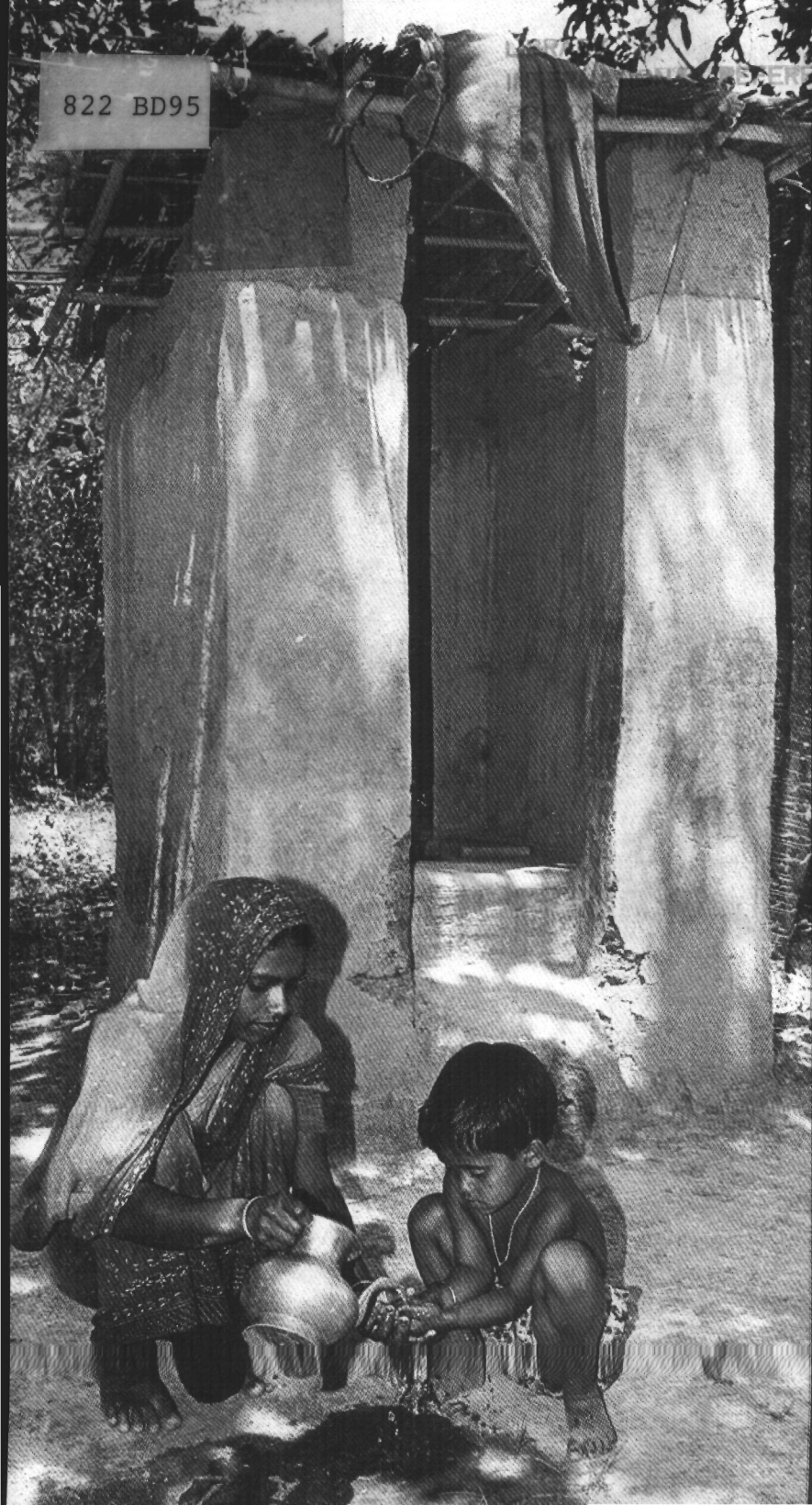


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**Dhamrai  
Thana -  
A Successful  
Approach for  
Sanitation**

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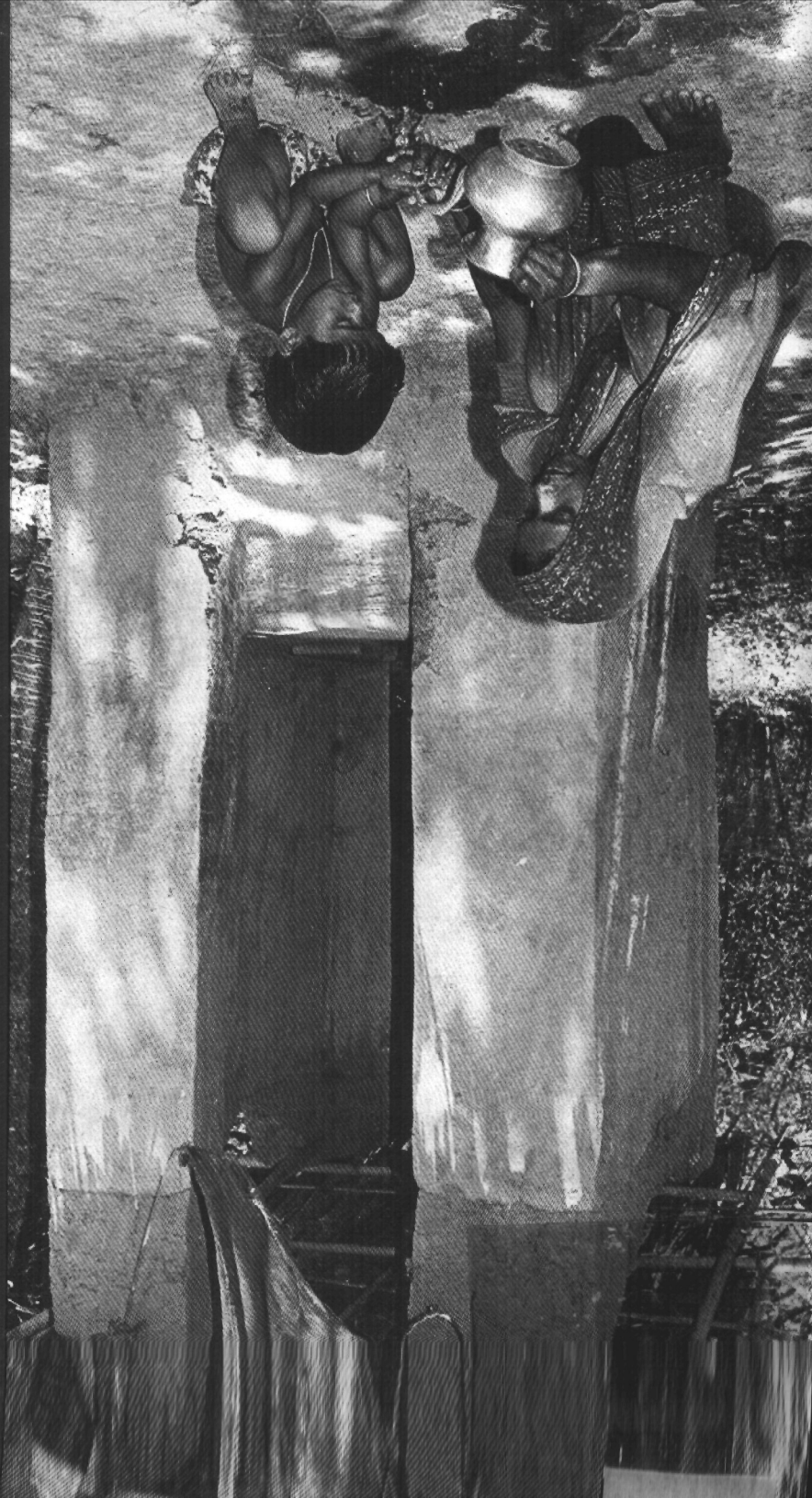


Photographs by Shehzad Noorani  
Design: Nazmul Ameen

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**Dhamrai  
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# Dhamrai Thana - A Successful Approach for Sanitation

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The rural water supply  
and sanitation programme  
in Bangladesh is run by the government  
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## Dhamrai Thana - A Successful Approach for Sanitation

In August 1992 a local NGO, Social Advancement Centre (SAC) with the help of DPHE and UNICEF, Dhaka Division, began a village sanitation project in Kushura Union of Dhamrai Thana. In some villages fewer than 7% of the households had sanitary latrines when the project began, but now all the families in the target villages have built their own latrines, either a waterseal latrine or a homemade pit latrine.

A number of lessons have been learnt from the success of the Kushura project:

- People need information to be motivated to change.
- House to house visits are effective.
- It is effective to focus on women.
- Low cost latrine technology is affordable and socially acceptable.

## Why Improved Sanitation is Necessary?

In the last ten years, there has been a revolution in the supply of safe water in Bangladesh, and since 1992 over 90% of the population has been able to use hand pump water for drinking. But despite this success there has been very little change in the incidence of diarrhoea. Every year, 260,000 children die of diarrhoea, and many more suffer from the disease.

### Safe Drinking Water is not Enough

Safe drinking water is important, but safe water alone will not end the scourge of life threatening diarrhoea. Good sanitation and personal hygiene are also essential in combating this disease, which is responsible for a third of all child deaths in the country. An integrated approach – that combines safe water with sanitary latrines and good personal hygiene – can contribute to the reduction of the incidence of diarrhoea.



*tubewell water*  
*Use of tubewell for personal hygiene*

### Only a Third of Rural People Have Sanitary Latrines

In the last few years in Bangladesh there has been an improvement in sanitation, but there is still a long way to go. Only a third of rural people have sanitary latrines.



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# A Strategy to Improve Sanitation

This booklet is intended to help government departments, NGOs and other interested groups plan and implement a campaign to improve sanitation. The experience in Kushura can provide a practical example of a successful strategy for change.

## The Essential Steps

### ● Alliance Building

Build an alliance of local organizations to work on the sanitation campaign.

### ● Publicity

Use every available method – meetings, processions, demonstrations, posters, schools, mosques, miking, radio – to make people aware of the campaign.

### ● Information

Make sure that all households, especially the women, understand the health and convenience benefits of sanitary latrines and good personal hygiene. Use meetings, posters, videos, and house to house visits to spread information.

### ● Technical Assistance

Send workers or volunteers to the villages to show people how to build sanitary latrines properly.

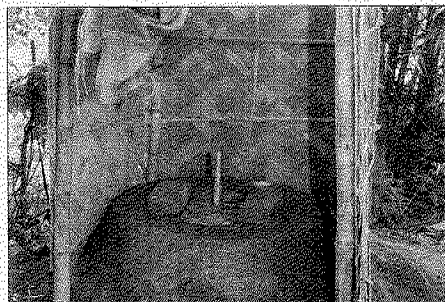
### ● Monitoring

Use charts and forms to show the progress of the campaign. Send workers out to the villages to see whether latrines have been built and whether they are being used. Plan return visits after one or two years to make sure that both adults and children are using latrines and that new pits are dug when the old ones are filled up.



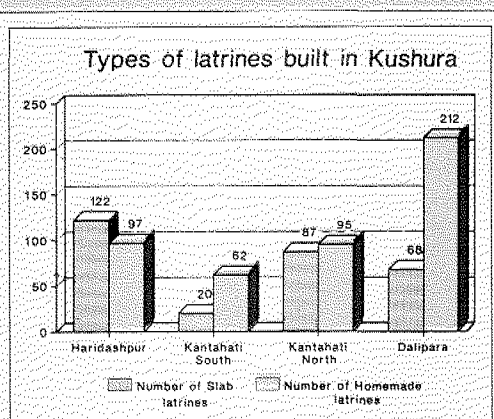
## Affordable Technology

Most villagers when asked why they do not have a latrine, will usually answer – "We are poor people. We can not afford a latrine". But in fact, with new latrine technology, poverty is generally not an issue. The real constraint is information, not poverty.



### **Poverty is not a Constraint**

*This homemade sanitary latrine is inexpensive to construct.*



### **The Majority of Latrines in Kushura are Homemade**

*This graph shows that homemade latrines can bring good sanitation within the reach of even poor households.*

There are a number of low cost options. Simple homemade pit latrines can often be built with materials available in the household, which do not need to be purchased. The pit should be at least two metres deep, so that it can be used for many years; and can usually be dug in less than one working day.

The other option is the waterseal latrine — one slab - one ring, which costs taka 125 and is within the reach of many village families. The one-ring is suitable for stable soils.

In Kushura, the homemade pit latrines and the one ring one slab latrines were both promoted.

## The Private Sector

The demands for waterseal latrines have increased. DPHE has limited stocks of latrine components, but the private sector has begun to meet the local demand for latrines. The picture shows a female local producer who sells latrines in the open market. With the greater awareness created, it is anticipated that the private sector will play an increasing role in sanitation.



# Alliance Building

In the Kushura project, the lead was taken by an NGO with assistance from DPHE and UNICEF.

It is important to put together a broad coalition for change. Local government leaders and elected officials, DPHE, schools and head teachers, madrassahs, religious leaders, NGOs, women's groups and locally influential people all played an important part in the sanitation campaign in Kushura.

If more than one organization is active in the sanitation programme, it becomes essential to coordinate their activities and divide the responsibilities in the project area.

## Women Can Take the Lead

The Kushura project was aimed mostly at women. Women benefit most from the privacy of sanitary latrines, and women are more likely to be in the home, spend most time on household activities, and care for children. It is essential that they understand the reasons for building latrines so that they can motivate their families to use them.

The men in the household, of course, must not be forgotten. They too need to understand the benefits of using and building latrines; and in financial matters, the men are still the decision makers.

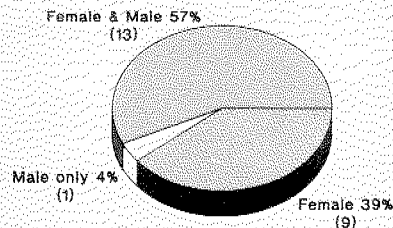
## Women Can Build Latrines

Over 80% of the latrines in Kushura Union were dug by women, sometimes with the help of the men in the family. This is important for future maintenance, because if people have been motivated to build a latrine for their own use, they are more likely to keep the latrine clean and repair it when it breaks.

In early projects in Bangladesh, where latrines were built free of cost for people, the beneficiaries often lacked the knowledge and the motivation to maintain the latrines properly. A poorly maintained latrine soon becomes so offensive that it ceases to be used.

### Latrine construction in Kushura Union

(Total observation : 23)



Source : Field visits, UNICEF & DPHE.

## Training for NGO Workers

Once the alliance of different groups has been built, the first step is training.

In Kushura, the NGO workers and the project director were given training in the importance of sanitation so that they could train the local volunteers to communicate the message to villagers.

SAC had five volunteers – two women and three men. They had already formed groups in the villages. Each group consisted of ten families with a female leader. These group leaders were also given special training.

## Publicity

Publicity of all kinds helped to make people aware of the sanitation programme. Miking, posters, meetings, processions, radio announcements - were all used in Kushura. Local groups that had not become active in the campaign were also made aware of the sanitation project so that their members could help to spread information about the benefits of good sanitation.



### ***A Mobile Latrine***

*A demonstration latrine was placed on an ox-cart and taken around the Union to show people the technology and make them aware of the sanitation project.*



### **Tin Posters**

*Tin posters explaining the importance of sanitary latrines and hygiene have been put in public places around the union. A hadith of the Prophet Mohammed (SM) about personal hygiene is included on each poster.*



### **Bill Boards**

*Bill boards with health information and diagrams showing how to construct pit latrines and one slab - one ring latrines have been placed around the union.*

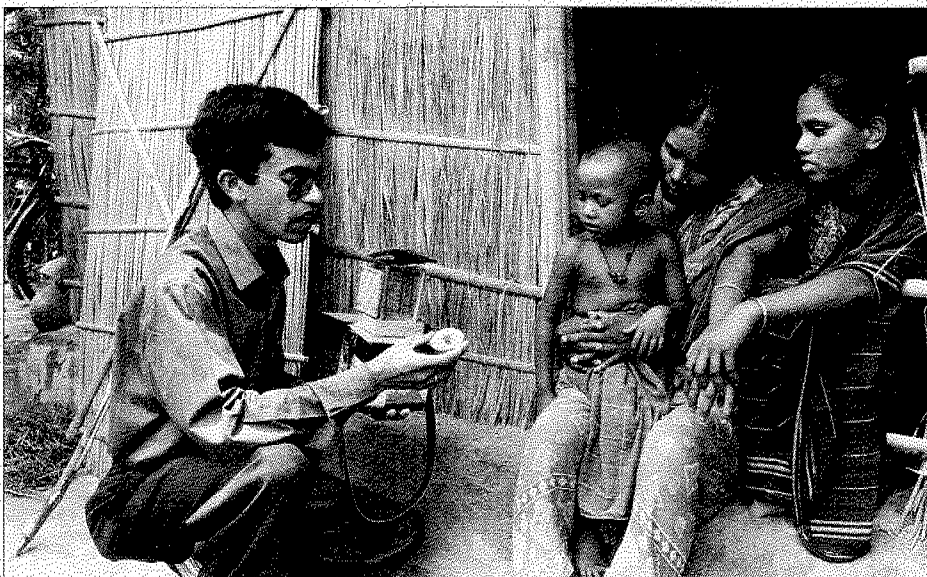
# Information

Improving sanitation is not just a question of safe water and sanitary latrines. Good sanitation is really about changing people's habits and improving hygienic practices. Workers in Kushura were good at explaining to villagers why better sanitation was important.

Meetings and house to house visits proved to be an effective way of reaching people to give them information. But this alone would not have been enough. The quality of the information the workers gave at these meetings was also very important. In Kushura the NGO workers and volunteers focused on the social benefits of latrines and the important health benefits. To get their message across they often used stories.

## Meetings and Home Visits

The Kushura project was structured around meetings for women, and house to house visits.



### **Information**

*Field worker talking about latrines using a latrine model.*



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## Union Level Meetings

The first meeting was held in the Kushura High school, and was attended by three hundred school girls and group leaders from the SAC women's groups in three villages. Officials from SAC, DPHE, UNICEF, DPHE and the local government conducted the meeting. They explained the aim of the project, the health reasons for building latrines, the importance of practising personal hygiene, using clean tubewell water and the convenience and privacy of a latrine. They also gave practical information about how to build low cost latrines.

## Village Meetings

The next meetings were held at the village level. All village women were invited to attend, and many village men also attended. Volunteer NGO workers gave health information about latrines, personal hygiene, and safe water, and in some villages a UNICEF video - Pani o Poribesh - was shown. Models, demonstration latrines, and posters were used to explain how to build a latrine on a raised surface to reduce it from rain water damage, and what to do when pits filled up.

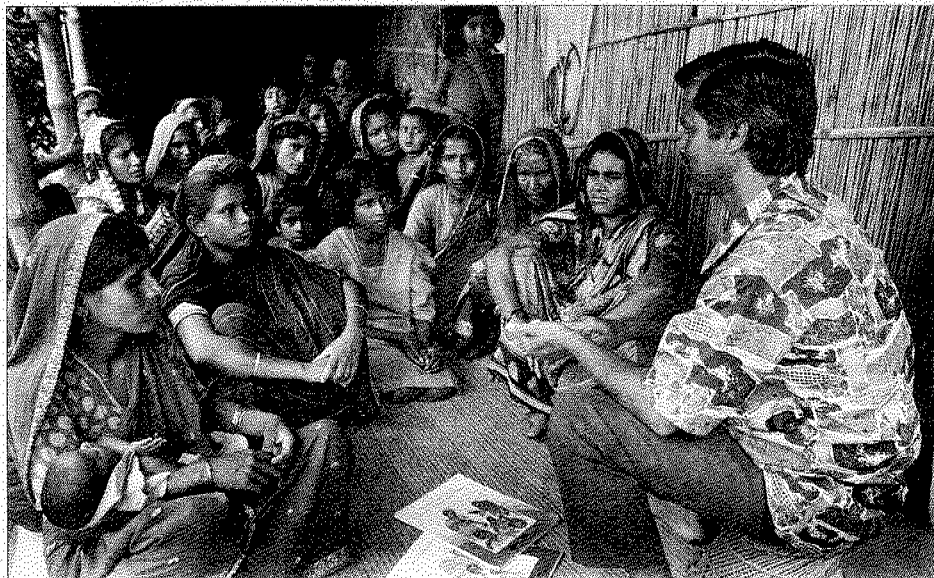
## Uthan Baithak

The final meetings were "uthan baithak" - courtyard meetings. These brought the information to all the women, even those who had been unwilling or unable to attend the larger meetings. These smaller meetings helped to make all families feel part of the effort to improve sanitation and health. NGO volunteers also took this opportunity to reinforce other health messages such as the importance of immunisation, and of feeding colostrum to infants.

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## House to House Visits

After the courtyard meetings, volunteers continued to visit the villages and go house to house to motivate villagers to build latrines and to monitor the success of the project. They gave people advice on how to build latrines and on the different kinds of low cost latrines that were suitable for that area.



*Awareness Building...  
through discussion and story telling*

## The Power of Example

Villagers in Kushura often learnt about good sanitation from their neighbours who persuaded them to change their habits and showed them how to build latrines.

Also field workers took people from new target villages to see villages where latrines had already been built. They discussed the benefits of having a latrine and building one for themselves.

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## The Quality of Information

The workers in Kushura were very effective at persuading people to change their sanitation and personal hygiene practices because they used creative ways to explain the health and social benefits.

They focused on three important messages:

- How diseases are transmitted through faeces.
- Which diseases and parasites are spread through faeces.
- The social benefits of latrines.

## Faecal-Oral Disease Transmission

Workers in Kushura used videos and charts to explain the faecal oral transmission of diarrhoeal diseases. They explained how faeces can contaminate water, can be passed on people's hands, can be passed through food, and can be carried by insects.

The message that everyone who has diarrhoea or worms must have eaten faeces, was found to be particularly powerful.

## The Power of Stories

### Who is Responsible?

A crazy person who takes a gun and shoots children in the village is soon captured by his neighbours and taken to jail. But what about the man who defecates on the edge of a river? The germs he puts into the environment soon mix with the river water and a little way downstream are swallowed by a small child who is taking a drink from that river. When that child sickens and dies of diarrhoea, who is responsible for her death?

### Flies Don't Wear Shoes

A fly has six feet. Can the fly afford shoes for six feet? Of course not. The fly sits on faeces and then sits on your food. Does it wash all six of its feet before it sits on your food?

Stories like these are used by NGO workers in Kushura to bring home the importance of good sanitation to villagers. Stories are a powerful way of giving information. A good story captures people's attention and makes them listen. A story is also memorable and can be repeated to friends and family members.

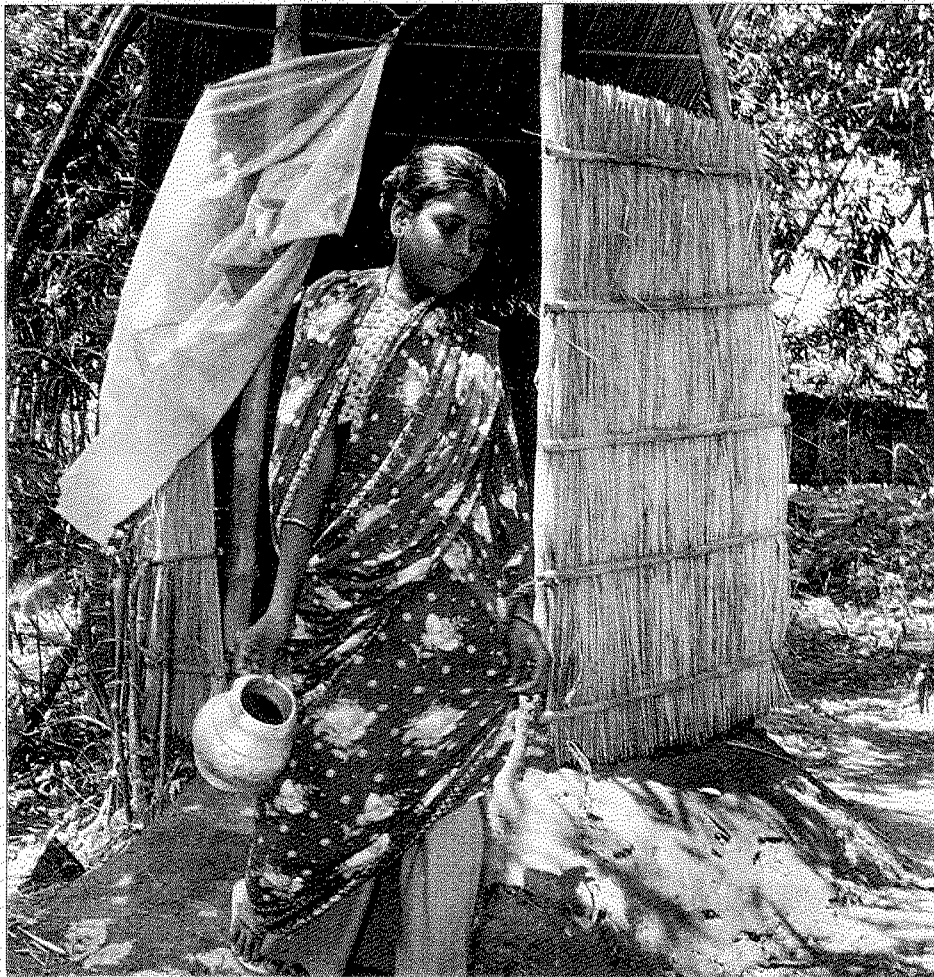
## The Social Benefits of Latrines

Open latrines are smelly and too offensive to be placed near the home. Surprisingly, even on a hot day, the homemade earth latrines and the waterseal latrines were almost odourless. This makes it possible to place them close to the home so that they are more convenient for women, old people and children.

In Kushura workers found that privacy was an especially important issue for women, and the desire for privacy motivated many women to dig their own latrines.

### ***Privacy for Women***

*Sanitary latrines can be placed close to the home and give much greater privacy to women.*



# Technical Assistance and Monitoring

The NGO workers in Kushura encourage the building of latrines by visiting the village frequently during the month or two that it takes to build latrines in every household. They use simple forms to monitor the progress on latrine building.

After a year or two some shallow latrine pits may have filled up. At this stage it is important to go house to house again and monitor the condition of latrines. Villagers need to be reminded of the importance of digging a new pit and continuing to use hygienic latrines. Otherwise they may return to open defecation or modify their latrine so that the overflow goes into a drain or pond.

## ***The Latrine Officer is Coming***

*The field workers have become well known and as they approach the village the children yell out - "The latrine officer is coming."*

