

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA: Lack of urgency in eradication of pit toilets in public schools a human rights violation
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The Public Servants Association (PSA), as representative Union of thousands of education-sector employees, is concerned about the lack of urgency by the Department of Basic Education to eradicate pit toilets at rural public schools. Pit toilets at schools are a violation of the right to access quality education as well as to the human right to dignity, safety, and the right to life.

The minimum norms and standards published in 2013, stated that all schools had to be provided with proper sanitation by 2016. The Minister of Basic Education postponed and committed that pit toilets would be eradicated by the end of 2022. The Minister, however, recently reported that there are still more schools that use pit latrines. It cannot be condoned that government shift its targets to address a glaring human rights violation.

In the wake of Human Rights Day, thousands of learners at rural schools continue to suffer and experience hardship in using such sanitation facilities. The Department is clearly not concerned about the safety of learners, educators, and support staff at schools. Urgent interventions are required to improve school infrastructure in support of a conducive teaching and learning environment. The PSA cannot forget Michael Komape, a pupil at Mahlodumela Primary in Limpopo, who fell into a pit toilet and lost his life. Similar tragedies took place at a primary school in Glen Gray in Eastern Cape.

The PSA demands that the Department prioritises budget allocation towards the urgent eradication of pit latrines by end of 2023. The Department should further procure temporary sanitation facilities whilst resolving the matter. Relevant stakeholders such as unions, NGOs, and communities must hold the Department accountable for the violation of human rights and the Constitution of the country.

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