



## **URGENT CALL FOR ACCOUNTABILITY AND IMMEDIATE INTERVENTION IN EASTERN CAPE SCHOOLS**

As Equal Education, we are extremely disappointed and deeply concerned that, after five weeks, teaching and learning have still not resumed at some schools in the Eastern Cape, including Luzuko Primary School.

The ongoing disruption follows legitimate concerns raised by parents and communities regarding unsafe school infrastructure. Luzuko Primary is a school made up of only prefabricated material, and this material has been there since 1999; these concerns cannot be dismissed or treated as an inconvenience. Educators have reportedly sustained injuries on multiple occasions as a result of unsafe conditions at the school. Parents have therefore been rightfully demanding that the Eastern Cape Department of Education address the underlying school infrastructure concerns and ensure that learners and educators can return to a safe learning environment.

We are now approaching the end of the third term, yet learners at affected schools have lost approximately four weeks of teaching and learning. Despite the significant amount of learning time that has already been lost, there remains no clear and publicly communicated catch-up plan from the Department, nor sufficient evidence of urgent interventions to ensure that lost learning time is recovered.

This situation cannot be allowed to continue as business as usual.

The Eastern Cape remains one of the country's most disadvantaged provinces, and learners in the province already face significant barriers to accessing quality education. The continued disruption of teaching and learning further deepens existing inequalities and places the educational futures of thousands of learners at risk.

The Department of Education must be held accountable for ensuring that learners' constitutional right to basic education is protected. Accountability cannot be avoided by shifting responsibility or allowing urgent matters to remain unresolved. Where schools are unsafe, the Eastern Cape Department of Education has a responsibility to respond urgently, transparently and effectively.

The ECDoE has repeatedly provided proposed timelines that were not constructive and dates for the delayed implementation of the infrastructure project. However, these timelines have been rejected by parents because they do not adequately respond to the urgency of the situation. Learners have already lost valuable teaching and learning time, while educators and learners continue to face the consequences of unsafe school infrastructure.

We note that the Disability Economic Empowerment Trust (DEET) has been appointed to deliver temporary classroom structures at Luzuko Primary School. While this is an important

intervention, parents are not making unreasonable demands. They are simply calling for the process to be fast-tracked so that learners can return to a safe and functional learning environment as soon as possible. This urgency must also extend to other schools across the province that are facing similar infrastructure challenges.

On Monday, 17 August, parents with the assistance of Equal Education had to mobilise themselves to receive feedback directly from officials of the ECDoE at Bundy Park. It is unacceptable that parents and communities must repeatedly organise and mobilise themselves with their own resources simply to obtain basic information about the education and safety of their children.

We therefore call on the Eastern Cape Department of Education to provide **clear, immediate and transparent information** on:

1. The clear steps being taken to address the infrastructure concerns at Luzuko Primary School and other affected schools;
2. The specific timeline for the safe resumption of teaching and learning;
3. The measures being implemented to protect learners and educators from unsafe infrastructure;
4. A clear and time-bound catch-up plan to recover the teaching and learning time already lost; and
5. The mechanisms that will be used to monitor and ensure that these commitments are implemented.

Parents and communities have demonstrated extraordinary patience throughout this process. They have repeatedly raised their concerns and have waited for meaningful intervention from the Department. They now deserve clear answers, concrete timelines and urgent action.

The Department cannot expect learners and parents to continue bearing the consequences of administrative delays and inadequate interventions. **Five weeks without teaching and learning is five weeks of learners' futures being compromised.**

As Equal Education, we call on the Eastern Cape Department of Education to treat this matter with the urgency it deserves and to account publicly to the learners, educators, parents and communities affected.

**The right to education cannot be postponed. Learners cannot afford another day of inaction.**

**#SofundaSonke #FixOurSchools #NoLearnerMustBeLeftBehind.**

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