



Bucket system	888	0.3%
No toilet	4866	1.8%
Total number of households	269 130	100%

Source: Page 149 of the Draft Revised 2026/27 Integrated Development Plan

The Metro does not indicate how many of its flush toilets are communal facilities in informal settlements. Communal ablution facilities — which generally include a basin with a tap and a standpipe and are provided at a ratio of one toilet per ten households — are the key intervention for sanitation access in the Metro's informal settlements, with Ventilated Improved Pit toilets provided in rural and peri-urban areas.²

While the Metro's backlog data is outdated — the statistics cited are from 2022 — it nonetheless acknowledges that there is a significant sanitation backlog. Crucially, access to a communal flush toilet does not equate to access to a toilet that is in working order.

Evidence collected by the Asivikelane Initiative since 2020 shows that these facilities are frequently broken, blocked, and dirty. A key reason is that far too many households share a single toilet, well above the Metro's own target of ten households per toilet. Reported faults often go unrepaired for extended periods, leaving residents without safe, hygienic, or dignified sanitation. The absence of bins near these facilities further undermines residents' ability to dispose of sanitary and other waste with dignity and contributes to blocked toilets.

In December 2025, Asivikelane partner Positive Impact Defined surveyed residents across five informal settlements in Buffalo City about their sanitation experiences. 98% relied on communal flush toilets. When asked what deterred them from using these facilities, 59% cited dirty toilets, 33% reported blockages, 31% flagged broken or damaged toilets, and 27% felt unsafe.³ Three-quarters of residents specifically mentioned that they felt unsafe using these toilets at nights.

Regarding access to water, the Metro — again relying on 2022 data — indicates that 6% of households receive water below what the Metro refers to as RDP level which is access to a tap more than 200m from their dwelling (5%) or no access to formal piped water (1%).

Table 2: Water provision in Buffalo City

Water type	Number of households	% of total households
Piped water inside dwelling	139701	52%
Piped water inside yard	68410	25%
Communal piped water less than 200m from dwelling (at RDP Level)	44798	17%
Communal piped water more than 200m from dwelling (below RDP Level)	14108	5%
No formal piped water	2112	1%
Total number of households	269129	

Source: Page 153 of the draft revised IDP 2026/27

2. Cutting the budget allocation for informal settlement sanitation: What next?

² Page 146 of the draft revised 2026/27 IDP:

³ Data and analysis available on request.



As noted above, the Metro targets one toilet per ten households — yet evidence collected by the Asivikelane Initiative consistently shows this ratio is exceeded in practice.

Asivikelane has consistently advocated for increased allocations to the 'Sanitation Facilities in Informal Settlements' project to help the Metro meet its own targets. Despite incremental budget increases in prior years, this project has been omitted from the 2026/27 capital budget — after an allocation of R10.4 million in its adjusted 2025/26 budget (see Table 3). The budget does not include any project which can be considered a replacement.

This is concerning, as the Metro's own Draft 2026/27 IDP acknowledges that informal settlements are growing and continues to identify communal facilities as the key sanitation intervention — yet has made no provision to fund them.⁴

Table 3: Sanitation Facilities in Informal Settlements

Project Description [R']	2024/25 audited outcome	2025/26 adjusted budget	2026/27 draft budget	2027/28 Draft Budget	2028/22 Draft Budget	% decrease from 2025/26 adjusted to 2026/27 draft
Sanitation Facilities in informal settlements	9 761 053	10 448 000	0	0	0	100%

Source: Page 147 of the draft 2026/27 MTREF: Annexure Y: A1 Consolidated Schedule⁵

Asivikelane therefore urges the Metro to:

- Confirm whether the project has been phased out, and if so, why?
- Indicate which project, if any, will now provide new toilets in informal settlements.
- Indicate what type of toilets will be provided going forward, and whether communal flush toilets will continue to be the primary intervention.

3. Informal settlements water projects reduced

The Metro aims to provide communal standpipes within 200m of all households — the RDP standard for water access. Despite 6% of households still receiving water below this standard, the Metro has cut the total allocation for water projects in informal settlements by 22.5%.

Table 4: Informal settlement water projects

Water department programme [R']	Adjusted Budget 2025/26	Draft Budget 2026/27	Draft Budget 2027/28	Draft Budget 2028/29	% increase/ decrease from adjusted budget 2025/26 to draft 2026/27 budget.
Water mains- informal settlements inland	7 313 583	5 656 791	10 656 791	11 722 470	-22.7%
Water supply - informal settlements coastal	8 358 380	5 268 785	10 268 785	11 295 664	-37.0%

⁴ Page 146 of the draft revised 2026/27 IDP

⁵ All 2026/27 draft budget documents available for download from: <https://www.buffalocity.gov.za/folder.php?id=D5E4A55>



5. Fault reporting in informal settlements

The Metro should set aside funds to create an accessible and transparent fault reporting system for the whole city, and should ensure that it works for informal settlement residents. The current system is inadequate — residents rely on ward councillors to report faults, which can delay repairs, limits who gets helped, and offers no way to track progress. Broken taps and toilets left unrepaired mean residents go without water and sanitation.

Asivikelane believes that improving fault reporting systems across the city would benefit all residents while helping address the particularly severe service interruptions experienced in informal settlements.

6. Waste removal services in informal settlements

There is no specific allocation for waste removal services in informal settlements in the Metro's operating budget, nor a specific allocation for waste containers in informal settlements. Bins near communal toilets are essential — without them, residents have nowhere to dispose of sanitary waste and nappies, leading to blocked toilets and added pressure on the repairs and maintenance budget. This gap falls hardest on women and girls. The Metro must allocate funding for both continuous waste removal and bins near communal toilets in these areas.