

Children's access to water, sanitation and electricity

Annie Leatt and Lizette Berry (Children's Institute)

Section 27 (1) (b) of the South African Constitution provides that "everyone has the right to have access to ... sufficient ... water". Article 24 (1) (c) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that States Parties should "recognise the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health ... through the provision of clean drinking-water".

THE NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF CHILDREN LIVING IN HOUSEHOLDS WITH BASIC SANITATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Good sanitation is essential for safe and healthy childhoods. There are a number of negative consequences for children and youth who are not able to access proper toilets. It is very difficult to maintain good hygiene without water and toilets, and children are exposed to worms and bacterial infection which compromise nutrition. Using public toilets and open bush can be dangerous because of crime and a lack of adequate sanitation undermines human dignity. The use of buckets and open *veldt* (fields) is also likely to have consequences for water quality in the area, and can lead to the spread of disease. In South Africa there are large numbers of under-18-year-olds without access to basic sanitation. In 2005, just over half (54%) of South Africa's children had access to adequate toilet facilities, while the other 8.4 million were using inadequate facilities – including unventi-

lated pit toilets, the bucket system or open fields.

Provincial disparities are also evident with regards to children's access to basic sanitation. In the Eastern Cape province, just over one-third (36%) of children had access to basic sanitation in 2005, whereas in Limpopo province less than one-quarter (24%) of children were accessing adequate sanitation facilities in that year. Inadequate sanitation is also linked to informal and traditional housing.

According to an analysis of the *General Household Survey 2005*, a large number of African children – 8.29 million children – are using inadequate sanitation facilities. This constitutes more than half (55%) of all African children living in South Africa, and 99% of all children having to use inadequate sanitation facilities. (For more details about this indicator refer to page 85.)

TABLE 16: The number and proportion of children living in households with basic sanitation in South Africa in 2004 and 2005

Province	2004		2005	
	Children with access to basic sanitation		Children with access to basic sanitation	
	Number	%	Number	%
Eastern Cape	869,424	27	1,129,150	36
Free State	644,280	61	728,611	65
Gauteng	2,357,434	89	2,328,739	88
KwaZulu-Natal	1,555,960	41	1,799,918	47
Limpopo	755,390	29	628,436	24
Mpumalanga	570,765	44	584,581	43
Northern Cape	268,431	80	280,446	83
North West	783,443	53	736,782	50
Western Cape	1,462,033	94	1,461,549	93
South Africa	9,267,160	51	9,678,213	54

Sources: Statistics South Africa (2005; 2006) *General Household Survey 2004. General Household Survey 2005*. Pretoria, Cape Town: Statistics South Africa. Analysis by Debbie Budlender, Centre for Actuarial Research, UCT.

SOURCES

- *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Act 108 of 1996.*
- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (1989) *Convention on the Rights of the Child, United Nations General Assembly Resolution 44/25*. Geneva: United Nations.
- Statistics South Africa (2005) *General Household Survey 2004*. Pretoria, Cape Town: Statistics South Africa.
- Statistics South Africa (2006) *General Household Survey 2005*. Pretoria, Cape Town: Statistics South Africa.

THE NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF CHILDREN WITH ACCESS TO DRINKING WATER ON SITE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Across South Africa in 2005, there were some 7.5 million children whose families had to rely on unsafe or distant sources of drinking water. They made up 42% of all children in South Africa. There is a significant racial bias in the distribution of drinking water as 99% of children without access to drinking water on site were African.

Some areas have performed well in delivering safe drinking water to children. Ninety percent or more of the child populations in the provinces of Free State, Gauteng, Northern Cape and Western Cape were able to access drinking water on site. In contrast, more than half of the children in some other provinces were exposed to poor

drinking water sources.

The Eastern Cape province was home to over two million children (68%) living under such circumstances in 2005. In the Limpopo province, more than 1.7 million children (68%) were living without drinking water on site, and over two million children (53%) in KwaZulu-Natal were living in similar conditions. This means that these children are exposed to health risks, or may be responsible for fetching and carrying drinking water to their homes. Lack of access to adequate water is also closely related to poor sanitation and hygiene. (For more details about this indicator refer to page 85.)

TABLE 17: The number and proportion of children with access to drinking water on site in South Africa in 2005

Province	2005	
	Number	%
Eastern Cape	990,924	32
Free State	1,005,294	90
Gauteng	2,390,761	90
KwaZulu-Natal	1,806,640	47
Limpopo	848,007	32
Mpumalanga	873,587	65
North West	900,595	62
Northern Cape	306,612	91
Western Cape	1,457,465	93
South Africa	10,579,885	58

Source: Statistics South Africa (2006) *General Household Survey 2005*. Pretoria, Cape Town: Statistics South Africa. Analysis by Debbie Budlender, Centre for Actuarial Research, UCT.

THE NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF CHILDREN LIVING IN HOUSEHOLDS WITH AN ELECTRICITY CONNECTION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Access to electricity in the physical structure of a house is important for a range of reasons. Where there is no electricity, families use fuels for heating and cooking. These pose health hazards, for example, wood or dung fires can result in chest infections, and burns due to open fires are a common cause of injury and death. Where families do not have access to fridges, they are also less likely to be able to keep food fresh.

There are a number of time-use consequences to not having electricity. It is usually women and children who collect wood and other fuels, and more effort is required in cooking and heating with these fuels. Also, the lack of adequate electric lighting is a contributing factor in children not being able to study after dark.

In June 2005, 76% of children in South Africa lived in households that were connected to electricity. Across most of the provinces, more than 60% of the respective child populations have access to electricity. There are some provinces, however, where large numbers of children still do not have access to electricity in their homes. In the KwaZulu-Natal province, 1.5 million children (40%) do not have electricity connections on site. Another 1.2 million children (38%) in the Eastern Cape province are in the same situation.

Since most electricity connections operate on a pre-paid meter system and require payment, access to electricity in the physical structure by no means guarantees continuous use of electricity in the household. (For more details about this indicator refer to page 85.)

TABLE 18: The number and proportion of children living in households with an electricity connection in South Africa in 2004 and 2005

Province	2004		2005	
	Connected		Connected	
	Number	%	Number	%
Eastern Cape	1,688,944	53	1,931,602	62
Free State	919,071	86	1,010,785	91
Gauteng	2,392,998	91	2,232,584	84
KwaZulu-Natal	2,364,591	62	2,312,375	60
Limpopo	2,054,565	79	2,125,848	81
Mpumalanga	1,092,454	84	1,124,532	83
Northern Cape	297,029	88	304,182	90
North West	1,374,988	92	1,279,505	88
Western Cape	1,450,041	93	1,480,377	94
South Africa	13,634,683	76	13,801,788	76

Sources: Statistics South Africa (2005; 2006) *General Household Survey 2004*. *General Household Survey 2005*. Pretoria, Cape Town: Statistics South Africa. Analysis by Debbie Budlender, Centre for Actuarial Research, UCT.