

Key messages

- The most important objective is to ensure that the camp population is protected from health hazards caused by faecal contamination.
- Ensure that key Sphere indicators are incorporated into waste management projects.
- Consulting the community in all aspects of excreta disposal provision planning will assist in improving optimum usage of services – latrines.
- Specific efforts should be made to ensure that vulnerable groups – women, girls, elderly and the disabled – have safe access to latrines.
- The location of latrines should take into account existing wells, surface and groundwater water sources and water table levels to prevent contamination.
- Water sources near to latrines should be monitored regularly for *coliforms*.
- Anal cleansing and hand-washing facilities should be available at all latrines.
- Establishing latrine / hygiene committees with beneficiaries helps to monitor latrine use, cleanliness and provides an entry point for extension services, e.g. hygiene awareness education.
- Developing monitoring indicators in consultation with the community helps the community to understand the importance of good hygiene practices.
- Construction materials should be sourced sustainably and be resistant to termite infestation where possible.
- Where soil structures are suitable, a good-fitting concrete latrine slab minimises / negates the need for secondary supporting structures for latrines.

EXCRETA DISPOSAL AND SANITATION

INTRODUCTION

Protecting a camp population from health hazards caused by faecal contamination can be complex and challenging. The complexity and challenges become greater where it is not possible to construct family latrines, i.e. communal latrine blocks are used.

The ultimate objective of an excreta disposal project is to ensure that the services provided, i.e. the latrines and associated provisions, encourage the camp population to use them effectively. Failure to work with and consult beneficiaries in any facet of such a project, e.g. latrine design, location, cleanliness, cleansing facilities, among other factors, is likely to result in less than optimum usage. In such instances, increasing open defecation is likely to result, which increases the risk of health hazards caused by faecal contamination.

Excreta disposal projects do not operate in isolation from other sectors. They are inextricably linked to water provision, health and education (within the overall camp management strategy). It is important to ensure that those agencies responsible for related sectors participate in the planning and monitoring of solid waste management projects in order to ensure complementarity and utilise inter-agency synergies.

KEY ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

A number of environmental considerations in excreta disposal projects relate *directly* to preventing human exposure to faecal contamination. These include:

- the protection of surface and groundwater sources from faecal contamination;
- solid waste management – collection, transportation and disposal; and
- safe decommissioning of latrines.

Broader, additional environmental considerations may include:

- ensuring effective drainage in the camp;
- sustainable / environmentally ethical sourcing of latrine construction materials; and
- installing organic digester tanks.

CHECKLIST

Latrine site location

- ✓ Latrine blocks should be constructed downstream of wells.
- ✓ At least 30m from groundwater sources.
- ✓ Have a depth of no more than 1.5m above the water table.
- ✓ Be no more than 50m from the residences of those using them.
- ✓ Community representatives should be consulted as to the most appropriate locations for building latrines.
- ✓ Particular attention should be paid to ensure that latrines are located in areas that minimise threats to women and girls.

Maintenance

- ✓ Latrine blocks should be managed / cleaned by established committees.
- ✓ Latrine cleaning tools and personal protection should be provided.
- ✓ Ensure that there is no standing water around the latrines blocks / washing areas.
- ✓ Pay particular attention to the monitoring of water for *coliforms* from wells relatively close to latrine blocks.
- ✓ If latrines are de-sludged, ensure that there are provisions for the safe collection and disposal of the waste.

Construction materials

- ✓ Appropriately sized concrete latrine slabs may negate the need for secondary supporting structures.
- ✓ Materials resistant to termite infestation should be used, where possible.

Provisions

- ✓ Latrine block provisions should be segregated by gender and provide culturally acceptable levels of privacy.
- ✓ A source of water for anal cleansing / hand-washing should be provided (or ash for the latter).
- ✓ There should be at least one latrine for every 20 persons.
- ✓ A private washing area should be constructed for women to wash sanitary cloths and means of disposal of sanitary protection should be provided.
- ✓ Latrine designs should ensure that all sectors of the community can effectively use them.

Further reading and resources

Emergency Sanitation: assessment and programme design (WEDC, 2002).

<http://www.wedc-knowledge.org/>

Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere Project, 2004).

http://www.sphereproject.org/component/option,com_docman/task,cat_view/gid,17/Itemid,203/lang,english/

Excreta Disposal in Emergencies: A Field Manual (WEDC, 2007).

<http://www.unhcr.org/4a3391c46.html>

Emergency Water Sources (WEDC, 1997).

<http://www.wedc-knowledge.org/>

Emergency Sanitation: Assessment and Programme Design (WEDC, 2002).

<http://www.wedc-knowledge.org/>

Low Cost Sanitation: A Survey of Practical Experience (Pickford, 1995).

http://developmentbookshop.com/product_info.php?products_id=238

Hygiene Evaluation Procedures: Approaches and Methods (Almedom, Blumenthal, Manderson, 1997).

www.unu.edu/unupress/food2/UIN11E/UIN11E00.HTM

Control of Communicable Diseases Manual, 16th Edition (Benenson, ed., 1995).

Hygiene Promotion: A Practical Manual for Relief and Development (Oxfam GB, 2000).

ProAct Network is a Swiss-based non-governmental environmental organisation. Our work aims to help vulnerable communities improve their resilience to disasters, climate change and humanitarian crises, through sustainable environmental management. This briefing note was compiled under the project "Strengthening Environmental Awareness and Management Capacity in Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) in Darfur", funded by Christian Aid.

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