



**MEDIA RELEASE**                                  **PSA outraged by Limpopo Department of Education's failure to provide toilets to Rivubye High School**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is outraged by the continued failure by the Limpopo Department of Education's failure to address the critical matter of sanitation at schools, leaving most learners and educators to use dangerous pit toilets.

The Department undertook to eliminate pit toilets in schools by 2023 after continually shifting of timeline but seems like another monumental failure. Rivubye High School in Valedisa Village, in the Vhembe district is one of many schools where more than 800 learners are still using pit toilets ten years after a learner in Limpopo died after falling into a pit toilet. Learners are forced to use these structures, which are in a filthy, unsanitary state. Some toilets do not have doors and have damaged roofs. There are no facilities for wash hands, thus increasing health risks. Educators also do not have sufficient ablution facilities.

The repulsive, unhygienic state of current facilities pose health risks to learners and educators and is a violation of their rights and human dignity. The Department is not complying with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, which places a legal burden on the employer to provide a workplace that is safe and without health risks to employees. The Department adopted the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for public school infrastructure, which banned pit toilets in schools in 2013. The undertaking by the Department to ensure that schools are provided with water tanks and proper toilets by June 2023 has not materialised, leaving learners - mostly in rural areas – no option but to use dangerous pit toilets.

The Department's excuse that Rivubye High School was omitted from the list of schools earmarked to receive new toilets, demonstrates its attitude towards the most vulnerable. In addition, other schools are yet to be provided with proper toilets. These include Dia Flora, Vlakplaats, Mamokgatsane, Thabampshe, Mahlolaneng, Mahwibitswane, Mohlaletse, Vergelegen "C" and "B", Strykraal "A" and "B", Ga-Maesela, Ga-Nchabeleng, Phahlamanoge, Ribacross, Madiseng, Tubatse Township, Mahubahuba, Indie Ga-Maisela, Mahlabaphooko, Malomanye, Pelangwe Village, Leeuwfontein, and Dichoeung. In addition, many schools do not have cleaning staff or cleaning materials to ensure the cleaning of pit toilets.

The PSA urges the MEC of the Department to prioritise Rivubye High School and other affected schools to ensure the provision of proper toilets. The MEC is reminded that even the courts found the Department wanting and directed it eradicate pit toilets in schools, as this is a right for learners and educators to operate in a conducive and healthy environment. The Department should stop with its promises and new dates and urgently address this critical matter. In addition, the Department should urgently address the issue of cleaners for schools, rather than relying on EPWP workers, as most schools have not been provided with such support.

**END**

