agency news

The Delft School Sanitation and Hygiene Education Framework for Action

Programmes in schools for water, sanitation and hygiene education have developed rapidly. To reflect this growing body of experience, a symposium entitled 'School Sanitation and Hygiene Education; The Way Forward: Construction is not enough' was held from 8–10 June 2004 in the city of Delft, the Netherlands. Leaders and representatives from all sectors – governments, NGOs, research and multilateral organizations – from 20 countries came together for the SSHE symposium. They reviewed experiences and identified principles and strategies for further action that can help ensure effective SSHE. One focus of the work was how to scale up SSHE while retaining quality.

The SSHE field has grown from uncoordinated efforts to build toilets and waterpoints in schools before the 1990s, and initial studies and workshops involving WHO and IRC in the early 1990s, to pilot SSHE programmes in six countries in 1999–2003 with UNICEF and IRC. At Delft in June 2004, Ms Agnes van Ardenne, Minister of Development Cooperation, Government of the Netherlands, promised to increase support of SSHE programmes to $2 million for 2004–6.

She announced: 'The targets for school sanitation and hygiene education are clearly set out in Vision 21, the Water for People document, presented and endorsed at the 2nd World Water Forum held in the Hague in 2000. By 2015, 80 per cent of all primary school children will be educated about hygiene, and all schools will be equipped with toilets and hand-washing facilities. All boys and girls must have access to basic education. Maternal and child mortality must be drastically reduced. School sanitation and hygiene education greatly contribute to all these goals – and so also to poverty reduction. Let that message be clear this December in Dakar, when the Collaborative Council meets in preparation for the 13th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.'

Water reaches the summits in 2005

Water Decade 2005–2015. Water will be taking centre stage at major international meetings in 2005. Beginning on World Water Day, 22 March 2005, will be the International Decade for Action, 'Water for Life', 2005 to 2015. This will be the second international decade on water-related issues under the auspices of the United Nations, following the first international decade on Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation 1981–1990. The Decade 'Water for Life' will have a strong focus on implementing water-related programmes and projects, while striving to ensure in particular the participation and involvement of women in water-related development efforts, and the furtherance of co-operation at all levels, to help achieve internationally agreed water-related goals such as those contained in Agenda 21 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

13th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. In addition, water and sanitation will be prominent at the thirteenth session of the UN's Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-13), scheduled for 11–22 April 2005, New York. CSD-13 is the policy session in the first two-year 'Implementation Cycle' of the CSD (seven such cycles are planned lasting from 2004 to 2017; only the first cycle in 2004–5 takes water and sanitation as its theme). CSD-13 will build upon the outcome of CSD-12 – the review session of the cycle – and will take policy decisions on practical measures to implement commitments in water, sanitation and human settlements as contained in Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, as well as the Millennium Declaration.

About CSD. The CSD originated from the Earth Summit (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The assembled heads of state: signed the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity; endorsed the Rio Declaration and the Forest Principles; and adopted Agenda 21, a 300-page plan for achieving sustainable development in the 21st century. The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was created in December 1992 to ensure effective follow-up of the Earth Summit agreements at the local, national, regional and international levels.

A five-year review of Earth Summit progress took place in 1997 and adopted the 'Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21', followed in 2002 by a ten-year review by the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg. Over 22 000 people attended the Summit, including 100 heads of state and government. The Summit reiterated the initial mandate and functions of the CSD as a high level forum on sustainable development and decided to enhance its role so that it can respond to the new demands emerging from the WSSD Plan of Implementation.

At the 11th Session of the CSD (CSD-11), held in 2003, decisions were made on the Commission's future programme and organization of work. It was agreed that the CSD's multi-year programme of work beyond 2003 would be organized on the basis of seven two-year cycles, with each cycle focusing on selected thematic clusters of issues. The first theme in 2004–5 would be water, sanitation and habitations.

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Also on the agenda for 2005 is a UN stocktake on the achievement of the MDGs scheduled for September and October 2005.

Community-led total sanitation approach in Indonesia

The Water and Sanitation Programme–East Asia and the Pacific and the Government of Indonesia hosted a work-

shop in Jakarta on 15 September 2004 to consider scaling up access to sanitation through the Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach. In the workshop, Dr Kamal Kar presented 'Subsidy or self-respect? Community-led total sanitation: community empowerment in the total sanitation movement in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Cambodia'. Government agencies expressed interest in testing the approach in Indonesia. Follow-ups of the workshop included development of a field trial on this approach in the 'Water and sanitation for low-income communities' project in Indonesia, and a planned study visit by a government and NGO team from Indonesia to countries that have applied the CLTS approach on a large-scale.

The CLTS is a new approach originating from Bangladesh for improving environmental sanitation by involving local communities in the analysis of risk of open defecation and building toilets without external subsidies. The success of agency projects in constructing latrines and toilets in Bangladesh has historically been measured in the number of latrines constructed, rather than the extent of open defecation, which often remains at the same level. The community-led effort had a huge impact, and open defecation was completely eliminated in more than 400 villages in Bangladesh, and is now being adopted elsewhere in Asia and in Africa.

The author argues that this approach has three major policy implications for the provision of services and infrastructure. Financial subsidies should be used to facilitate community understanding of open defecation and to train the community, rather than to invest in material and infrastructure. Agencies must be flexible in working with communities to allow the latter to take the lead in addressing problems. Success must be measured on the basis of the final impact (elimination of open defecation) rather than the final output (construction of toilets). This experience demonstrates the significant impact that a simple facilitative process can have on age-old practices.

For more information on CLTS, read Kar, Kamal (2003) 'Subsidy or self-respect? Participatory total community sanitation in Bangladesh', IDS Working Paper No. 184.

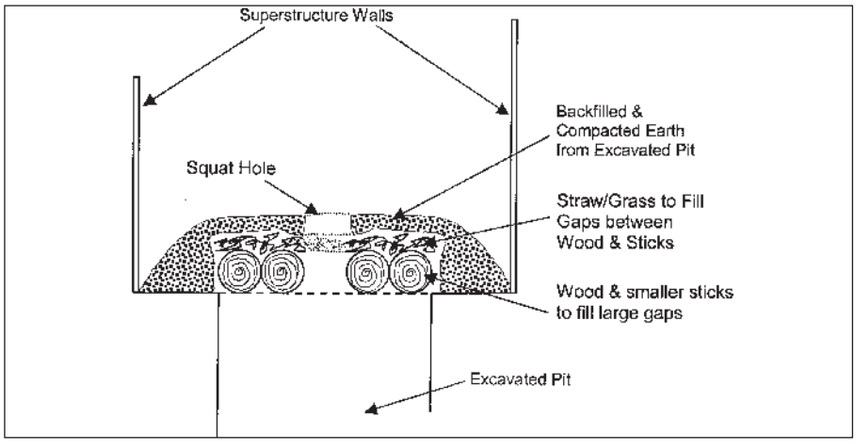

Figure 1. The Oxfam pilot design for a latrine

Oxfam builds traditional pit latrines in Angola

Traditional pit latrines are often utilized in first-phase emergencies due to their speed of construction, and the availability of local materials. As communities become settled, a move towards the use of improved latrine models is usually seen. Oxfam GB's public health programme in Angola is successfully going 'back to basics', however, helping to build traditional pit latrines in place of improved concrete slab latrines.

After the end of the conflict in Angola in 2002, Oxfam GB began to shift its work from displacement camps to returnee communities. At first the programme proposed to build one concrete slab latrine per 20 people, which is the minimum normally recommended, but when it became clear that local people were not prepared to maintain communal latrines, a way had to be found to provide a latrine for every household.

After a community consultation on sanitation it was decided that the communities would construct their own traditional family latrines using locally available materials, and with toolkits and training provided by Oxfam. Resources, toolkits, and know-how would remain in the community after Oxfam left, and would be available to families who are yet to return to the community.

The toolkits, which consisted of a shovel, a pickaxe, a metal bucket, a hoe, a machete, an axe and 5m of rope, were needed to dig the pit, and construct the squatting platform and the superstructure. A system of rotation of toolkits was agreed and implemented, with each kit being shared between 10–15 households. Rotating the kits was the responsibility of a member of the GAS committee (community water and sanitation committee). Once all the households have finished construction, the majority of the toolkits are returned to Oxfam for use in a new community.

Following the sensitization and mobilization of the communities, the Oxfam team – together with the GAS and other community members – construct a pilot latrine to demonstrate the basic principles. The design varies very little from known designs for simple traditional pit latrines, consisting of a pit, a wooden platform covered with soil, and a grass superstructure (see Figure 1). The areas in which Oxfam insists on consistency are:

- The depth of the pit should be close to 3m to ensure longevity. The teams also recommend a size of 1m × 1m to keep the wood needed for the platform to a minimum.
- The number (four) and size of pieces of wood to span the pit, to ensure the stability of the squatting platform.
- The platform should be raised to prevent damage from surface water.

Households wishing to build a latrine collect wood from the surrounding area and construct the slab as shown in Figure 1. The superstructure is then constructed from grass thatch. As families are becoming more settled, and as the dry season allows, people are starting to make adobe blocks for their houses and are planning to make additional blocks for the latrines, which will be more durable than grass thatch.

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