



**Upgrading sanitation:**  
an evaluation of school and community  
initiatives

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Colloquium on Improving the Health of  
School Age Children in an Era of HIV/AIDS

# Research team



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HSRC Water Research Team

# **Importance of school sanitation**

- **Health of learners is critically important as a large proportion of the population**
- **A step forward in the good health practices of the next generation**
- **Better attendance at school especially by teenage girls who find there is no special provision**
- **Disease control of parasite infections**
- **Schools should be the exemplar of best practices in health and hygiene; learners will expect sanitation at least at the level of the school**



# Problems in bringing change

- Educationalists argue that good results can be achieved even with poor resources
- Preoccupation with school conditions is introspective and narrow
- Can/should schools operate as a model in terms of service provision?
- Lack of integrated development: who is ultimately responsible both for school and community sanitation?
- Department of Education, Public Works Department, District Municipalities, DWAF?



# International comparisons

- Smelly, dirty, school toilets are a problem across Europe and new legislation is needed to improve standards
- The facilities are unattractive and unhygienic
- They are a magnet for bullies
- Can increase the risk of constipation and incontinence
- Acceptable standards of hygiene being proposed such as availability of soap, towels, washing facilities, toilet paper and adequate privacy
- Privacy: working door completely closing off view of user



## **Difficulties with curriculum**

- Health and hygiene topics do not seem to feature in the current curriculum
- No posters evident in the school rooms with one exception in staff common room
- Past curriculae did have material on water and health but they have fallen away
- Curriculum now set out by teachers who work within broad guidelines and with texts
- Whether health and water is discussed or taught depends on the particular school, the teacher, and the teaching materials available
- It all depends on local conditions



# Cost of school sanitation

- "Outrageous" cost of implementation
- Education Department suggests cost of R15 000 per toilet in rural schools.
- Sanitation experts argue that R2000 should be adequate
- Slow rate at which adequate toilet facilities are being built at South Africa's rural schools
- Specific budget for toilets not always spent?



# School culture

- Generally poor learning conditions: classrooms without ceilings, no supportive facilities, storage of books, etc
- Very poor time-keeping by learners and teachers
- Extended 'breaks'
- Constant movement in and out of schools
- Big investment by parents; often poor results
- Evidence of bullying, robbing of young children
- Sexual abuse?





# Problems in design

- Toilets appear as structures similar to schools but not always appropriate
- High cost but low effectiveness; some toilet seats, some ventilation; but mostly absent
- Urinals which subside, get blocked and gather stinking pools of urine
- No handwashing facilities
- Very unattractive and not always used particularly by girls
- Local materials and labour apparently not used
- Experimentation with urinary diversion toilets



# Previous study (Mqadi)

- Toilets were in a bad state, and were breeding places for germs. The conditions of the toilets allocated to the teachers were better.
- Toilets were situated in the learners' space and teachers never frequented these areas.
- Toilets were vandalised and there were no privacy for girl students. There were faeces and vulgar graffiti on the walls.
- Many learners preferred not to use the toilets unless absolutely necessary. They feared contamination from the unhygienic conditions and the unsafe environment of the toilets.
- Toilets were used for unauthorised social purposes (bullying, smoking, avoiding lessons, dealing with drugs)



# Mqadi 2

- Vandalism occurred in toilets
- The roles and responsibilities were unclear (role of learners, caretakers/ factotums, teachers,)
- Parental involvement around toilet, hygiene and concomitant problems was low.
- Hand washing and hygiene, although it was known, was not practised.
- Water is usually available but there were few taps and poor drainage
- The perception prevailed that toilets are not important to the learning environment. The priorities included obvious essentials such as textbooks, libraries, uniforms, etc.



# Problems in use

- No supervision/inspection by head or teachers evident
- No cleaning staff employed
- Does not seem to be roster of children responsible
- But no lavatory paper
- No handwashing in evidence
- Every kind of material lying in toilets: planks, cardboard, tinfoil, old newspapers
- Abusive attitude from learners: burning plastic pedestals



# Criteria for assessment

- Pit built as per criteria
- Privacy (door/curtain/screen)
- Cover on hole/ water in water seal
- Cover on pedestal in place
- No excreta in pan/ floor/ walls
- No pools of urine around pedestal
- Water & soap/ substitute in or near latrine, for handwashing (check)
- All learners using facility (probe)
- No human excreta around the latrine
- No openings for flies to enter
- Ventilation with flue cover
- No solid waste/rubbish in latrine



# Results

Annandale	Annandale CP	83
Vulindlela	Gobindlow H	67
Emnambiti	Dival CP	67
	Phindokuhle H	67
Shikishela	Nkosana H	67
Hluhluwe	Ezifundeni H	67
Ezingeni	Hlakaniphani H	67
Ntabaskop	Ntabaskop P	67
	Mdeni P	58
KwaNyuswa	Zuzicebo H	50
KwaFodo	Cekeza H	50
	KwaMadlala CP	50
Njomelwane	Njomelwane CP	50
Bhekeshowe	Maqhwakazi P	50
Emayelisweni	Khanyisa H	50
Emnywaneni	Emnywaneni P	50
Nquthu 3	Masotsheni CP	42
KwaNzimakwe	Gabhamanzi P	25
	Taylors P	25
Matshamhlophe	Bhobhobho CP	25
Thaleni	Siyabathwa H	17
Isulabasha	Ngali H	8
Kromellenboog	Laanggewatch P	8



# Gabhamanzi Primary School

- Located in Kwafodo, Ugu DM
- 403 learners enrolled in the school (222 boys and 181 girls)
- 3 toilets
- Only one of these is currently in use
- Teachers share this one toilet with students



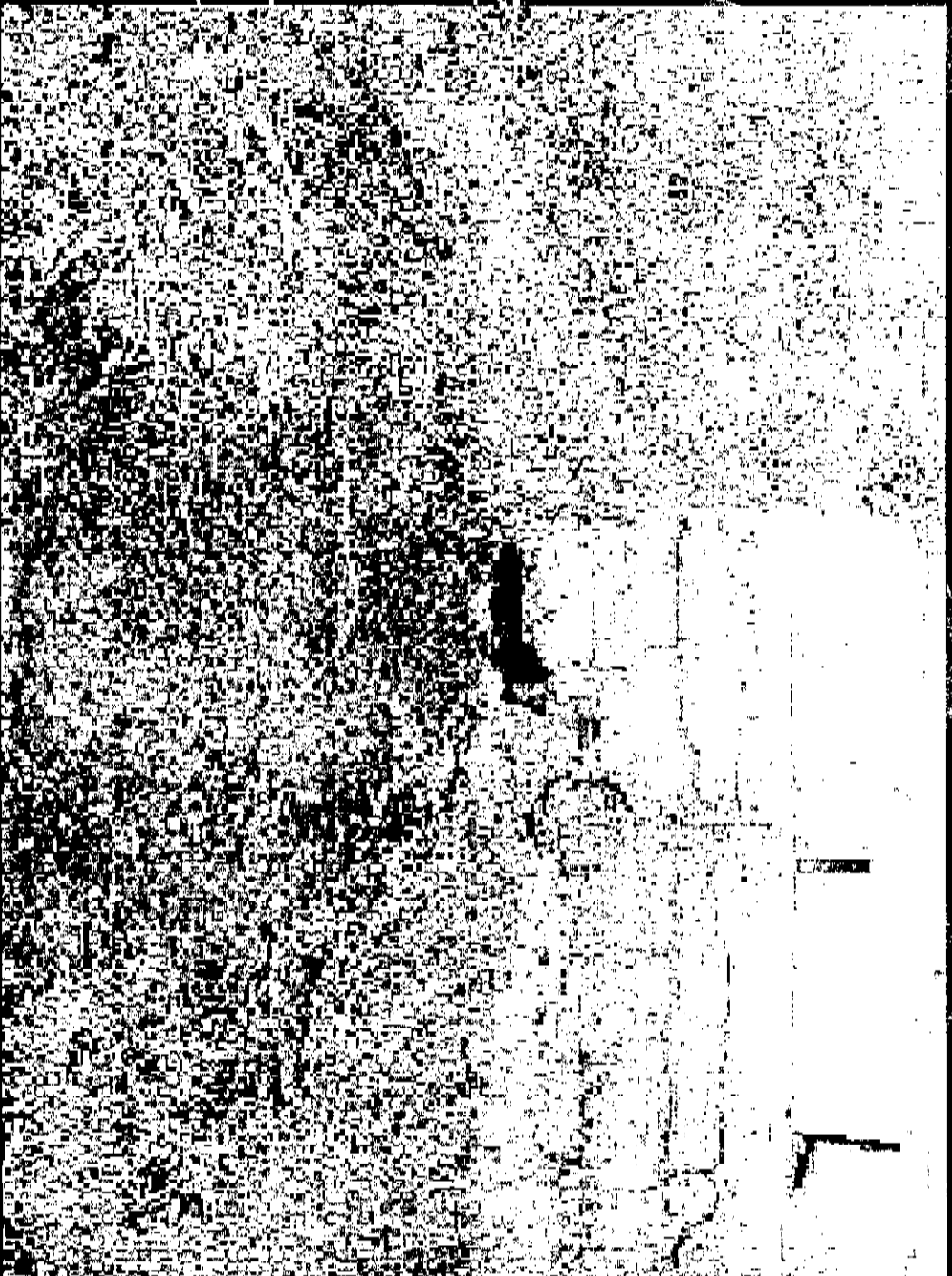


The latrines at Gabhamanzi Primary School



- Located approximately 6 metres from classrooms
- Two cubicles have doors but privacy is still not afforded by these. The door has fallen off another cubicle
- The floor has collapsed in one latrine and is highly unsafe
- No covers or toilet seats
- No urinals
- No handwashing facilities
- Excreta leaking out of the construction into the schoolyard





Excreta leaking out of the toilet at Gabhamanzi Primary School

# Initiatives

- The Headmistress has made repeated efforts to try to improve the unsanitary conditions of the school's toilets but has received little help from both the DM and the Department of Education.
- There is currently no clean drinking water in the school and the headmistress complained that it cannot afford the cost of a connection.



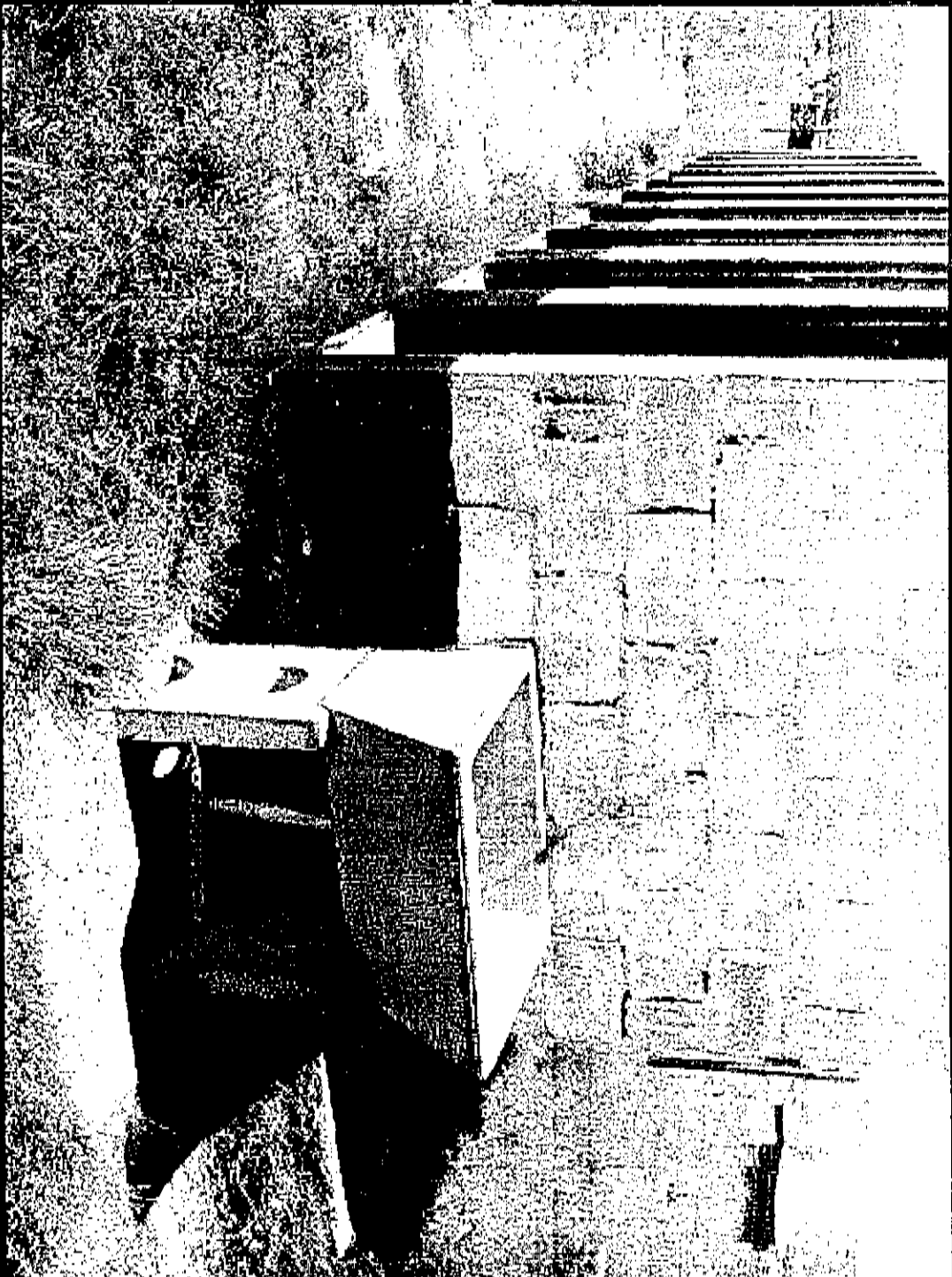
# Engqondweni High School

- Located in Dival, uThukela DM
- 544 learners enrolled in the school (271 boys and 273 girls)
- 18 teachers (10 women and 8 men)
- 20 toilets (10 for boys and 10 for girls)
- Teachers share one toilet from each set with the students



- Located approximately 7 metres from classrooms
- Each cubicle with secure door ensuring privacy
- Clean with no excreta or urine around the latrines
- Most seats covered
- Ventilation with flue cover
- Handwashing facilities BUT no running water is currently available in the school





Latrines at Engqondweni High School. The Handwashing facilities are in the foreground.

# Initiatives

- Female teachers have contributed money to recharge the pre-paid card in order for students to have clean drinking water from a standpipe outside of the school gates
- Teachers developed the idea for all students to collect money for toilet paper. Only girls have shown enthusiasm for this so far



# Some conclusions

- Higher priority needs to be given
- School and community sanitation needs to be linked
- Final responsibility needs to be assigned for school sanitation
- Much improved health and hygiene education needed
- Curriculum needs re-examination
- Materials must be available in classrooms
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