

A tribute to Yves Chartier



WHO/Chris Black *Democratic Republic of Congo*

It is with great pain and sadness for many in the WASH sector and the humanitarian field to learn of the death of Yves Chartier in an accident in the Jura Mountains near Geneva on Sunday 8 January 2012.

When remembering Yves, the overwhelming feeling is of great respect. For nearly three decades Yves worked in WASH in the humanitarian and development fields, initially with Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and later for the World Health Organization (WHO). He was one of a small group of professionals who, in the 1980s–1990s, helped to shape and raise the profile of WASH in emergencies, forming a practical approach to implementing basic but often overlooked water, sanitation, and hygiene interventions. As a result, he influenced and inspired a wide range of people – from refugees to health-care workers, from high-level decision-makers to academics – and improved the lives of huge numbers of individuals in hotspots around the world.

Yves had an extraordinary clarity of vision, and ability to get to the essential. This, combined with his solid common sense, strong sense of purpose, and the drive to stick with that vision, was very powerful. Motivating Mozambican refugees to transform defecation fields into soccer pitches, supporting WASH for the injured in war-torn Southern Sudan, setting up safe medical-waste sites from Haiti to Tanzania,

and finding simple solutions to drinking water in Eastern Congo, all happened because Yves made sure it did.

Yves' professional capacity was broad and of a very high standard. Over the years he authored or co-authored numerous manuals and guidelines and undertook and published a wide range of practical research, much of which has subsequently influenced policy and practice in the sector. But Yves was so much more than a good professional – he was a good man, a rare gem. He was generous and sensitive, a rebel and non-conformist, serious, with a cheeky sense of humour, a contagious smile, and a very acute sense of justice. He was an accomplice for action, enabling others to get things done and as a result greatly magnifying his impact. It was difficult to refuse a request from Yves and likewise he never refused a request for help. He spoke little, but did much.

Yves was also a humble man, greatly under-estimating his own impact. At the heart of everything he did was concern for the impact his actions may have on someone else's life. People mattered a great deal to him. His passion for helping people was surpassed only by his passion for his wife, his two sons, and his wider family.

A colourful strand in the thread of humanity has come to its end by his death. But his influence and impact live on through those who have grown professionally and personally, for the better, by having known Yves.

From colleagues and friends of Yves from the WASH sector