

Editorial

FOR THOSE WHOSE EVERYDAY WORK concerns the long-term development and improvement of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), it is easy to under-estimate just how different are the context, the needs, and the required responses in emergencies. The urgency of assessment and response, the imperative to focus on immediate priorities and needs, and the particular features of displaced and refugee settlements – population density, social and cultural heterogeneity, psychosocial damage, among others – make emergency WASH a very different business from WASH in development.

Because of the importance of the subject matter, and the excellent range of papers that have been submitted, we are combining the January and April editions of *Waterlines* into a double issue devoted to this theme.

Of course there is no such thing as a typical emergency. Emergencies arise in different ways and they have different consequences. They vary by cause – natural disaster or man-made; by speed of onset – from slow-onset such as drought to rapid-onset such as earthquake; by geographical location – rural, urban, terrain type; and by the degree of human displacement caused – from little or none through to large-scale refugee movements.

The world of humanitarian emergencies – especially the big ones such as the Haiti earthquake or the Pakistan floods – is characterized by greater media visibility and more readily available funding (in the short-term at least) than that of long-term development.

The priorities in emergencies must be to minimize further human suffering, protect from harm, and provide the basic services necessary to preserve life, health, and security. Water supply, sanitation, and the opportunity to practise good hygiene are fundamental needs, alongside shelter and food, which are basic to health.

For all these reasons it is essential that the responses which are undertaken in emergencies are properly targeted, meet basic needs, address suffering, and are effective and cost-efficient. It is some of these issues which this edition of *Waterlines* addresses.

We begin this edition with a tribute to a colleague and dear friend to many in the WASH sector and the humanitarian field. Yves Chartier died in January 2012, but his example and publications will continue to inspire and guide us for a long to come.

Marco Visser challenges us to put much higher priority on sanitation in emergencies than is currently the case. To quote Marco, ‘water

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© Practical Action Publishing, 2012, www.practicalactionpublishing.org
doi: 10.3362/1756-3488.2012.001, ISSN: 0262-8104 (print) 1756-3488 (online)

is hot, sanitation is not', in emergencies as much as in long-term development. He argues the case for sufficient, safe, high quality, free sanitation services in emergencies.

Brown et al present an overview of current knowledge about what works to prevent disease in emergency WASH response. They propose key areas for critical research to support the evidence base for WASH interventions in emergencies and promote innovation

Andy Bastable and Jenny Lamb remind us that sanitation solutions in emergencies can be very challenging – especially when ground conditions or flooding make latrine construction difficult. Innovation continues to be needed in this crucial area of response. This is an issue also discussed by Coloni and colleagues in their paper on the use of biodegradable bags as emergency sanitation in urban areas of Haiti after the 2010 earthquake

In a note from the field Pankaj Singh describes the design of a household trench latrine to meet the short-term needs of flood-affected populations in Pakistan – a further example of the type of innovation which is constantly required. Also important is sustainability, the high cost of fittings can be a barrier to sustainable community management of water supplies. Castle and Reed describe manual butt welding technique for polyethylene pipe

Daniele Lantagne and Tom Clasen present a review of the efficacy of point-of-use water treatment in emergencies, concluding that such approaches have a place in 'non-acute' emergencies, but that the design of response needs to be carefully matched to context and local situation.

Richard Luff and Caetano Dorea question whether the deployment of bulk water treatment units (for instance in the 2010 Pakistan floods) is the most appropriate response for meeting the needs of water users, or rather a 'silver-bullet' solution which is not always fit-for-purpose and perhaps of more interest to the media than to those whom it is meant to serve.

Marni Sommer draws attention to the needs of girls and women in emergencies for convenient and dignified means of managing menstrual hygiene. Given the male domination of the humanitarian emergency professions, it is perhaps not surprising (though not excusable) that this topic has been neglected in the past. It is encouraging to see the growing body of experience, know-how and recognition of menstrual hygiene management in both emergencies and long-term development. There is still a long way to go, however.

Jean-François Pinera's paper examines the restoration and rehabilitation of water supply services in urban environments affected by armed conflict. He examines the cases of Kabul, Jaffna, Monrovia, Port-au-Prince, Beni, and Grozny, and draws conclusions about the nature of partnerships, the linkages between large-scale reconstruction

and neighbourhood services, and the implications for sustainability and universal service.

None of the papers in this edition directly confronts the challenges of linking disaster preparedness and risk reduction, emergency response, post-emergency rehabilitation, and long-term development. Getting this continuum right has long been the holy grail of both development workers and humanitarian emergency practitioners. As populations in low-income countries continue to grow, urban and rural demographics alter, the state of the environment continues to deteriorate, and the unpredictability of climate increases, disasters and emergencies are set to increase. The challenge for WASH practitioners in both development and emergency response work is how to collaborate more effectively to limit the impact of such trends on the poorest and most vulnerable.

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