

Are new sanitation technologies the key to improving access to dignified sanitation for South Africans?

In 2021 we tested alternative sanitation technologies within households in the Mzinyathi community. A high-tech, incineration sanitation system was installed at one of the households. This household rejoiced in having the ease, convenience, and comfort of an incineration toilet. Once the testing was completed, one of the household members said: “Life is so difficult without a toilet, it's like I am living in the previous disadvantaged times.” The household was very interested in purchasing an incineration toilet despite the relatively high price. However, at this stage this technology is not available for purchase in South Africa.

Why are technology developers reluctant to enter the South African landscape?

From the onset of this testing campaign the testing team have attempted to ascertain the source of this reluctance and how we can streamline the uptake of alternative sanitation technologies in South African communities. To understand this reluctance we have looked at the barriers faced by technology developers. A key barrier is being able to meet and comply with the required ISO/SANS 30500 standards. Various technologies were tested over a period of time and each assessed against the required standards. From the technologies tested, only one technology was able to meet key ISO standards. We have identified that to increase the uptake of sanitation technologies in South Africa, the standard needs to be adapted to suit our local context and the level of complexity of the technology.