the Rapid Audit Report from the Department to the President?

The Limpopo Department of Education in February 2014 announced that the initial budget of R997 million (in the 2012/13 financial year) would see the eradication of the bucket and pit toilets in 868 schools by the end of 2014.

I quote the spokesperson, Phuti Seloba "...I can put my head on the block and say that all the outstanding toilets will be delivered before the end of 2014. We just need our people to be patient with us" – well, five years and five months later, our people are still waiting!

*Toilette is egter nie die enigste infrastruktuur risiko nie.*

*Op 1 Februarie vanjaar sterf Roydon Olckers, Jandré Steyn, Marli Currie en Marnus Nagel nadat 'n loopbrug by Hoërskool Driehoek in Vanderbijlpark ineengestort het.*

*Dié tragedie moet as ernstige waarskuwing dien om inspeksie by al ons skole te doen en te verseker dat die strukturele integriteit van alle klaskamers, geboue, loopgange en -brûe aan die aanvaarbare standaard soos uiteengesit in wetgewing voldoen.*

Our solutions:

- Reverse the massive budget cut to school infrastructure: R7.2 billion was cut, but it is being returned at an unacceptable rate of drips and drabs;

- The massive bailouts paid to save Eskom, SAA and Denel because of corruption is morally questionable, whilst the lives of our children and teachers are placed at risk every day in unsafe schools;
- Provincial Departments should blacklist and stop using dodgy middle-men and Implementing Agents with poor or no track records or those involved in corruption;
- Treasury must implement a proper monitoring system on all conditional funds to Departments; and,
- Stop blocking willing donors and companies who want to contribute by building schools to enhance the delivery thereof, subject to quality controls.

In South Africa, every teacher and every learner must be able to teach and be educated at a properly built, safe school, with dignified sanitation, water, electricity, equipped with laboratories, libraries, and sports grounds.