

Sanitation Enthusiasm in Nigeria Implementation of the SanPlat System in the UNICEF-Enugu Integrated Sanitation Programme

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UNICEF-Enugu in southeastern Nigeria, has embarked on a SanPlat based Sanitation Programme with impressive enthusiasm and commitment from all parties involved. Production of the SanPlat is much easier than promoting VIP-latrines. The selling of SanPlats and other sanitary articles from community managed 'SaniCentres' has made the demand for improved sanitation surpass the delivery capacity of the programme. Costs and subsidies have been reduced to a fraction of what they were before, and everybody is enthusiastic. Changing

from VIP to SanPlat has become more than a change in technology — it's a paradigm shift.

The Principle is Simple

People in Enugu buy SanPlats from SaniCentres and build latrines without assistance from the programme, using their own material, skills and imagination. The political and traditional leadership supports the programme while the real promoters are women at the grass root level. The demand for the SanPlats exceeds the production capacity of the SaniCentres. Hundreds of families are

paying for their SanPlats and are paying in advance to be sure not to miss the opportunity.

Confused?

Because of its successful SanPlat sanitation programme in Enugu, Nigeria was selected to host a regional UNICEF-WES seminar focusing on

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sanitation and behavioural change. During a field visit many participants became confused. What was the novelty? What was the difference between the latrine slabs in the field and ordinary latrine slabs?

- They were neither dome shaped nor 60x60 cm, as pictured in the manuals.
- They had sloping surfaces and were sometimes a bit rough.
- The footrests were rectangular and wide apart.
- The drop-holes were too wide, and
- Some had holes for a modest ventpipe!

Their confusion was understandable, especially as the field examples differed from the criteria identified for a SanPlat. Had the name been stolen and the concept abandoned?

Principles Rather than Blueprints

Actually, Nigeria's programme of improved sanitation goes beyond the detailed design of a piece of concrete (latrine slab). What was being sold was the vital part of a latrine, allowing people to build the kind of latrines they liked rather than being limited to a fixed design. The vital part was the SanPlat even if its details were not orthodox. Details needed to be improved, but the fact that

What is a SanPlat

It is a latrine slab with the following characteristics

A surface that is:

- hard;
- smooth and
- sloping

for maximum hygiene and easy cleaning.

A drop hole that is:

- small enough to be safe for the smallest children;
- big enough to be used safely;
- safe from smells and flies

It may have:

- a lid (traditional improved latrine)
- a ventpipe (VIP latrine)
- a waterseal (Pour Flush latrine)
- or nothing (as the dangers of smells and flies are mainly psychological).

Elevated footrests adapted for:

- small children (not too wide apart)
- fat men and pregnant women (foot angle wide enough)
- normal people (testing may be required)

the programme was moving away from a fixed design approach to a delivery system gave tremendous results. Precautions must be taken, though, so that essential qualities like hygiene, user-friendliness and safety are not sacrificed.

There is no blueprint to improved sanitation but a list of principles, and these are advocated by the SanPlat system in a simple but practical way. The basic principles are improved hygiene and (child) safety. Other concepts include the need for:

- Balance between traditional and new;

- Balance between cost and affordability;
- Balance between predefined and chosen.

Balancing traditional and new

People have always been attracted to novelties that trigger consumption as well as development. This has been understood by, for example, the successful automobile and textile industry. The Nigerian SanPlat Programme can use this idea to increase marketability.

Non-traditional production models can have the following advantages:

- give a smarter finish and ease of cleaning to attract buyers;
- secure sloping surfaces;
- secure a child-safe drophole;
- secure correct spacing of footrests;
- reduce production costs by optimising the use of building material;
- reduce weight and costs for transport;
- speed up production;
- reduce training needs.

But, the beauty is that the system works also in its 'imperfection'. After all, the main objective is not selling latrine slabs but increasing the usage of latrines. These SanPlats will be used as much as the perfect ones, because they have been chosen by the people who bought them and built according to their own taste and possibilities.

Balancing Cost and Affordability

It is embarrassing that engineers and planners have not understood the need for balance between cost and affordability. Every woman looks into her purse before going to a grocery shop or before buying clothes for the children. If not, there would not be food at the end of the month.

However, when planning for others, we can be idealistic and overambitious, resulting in unsustainable programmes with high subsidy levels, giving "all to some" instead of "some to all." This will have a negative impact on environmental sanitation because it creates a passive attitude; responsibility for environmental sanitation is taken away from the population and given to "the guys with the money". And they don't have that much.

In Nigeria the shift from VIP to SanPlat has reduced programme costs on the scale of 1 to 45, enormously increasing the number of families able to benefit from the programme. Overhead has also been reduced as the programme is implemented at the local level.

There are No Blueprint Solutions

There are no blueprint solutions but there are principles, the most important of which is that hygiene and child safety cannot be sacrificed.

There is a need for a balance:

- * between traditional and new
- * between cost and affordability
- * between predefined and chosen.

A lot of stimulating development work remains to be done:

- * by people at the local level;
- * by leaders and decision makers at all levels;
- * by you.

Creativity is a human characteristic which

- * distinguishes us from the animals. (Depriving people from their creativity is depriving them of their humanity.)
- * is a human responsibility which distinguishes true democracy from fascism. (Hard but true)
- * brings quality to life.

SMART and WISER

Formulation of objectives in UNICEF sanitation projects is fundamental. Objectives should be "smart":

- S Specific in terms of what should be achieved
- M Measurable outputs for assessment of results
- A Achievable with available resources
- R Relevant for achieving the objectives
- T Timely or time-bound

They should be also be "wiser." There is a need to assess:

- W Willingness to participate in community managed programmes
- I Importance for the targeted people
- S Sustainability after the end of the project
- E Effectiveness in using human, material and financial resources
- R Replicability in other areas and projects

continued on page 17

■ Angola—Hoping for Better Times, from page 4

In collaboration with an NGO working in the area, UNICEF designed a small slow gravity-filter with mixed media beds of sand, coal and limestone, as an alternative for potable water. The water source was the existing or new hand-dug wells on which a handpump was mounted for extracting the water. It was then conveyed to the various compartments - first through graded aggregates, then through the 3-media compartment, and finally to the drinking water tank. After encouraging results from the first prototype, thirty plants were constructed with the full participation of the villagers. An intensive social mobilization and community education programme accompanied the construction phase that aided in changing the community habits of using the river and unprotected hand-dug wells.

The results of this simple and cost-effective intervention (each system costs \$405, including an India MKII hand-pump) were instant. Diarrhoeal disease cases showed a dramatic 90% fall one month after the evaluation of the project. No new cases of bilharzia have been reported since the project was completed one year ago.

Peri-Urban Upgrading Project

The accumulation of solid waste in the peri-urban cluster of Luanda has

been an environmental catastrophe for many years. These areas account for more than two-thirds of Luanda's two million population, but exist without the basic services of running water, sewerage and solid waste disposal.


In a bairro of about 4 km², 20,000 people lived among "mountains" of accumulated garbage, ponds of mosquito-infested stagnant water, and an extreme paucity of adequate sanitation facilities. Malaria, diarrhoeal diseases and acute respiratory infections were common health problems, averaging at least two disease episodes per month.

In collaboration with the municipal and provincial authorities, the WES sector initiated a new programme of activities. These included social mobilization for community participation and management, advocacy for attracting attention to the expanded sanitation problems of the city, and resource mobilization to involve public and private enterprise in the venture. Inter-sectoral linkages with this project produced inputs from the Health, Information and Education sectors that were integrated into the WES interventions.

After one month of concentrated work involving community municipal and private workers, 1800 tons of solid waste was moved out of the area and

nearly 2km of roads were drained of stagnant water and regraded. In addition, two schools and the health centre were rehabilitated and refurbished with supplies and each household in the community was reached with health education and domestic hygiene messages. Through constant follow up and monitoring of the situation by UNICEF and the continuing vigilance of the trained community activists, solid waste accumulation has not restarted. ORS usage has increased by 70%, malaria and diarrhoea cases have fallen significantly, and latrine construction has increased within the community.

Overview

The above projects, embodying different programming and implementation characteristics, highlight the types of activities that can form part of a complex emergency environment. They provide the developmental ingredients of community participation and management, cost-effectiveness and sustainability. As the peace process continues to hold in Angola, UNICEF's country programme in 1997-98 will act as a transitional bridge to the expected stability for long-term programme planning. The WES sector is well armed with doable projects to meet this challenge, if given the required resources. 

■ Sanitation Enthusiasm in Nigeria, from page 11

Balancing Predefined and Chosen

Freedom to design is an important quality by itself, especially if money can be saved at the same time. How many people make their own clothes and knit their own cardigans? Choosing our car, clothes and the food we eat is close to a human right. It has a creative element that gives quality to life.

In many situations we prefer the design to be ready-made. The building material industry has understood this and produces doors, window-planks and roof-tiles that can be fitted into any house without influencing the size or design. In the same way a well-designed

SanPlat can be installed in any latrine using local materials and skills without impairing creative solutions.

It is more relevant to compare the implications that the choice of one system or the other has on affordability, replicability, sustainability and enthusiasm.

A Paradigm Shift

Comparing VIP-latrines with SanPlats is like comparing houses and doors, comparing a structure with an

element. It is more relevant to compare the implications that the choice of one system or the other has on affordability, replicability, sustainability and enthusiasm. The Nigeria Sanitation Programme makes a clear statement about that. Opting for the SanPlat system has resulted in a paradigm shift; the probability of full sanitation coverage has come 45 times closer. Choosing the SanPlat system has proven to be smart and wise.

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