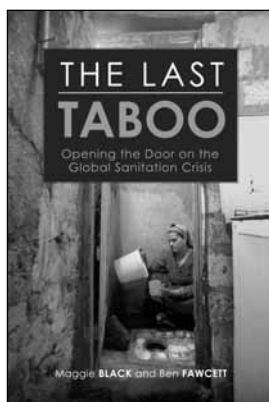


## Reviews and resources



The Last Taboo: Opening the Door on the Global Sanitation Crisis  
Maggie Black and Ben Fawcett  
2008, Earthscan, 272 pages  
£60 hbk, £16.99 pbk, ISBN:  
9781844075447

*'In the byways of the developing world, much is happening on the excretory frontier'.* The quote on the back cover should have caught your attention and by the time you have finished reading this review, I hope to have persuaded you to fork out £17 for a book which I cannot recommend more highly. Unlike the majority of technical publications that we *refer* to from time to time, this is one that you will actually *read*. Why? Unlike the majority of books that we label as guides, textbooks or such like, this book is different. The authors avoid the usual formulaic approach towards presentation of facts and figures often adopted by technocrats who write books about how to improve water and sanitation. Instead the authors present an illuminating documentary of past experience, contemporary knowledge and anecdotal evidence to give you a holistic understanding of sanitation in its entirety.

The authors use these accounts to provide you with a

vision for the future which is both realistic and pragmatic. In addition, they take a welcome objective viewpoint of the multifaceted world of sanitation, carefully avoiding pigeon-holing themselves as advocates of specific forms of technology or approaches. Although the authors clearly have their own views, they don't force these upon you, they let the facts speak simply for themselves and let you decide for yourself.

The authors weave together a fascinating array of experiences and facts from a bewildering range of sources to present a truly holistic picture of global sanitation. As succinctly put on the back cover, *'the authors bring this awkward subject to a wider audience than the world of international filth usually commands'*. In doing so, they call for a cultural revolution, not only amongst potential customers, but also amongst sanitary engineers.

They rightly acknowledge the merits of the sanitation Millennium Development Goals as a way of advocating the need for a massive increase in resources for improved sanitation. However, the authors argue strongly that those in positions of power must be made aware of the fact that we cannot meet these goals by rolling out large-scale, supply driven approaches.

---

Compiled by Jonathan Parkinson, WS Atkins International Ltd, UK

© Practical Action Publishing, 2008, [www.practicalactionpublishing.org](http://www.practicalactionpublishing.org)  
doi: 10.3362/1756-3488.2008.039, ISSN: 0262-8104 (print) 1756-3488 (online)

October 2008

Waterlines Vol. 27 No. 4

Thankfully, it would appear that we are learning from our mistakes (or at least some of us are) and there are an increasing number of initiatives and programmes which adopt contemporary approaches towards ensuring that local needs for improved sanitation are met. The book provides us with a wealth of good and bad experiences from all parts of the world – in both urban and rural contexts – which can be used to illuminate not just ourselves but those that constitute our world.

So, in addition to buying the book for yourself, do your bit for UN Habitat's Year of Sanitation and give a copy of this book to someone that you know – maybe a colleague or an interested friend – and in doing so you may well capture their 'hearts and minds' and enlist another champion to the sanitation army. But, what more can I say, just buy it and make up your own mind.

*Jonathan Parkinson*

**Towards Effective Programming for WASH in Schools: A manual on scaling up programmes for water, sanitation and hygiene in schools**  
IRC

2007, €19, can be downloaded from <http://www.irc.nl/page/37479>

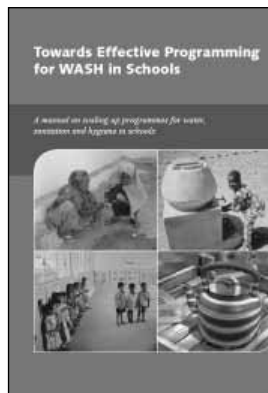
The Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 called for action to improve sanitation and promote

safe hygiene practices in public institutions, especially schools, which often have poor hygiene and lack water for hygiene and sanitation. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) further stress this need, as they aim to ensure universal primary education for all and halve the proportion of people living without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.

The United Nations' Year of Sanitation (2008) provides an excellent vehicle to enhance the global understanding and action of WASH for health and education, as do the recently-launched global partnerships for, respectively, 'The Scaling Up of Hand Washing' and 'Education for All'.

Also in a very timely development UNICEF and the International Water and Sanitation Centre in the Netherlands have updated their 1998 manual on school sanitation and hygiene education (SSHE). In recognition of the importance of this subject, the new title includes the acronym 'WASH' (water sanitation and hygiene). The updated manual, which will serve as a reference for government, UNICEF and NGO staff, can be downloaded from IRC's homepage ([www.irc.nl](http://www.irc.nl)).

The manual has updated references and includes several good links to web-based tools, manuals and references. A further strength are the lessons learned and examples from



UNICEF-supported programmes in Malawi and India, as well as the UNICEF-IRC pilot study for SSHE (1999 to 2003) and the post-intervention assessment (2006) covering Burkina Faso, Colombia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Vietnam and Zambia.

In brief the manual outlines the importance of improved WASH for health, nutrition, academic performance and school attendance, especially for girls. The manual provides tips, hints and practical tools for participatory district planning for WASH in schools, including, but not limited to, how to motivate teachers and include children, their parents and the surrounding community, as well as the politicians, local government and the health staff. It wisely opts for flexible, shorter-term implementation plans within longer-term development plans and strategies and recommends a demand-based approach for the selection of schools to be included in the programme. It further argues for a move from 'model schools' in better off areas towards 'high coverage programmes' to ensure the inclusion of schools in poorer, more remote areas.

The manual includes an excellent chapter on life-skills-based hygiene education with many useful details for the teacher and mentions the importance of national curriculum reforms, teacher training centres, refresher courses, study tours and conferences. Indeed, as more and more children enter schools,

the need to enhance hygiene, as well as the quality of teaching at low cost, are of major importance. Here the manual provides many excellent low-cost solutions and detailed examples that can be used for life skills training for different age groups and how to practically include parents and other community members through survey activities, open house days and child-to-child approaches. An overview of various options for child-friendly WASH facilities stresses the importance of operation and maintenance for sustainable WASH, and briefly mentions some of the problems faced in providing water and soap for hand washing.

One chapter focuses specifically on monitoring and suggests a range of possible indicators, the majority being target indicators. I would have liked a more diversified operational approach also including input (e.g. financial resources), output (e.g. number of facilities constructed), outcome (e.g. number of children washing hands with soap), impact (e.g. reduced incidence of diarrhoea in children) and progress indicators (e.g. increase in the proportion of children using the sanitation facilities over time) to strengthen local resource management, implementation and outcome monitoring, but also to enable local personnel to evaluate their efficiency and track their progress over time towards full coverage with high quality WASH, thus ensuring continuous progress.

While support from government authorities and local service providers is important, schools can clearly do a lot with a little as long as they are supported by their local community. The manual mentions the possible role of local health staff, but could have developed this idea further.

The manual has many illustrations but too few with explanatory text which at times make it difficult to understand what the pictures actually illustrate. This is unfortunate as some of the illustrations include facilities and behaviours that clearly appear to be less desirable.

Construction of water and sanitation facilities at schools has existed for decades, but this manual provides a very useful add-on with its focus on life skills for promotion of hygiene education, and operation and maintenance of facilities. While there is some guidance on the organizational arrangements at community and district level, the manual could have provided more information and advice on the overall strengthening of institutional linkages across sectors, and the development of national policies and plans. The private sector, which plays an important role in achieving WASH for all (e.g. masons for construction and repair of facilities, local spare part dealers, and soap vendors), could also have benefited from more attention.

The experiences from the six countries included in the UNICEF-IRC pilot study for SSHE

show that the limited scale and the fragmentation in the planning, management and monitoring of WASH in schools will make it difficult to reach the MDGs unless special steps are taken to accelerate and enhance coordination. Some further discussion and practical guidance on how to enhance effectiveness through inter-sectoral and coordinated sector-wide approaches and harmonization in line with the Paris Declaration would have been desirable.

Finally, considering that a large proportion of youngsters currently out of school are children with disabilities, it is important to ensure that school WASH facilities are accessible for all, through appropriate designs and the inclusion of people with disabilities in decision-making at all levels. Here, the WEDC publication 'Water and Sanitation for Disabled People and Other Vulnerable Groups' available for download from <http://wedc.lboro.ac.uk/> provides some practical guidance.

The energy and enthusiasm with which UNICEF and IRC Netherlands continue to pursue the issues of WASH within global development are admirable. This book will most likely be very useful for a broad range of people working at community, district and national level within developing countries and development agencies throughout the world.

*Pia Rockhold is a senior operation officer with the World Bank's Human Development Network*



**Infrastructure for All**  
 Brian Reed, Sue Coates, Sarah  
 Parry-Jones and others  
 2007, WEDC, Loughborough,  
 UK, 236 pp., 60 fig., £24.95,  
 ISBN 978 1 84380 109 2

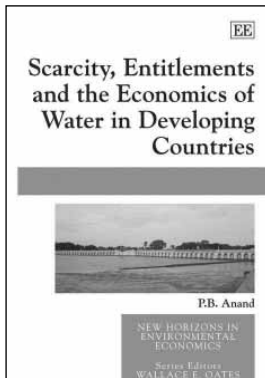
Many facilities and infrastructure are constructed as part of development projects for the benefit of communities. But frequently these do not benefit all cross-sections of society equally. This is because different members of the community have different priorities and needs, which are not always perceived clearly by engineers responsible for their design and construction. The book refers to problems specific to children and other vulnerable groups such as the poor and physically disabled, but the main focus is upon gender issues relevant to men and women.

The first objective of the book is to help engineers, technicians and project managers understand how differences between men and women can undermine the expected benefits of infrastructure provided by the projects that they are responsible for. The second objective is to provide a practical guide to promote equality in the planning and design processes to ensure that constructed facilities are beneficial to all members of society.

Rather than going into an in-depth theoretical analysis of gender concerns and their importance to socio-economic

development, the focus is upon practical solutions that are of specific relevance to engineers. There is a wealth of experience documented in the book to illustrate ideas and concepts. Many of these relate to water and sanitation facilities, but there are also examples from other sectors such as solid waste and transport. Many of the ideas contained in the book are relevant to cross-sectoral livelihood improvement projects which usually include some infrastructure components. The examples present a clear picture of how gender divisions may hinder development projects and how these may be overcome with some perceptive thinking and clever design.

As well as chapters which describe ways in which men and women may be involved in different stages of the project cycle, the book also includes a chapter on the roles of men and women in the workplace. The chapter stresses ways in which gender problems may manifest themselves and describes how problems can be overcome to promote gender equality within organizations. One of the main arguments is that if organizations do not practice what they preach, they are much less likely to be effective at achieving their development objectives which invariably promote gender equality. With this objective in mind, the authors have produced a set of notes complementary to the book itself and



designed to assist managers and trainers of engineers in raising awareness of some of these issues. These are available for an additional £24.95 from WEDC Publications, but the training notes and the book itself are available from the WEDC website as a free download in portable document format (pdf file). However, it is only possible to view the contents on the computer screen as the files are blocked for printing.

This is a very interesting book which should stimulate open-minded and lateral thinking and be of real benefit to the engineering fraternity involved in development work. In particular, it will help more technically orientated practitioners to understand the importance and relevance of gender and other social divisions that may hinder the advancement of infrastructure projects. The book will also be of use to social scientists who will benefit from understanding better the issues that are of greater concern to engineers and how their perception of social issues can be of relevance to the technicians. The book is endorsed by DFID and has the credentials of WEDC with the trademark of clear presentation and numerous, excellent diagrams, which make it a very accessible and intelligible publication, and a highly recommended purchase at £24.95.

*Jonathan Parkinson*

Scarcity, Entitlements and the Economics of Water in Developing Countries  
P.B. Anand  
2007, Edward Elgar, £79.95,  
ISBN: 9781843767688

Those seeking an informed overview of the social and economic aspects of water issues in developing contexts today would do well to read P.B. Anand's book. *Scarcity, Entitlements and the Economics of Water in Developing Countries* is extensive – covering local, sub-national and international aspects of water scarcity, the human right to water, transboundary water disputes and progress on the Millennium Development Goals. It also delves quite deep – weaving together discussions of rational choice, injustice and institutional capacity with basic economics theory and Sen's capability approach. It will be of interest to water resource managers, urban water and sanitation policy-makers, international donors, and students of environmental justice, water issues, and development more broadly.

The thread running through Anand's manuscript is a strong sense of addressing the injustices he exposes throughout it. Thus while much of the book confirms Mark Reisner's phrase that 'water flows uphill to money' (and the corollary – that sewage obeys gravity to flow towards the poor), it also seeks

to challenge the status quo.

That water scarcity is primarily a socially constructed phenomenon serves as foundation of the analysis. The answers to scarcity found outside of the watershed, in the institutions, economies and fair distribution of the physical resource, rather than in supply-side management paradigms traditionally supported by international donor agencies which 'may turn policy makers into investment seekers' (p. 22).

The structure of the book is based on the 'water and well-being' framework laid out in the first chapter, which links individuals to resources, institutions, entitlements, donor assistance and the forces of nature. The second and third chapters deal with water scarcity at the international level. FAO and economic databases are combined to examine the link between intensity of water use to a state's GDP. Further to confirming that poorer economies based on agricultural production use water more intensively than industrialized countries, the author searches for positive relations between per capita water use, dams and population (though these are difficult to establish). Chapter 3 focuses on access to water and the water and sanitation target (Target 10) of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Analysis of a WHO-Unicef dataset (ending in 2000) on the role of donor assistance in progress to Target 10 delivers mixed results. A positive

relation between the two is found in Egypt, Cameroon and Paraguay, for example, but the relation is much less strong (or negative) in the neighbouring countries of Ethiopia, Burkina Faso and Columbia. Thus are the problems of national-level aggregate data exposed. The discussion on the limitations identifies factors such as economic growth rates, freshwater availability per capita, strength of institutions, etc. The forays into links between the privatization of water infrastructure and progress towards Target 10 are similarly hampered by the lack of context-specific information.

Chapter 4 deals with international and sub-national trans-boundary water conflict. Anand reviews the concepts and debates of territorial integrity vs. the restricted sovereignty approach of international water law, upstream/downstream interdependence, the symbolic nature of water and issues of cross-border collective action. He provides an untested theoretical contribution to water conflict prediction linking riparian position, power asymmetry and the internal cohesion of the governments. The analysis is loosely applied to the Murray-Darling, Arkansas and Missouri rivers. The analysis is somewhat wanting for insight, primarily for its lack of consideration of the conflict-mitigating effects of virtual water (crop and livestock) trade, and the inertia deriving from hegemonic situations based on power asymmetry.

Chapter 5's analysis of the Cauvery dispute between the Indian states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu reveals that the conflict is sustained by the contested power asymmetry, the lack of incentives for the states to cooperate, the lack of independent monitoring, and the negligible role of non-state actors. Anand finds that interests and salience are factors determining the behaviour of each state, thereby contributing two more elements to the previous chapter's suggested analytical frame.

The following two chapters take us from international and sub-national level down to the household level. Anand relies upon Sen's capability analysis (CA) approach, whose focus crucially avoids the problems associated with national-level aggregate data. Being more process-based and intent on expanding substantive individual freedoms, the CA approach is suggested as a more viable alternative to achieving development goals. The importance of human rights and property rights are intertwined with discussions on the social, political and institutional aspects of water. A very thorough examination of access to water in the Indian city of Chennai leads to specific policy implications, such as the need to reform regulation based on sustainability and public health and people's willingness to pay,

shifting away from the supply-side management mentality. The focus remains on inequity in Chapter 8, where more academic issues are addressed, such as the relative merits of the rights-based vs. the capabilities analysis approach. The more well-known former approach carries with it all the luggage and legacy of issues surrounding rights (primarily that rights are only as relevant as an individual's ability to secure them, 60 cynical years on from the Universal Declaration). The author asserts that while it is possible to invoke human rights without the CA approach, efforts will be more effective when combined.

Anand's book is recommended as useful and interesting reading primarily for its broad range and interdisciplinary approach. It will for the same reason probably not satisfy hair-splitting experts in each of the particular fields covered, but this may be testament to the book's practical utility. Above all, Anand reminds those of us engaged with water issues from academic and policy circles that we are obliged to think and look outside our respective boxes. *Scarcity, Entitlements and the Economics of Water in Developing Countries* does just that.

*Mark Zeitoun is a lecturer at the Centre of Environmental Policy and Governance, London School of Economics and Political Science*