

5. 2006 Humanitarian toilet challenges

Oxfam: Andy Bastable

The use of latrines/toilets is considered a key element toward the improvement of health. Andy Bastable from Oxfam showed different options and approaches developed in order to facilitate the building and use of toilets under either emergency or extreme conditions.

The presentation focused on the improvement of the weak factors when using latrines, aspects such as the maintenance and ground water contamination were considered. All the approaches presented were related to specific case studies. (Darfur, Chad, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Aceh)

- ***Highlighted points:***

- New development in the use of plastic slabs for toilets – easy to clean. In Pakistan, for instance, this solution with a water-seal plastic attachment were used even after the emergency.
- Module solutions for women: this alternative was designed in order to avoid cultural restriction for women.
- Module solution for disabled people – new approach.
- Alternatives to the Indonesian “concrete culvert” excreta containment tanks by simple modifications or using prefabricated plastic or concrete septic tanks.
- The community should be aware of the life time of septic tanks.
- Acceptance and training are important factors in the implementation of this kind of solutions. Important initiative – Chemical sludge digestion options, (cat fish living in septic tanks) in Aceh.

As a complementary aspect of this presentation, a brief description of a project on excreta disposal in urban areas during floods was given. This project is still under development. Comments, inputs and suggestions can be sent to: James Robertson. E-mail: J.A.Robertson@lboro.ac.uk

- ***Discussion***

- Special solution for schools – An interagency book “Excreta Disposal in Emergencies” is now available, published by WEDC, which covers a wide range of technical options as well as latrines for schools.
 - Management of communal latrines – after the initial emergency where communal latrines are necessary for the 1st phase a good strategy is to rapidly allocate one latrine to a group of families (4 is normal), in this way it is easier to guarantee its maintenance.
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