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India WASH Forum news

Proceedings of the Global Sanitation Fund Launch Workshop held on 4th Aug 2009, and Right to Water and Sanitation Workshop Report of 5th Aug 2009, are now ready. Soft copies of the two reports and a limited number of hard copies are available on request by the members.

We invite readers of our monthly update to send in their comments and any original material for the Updates. We will give priority to good quality people centered analytical commentaries for inclusion in our Update. Please send in your commentaries in a max of 100 words if possible.

We would like to know if there is a bibliography of important studies and reports on the water-sanitation-hygiene issues for India? If you know of a network or a source where these are available then please let us know.

India WASH Forum was engaged with Freshwater Action Network and WaterAid in the Pre-SACOSAN meeting held in Colombo from 9-11 November, 2009. The meeting discussed on the progress chase matrix in all the South-Asian countries; action and activities taken by CSOs and key sector hurdles of problems in achieving the goals.

Commentary- Water less urinals for a few vs. no toilets for many

Media report these days bring out stories on the plan by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) to upgrade 1,000 public conveniences into waterless urinals in view of the upcoming Commonwealth Games.

According to the civic agency, these urinals will come up at important Games venue stretches and would be ready by June 2010. The MCD expects to earn Rs.5 crore (US\$ 1 million) per year after leasing out these urinals for five years. While the civic agency's engineering department will construct the urinals, maintenance and operation will be handed over to a company that will be given advertisement rights.

However, a journey on the roads of Delhi will make you feel that the number of public toilets in Delhi is few and a vast majority of the public toilets are in bad shape owing to poor maintenance. The MCD itself maintains that there are 4,000 urinals and toilets in the city that suffer from non-maintenance.

Commentary- Water less urinals (contd.)

A vast majority of Delhi's lives in slums which are devoid of basic sanitation facilities. At the National level, most documents and policy schemes note the norm for public toilets to be 1 latrine seat for 50 people. The City Development Plan of Delhi released in 2006 states that the norm according to the Environmental Improvement Scheme of JJ clusters is 1 latrine seat for 20-25 people.

Different departments: different norms

Meet the officials of various departments in Delhi and one would answer different norms for toilet seats. The Chief Engineer, Engineering Department, MCD, states that 1 latrine seat is installed if there are 20 users to use it in one day. The officials from the Slum and JJ Department, MCD, mention that the norm in slum areas is 1 latrine seat for 150 people and a 20-20 Community Toilet Complex (a 20-20 CTC – means a toilet complex which has 20 latrine seats for men and 20 latrine seats for women) for a plot meant for 500 households. If it is assumed that there are 5 members in each household, 500 households would mean 2,500 people, and assuming there is an equal number of males and females, then there are 1250 males and 1250 females. Hence, it works out that there is 1 latrine seat for 62.5 people; or 2 latrine seats for 125 people of each sex. The Sanitary Inspectors, DEMS (Department of Environmental Management Services), MCD, speak of 1 latrine seat for 25 people of the same sex.

Reality Check

A study by Centre for Civil Society revealed the true picture with regard to public toilets in Delhi, particularly in the slums and resettlement colonies of the city. The study aimed at looking at number of toilet seats available to women across various slums and resettlement colonies in Delhi. The study results in terms of the ratio of women to toilet seats comes out to be -

- 0 in areas like Sanjay Colony, Jhilmil Colony and Bawana JJ resettlement colony;
- 1 latrine seat for 20 women in B Block Balmiki Basti
- 1 latrine seat for 100- 150 women in Rajiv Camp in Jhilmil Colony and Bawana JJ resettlement colony; and
- 1 latrine seat for 250 women in Savda Ghevra and Madanpur Khader JJ resettlement colonies.

Hence, the ratios are very different from the norms suggested. Typically, out of the 20 latrine seats in a Women's Block in a CTC, 4 are reserved for children; the ones for children are without a door. Due to this, the ratio is actually even more skewed in the case of women.

This calls for the urgent need for urgent attention of the MCD to look into the toilets in these areas and across the city. The need for the policy makers is to clearly define the norms for the number of latrine seats to users, the infrastructural requirements for CTCs and the placement of CTCs. The implementation agencies must follow these norms strictly.

Romit Sen

This article is based on media reports and inputs from the Study on Public Toilets in Slums of Delhi by Centre for Civil Society.

Review - A Survey of Household Water and Sanitation (ASHWAS)

There has been a drastic scaling down of official coverage estimates for habitations covered with safe drinking water, from 96% down to 69%. Rural and urban sanitation coverage (usage of toilets) has shown nearly a 300% increase in the last 9 years (from 20% to 59%). The census 2011 is not far away. High quality assessments of status of water and sanitation are needed.

ASHWAS (A Survey of Household Water and Sanitation) is a report by Arghyam Trust, that fills this critical gap in high quality assessments of status of water and sanitation, for the state of Karnataka. "It is a survey conducted by Arghyam to ascertain the status of household water and sanitation in rural Karnataka, from a citizen perspective". The report objectives have been described as collecting and analysing perceptions of water and sanitation from the people, to reflect on and draw inferences for deepening the discourse and addressing the policy makers. The report therefore represents a citizens report card on various parameters it has chosen to study.

The Report is the result of collaboration of several 18 NGO partners and the Public Affairs Centre, professional inputs of Feedback Ventures and the Arghyam Trust. As an alternative survey of household water and sanitation status, this is perhaps the most ambitious survey in terms of size and scale by any NGO. The survey quantifies variables from 17,200 household interviews (100 households from 172 Gram Panchayats), into results/evidence for key indicators of water-sanitation-hygiene status for the state and produces district reports as well, in one published report. An ambitious effort underway to go back to the GPs/people to share the outcome of the survey with all the Gram Panchayats surveyed.

The ASHWAS report itself is presented in easy to read format illustrated district wise for main indicators of water, sanitation and hygiene and an overall comment on Equity considerations, governance and satisfaction levels. The survey has relied on simple indicators to build the research conclusions. A state wise summary across key indicators that is very helpful. The Report is a useful contribution to all organisations and individuals working in or interested in addressing the challenge of rural water and sanitation challenge.

Key findings of the report

Sanitation status. The survey identifies open defecation at 72% of the rural population, much higher than the official 51% status reported by the government. It implies that several toilets exist on paper but are either not in use or have been abandoned. All the 14 Nirmal Gram Panchayats (NGPs) that came in the sample survey of ASHWAS, are verified and found to be not true.

The report identifies affordability and space as the two major constraints for the prevailing high open defecation in Karnataka. Behaviour and attitudinal barriers are not identified as barriers that prevent people from building and using toilets in rural Karnataka. As evidence, over 80% of the respondents of the survey who defecate in the open admit that this is not what they want to do, and affordability of constructing a toilet is cited as the major constraint alongwith space. These reasons (affordability and space) are often dismissed by proponents of Community Lead Total Sanitation. The report does not comment whether the current incentive lead individual toilet construction programme of the government (TSC) incentive needs to be enhanced.

Drinking water status. It is not possible to ascertain from the report, the coverage status for drinking water since more than one variables are involved in making this assessment.

While 78% respondents report availability of water throughout the year, 45% respondents report experiencing shortages during the year. What do we conclude from this about assured availability of drinking water is not clear. The current drinking water coverage status for Karnataka is only 42% as per the government estimates.

Given the high Fluoride contamination, the real status for safe, adequate and assured drinking water supply would fall even below the recently revised estimates of government of India and present a frightening picture of drinking water insecurity in Karnataka. This important aspect has not been highlighted by the ASHWAS report.

The report shows a relatively high(33%) of piped water supply in rural Karnataka. Piped water schemes rely on electricity charges and expensive operations and maintenance. All the GPs studies by ASHWAS report large under recoveries on this account.

Incidence of diarrhoea. The survey reports a surprisingly low incidence of household diarrhoea. As compared to 20% households reporting incidence of Chikungunya, only 10% diarrhoeal incidence per family in a year was reported. Perhaps there is an under reporting of incidence for a one year recall period by a household. Diarrhoea is often cited as the second biggest contributor to child mortality after Respiratory illness(Pneumonia being the single largest killer).

Water Quality. Fluoride contamination at 60% of the samples tested, is even higher than Bacteriological contamination(38%). Nitrate contamination is also high at 36%(of handpumps tested).

As was expected, some perceptions can be completely untrue. The report is able to find this because it has done a parallel physical verification for a variable that is possible to do. While 69% of the GPs believed that that water was not contaminated and 54% households reported full satisfaction with water quality, water testing by ASHWAS survey showed 60% Fluoride contamination and 38% bacteriological contamination.

While a relatively higher number of rural people are accessing piped water, the increasing proportion of households boiling water (13%) is observed. The increasing percentage of people boiling water for drinking purpose- is this a new trend or is it an old one? Has this resulted in lowering the diarrhoeal incidence in Karnataka? If this is so then this is a great achievement that has not been acknowledged in any research. If not then what is behind the lowering of Diarrhoea?

Menstrual Hygiene and burden on women for collecting water is well brought out in the report. Lack of awareness and affordable sanitary napkins for menstrual hygiene(94% women use cloth), adolescent girls in school have no access to sanitary napkins and more is highlighted. There is a clear case for school level sanitary napkins provision for girls.

Some unanswered questions

The ASHWAS study is a gigantic capacity-building exercise for Arghyam with its entire team taking part in this exercise, in addition to being a study. SHG members (200) have been primary surveyors, NGOs (18) have been field managers(30 coordinators and 45 supervisors), but market research and watsan experts have also been involved. Villagers have been respondents and participants in water quality tests. Arghyam's own capacities have been built. All very unique and credible for a survey methodology. However there are some questions that remain unanswered.

Review - A Survey of Household Water and Sanitation (ASHWAS) contd...

The report being a one time snapshot of information, does not help us see any trend for the state in terms of movement or progress in water-sanitation-hygiene, leave alone for the districts. For example the report confirms that “most toilets” in schools are “defunct” and only 50% GPs have toilets in anganwadis. Why this is so is not discussed in the report. This is a limitation of the structure of the ASHWAS report where analysis is narrative explanatory and for any cause and effect relationships between a rich array of data, is not possible. Another example is water contamination. Dr.A.K Susheela, the Fluoride expert says that the incidence of high Fluoride in drinking water impairs absorption of food and thereby contributes to malnutrition and Anaemia among the rural poor. Comments and correlations like this make a report more useful.

The impact of water and sanitation interventions, as measured by health impact(diarrhoeal incidence reduction), is not evident in the ASHWAS survey. Open defecation is high, water is contaminated with bacteria and the village environments are not clean - yet incidence of diarrhoea is low? Is there any other study that validates or confirms the low prevalence of diarrhoeal incidence in Karnataka? Have the people not reported the real incidence of diarrhoea?

Some critical issues that are either not fully addressed or have been missed out from the ASHWAS report. These include questions like whose priority matters in building household toilets, what does adequate space and finances mean, what bearing does livelihoods status and migration have on rural people building and sustaining toilet usage, what is the perception of women in terms of any increased burden on them to maintain clean toilets and fetch water for flushing and what needs to be done to reduce this burden, what is the significance of water availability in constructing and using toilets, what are the cultural and religious factors that inhibit toilet construction inside a home and how to address them, any family dynamics that prevent toilet use by women including the daughter in-laws, etc. Similar issues in the drinking water and hygiene arena also need to be explored to understand the trends and barriers in ensuring access and coverage on the one hand and the larger and worsening scenario of water crisis for districts and states of India.

In future studies, in other states, if the ASHWAS report format is adopted, it may be better to give up the district wise presentation format(more as a report card) in favour of theme/issue wise analysis and presentation for the state. Instead of relying on household level survey, more number of village surveys(not GPs) representing different social and geographical types, with Focus Group Discussions could be sufficient and generate sub regional and social contextually rich information as well as linkages between water and sanitation and some other issues(health, livelihoods, migration and poverty). Gender and exclusion can also be studied in depth.

The Arghyam report can be seen as a citizen's report card, which does not choose to interpret findings or make demands as is done in more qualitative reports, it allows the statistics/findings to speak for themselves. The underlying assumption may have been that the exercise will mobilise broader opinion, as people interpret results for themselves and start posing questions to the government. This is said to have worked in the context of citizens' report cards done by Public Affairs Centre in Bangalore, but that is in the context of a metro where there is high corporate and media interest. Will the same work for rural areas? The back to the villages dissemination of the study findings by Arghyam is aimed at ensuring that the results of the survey reach back to the villages and for people to see the results and help them articulate their demands.

Will such a study make people internalise the constraints of the state and not make sharp demands or will some politically aware groups use the findings to mobilise people and make demands on the state, needs to be seen as the outcome of any research, not just ASHWAS.

Depinder Kapur

News and information update

1. **A paper on the assessment of the impact of climate change on the megacities of India and of the current policies and strategies to meet.** Read the report at - <http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/climatechange-urbansymposiumNair.pdf>
2. **Book – Climate Change: Politics and Facts** - By Sunita Narain, Director, Centre for Science and Environment. This book attempts to demystify climate change through various fact sheets – Download the book at - http://www.cseindia.org/equitywatch/pdf/politics_facts.pdf
3. **E-book of the Groundwater Quality Report in Karnataka State (Source:IWP)** - http://www.indiawaterportal.org/sites/indiawaterportal.org/files/An%20Overview_0.pdf
4. **Banking on nature's assets: how Multilateral Development Banks can strengthen development by using ecosystem services.** This report identifies entry points for mainstreaming ecosystem services in Multilateral Development Banks' (MDBs') core operations and describes a portfolio of tools to help. It also presents a range of policy options that MDBs can help country partners implement to sustain critical ecosystem services. Read the report at - http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/banking_on_natures_assets.pdf
5. **Boiling point: containing the 'spill over' of climate change on the Indian subcontinent.** This report presents case studies from different parts of India, where local communities are under the assault of climate change. Calls for action that can help in long term mitigation and local level adaptation and ten broad areas of intervention have also been identified in the given national context. Read the report at - <http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/boiling%20point.pdf>
6. **Urban governance for adaptation: assessing climate change resilience in ten Asian cities:** This research, undertaken with a set of partner research institutes, examines how to manage climate-related impacts in an urban context by promoting planned and autonomous adaptation in order to by improve resilience in a changing climate. Read the report at - <http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/boiling%20point.pdf>

Media Alerts

- **State to do away with manual cleaning of drains**
<http://www.hindu.com/2009/11/30/stories/2009113058500300.htm>
- **Diarrhoea kills over a million over-fives each year** - <http://www.scidev.net/en/news/diarrhoea-kills-over-a-million-over-fives-each-year.html>
- **India: Cabinet promises better access to water for women and minorities** - <http://www.irc.nl/page/50733>
- **Australia pledges \$70 million for research projects in India** - <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/environment/developmental-issues/Australia-pledges-70-million-for-research-projects-in-India-/articleshow/5223291.cms>

Media Alerts

- *Rapid Urbanization Pushing Local Government Budgets to the Limit in India* - <http://www.adb.org/Media/Articles/2009/13045-indian-urban-developments/>
- Major rain water harvesting programme for Coimbatore City - <http://www.hindu.com/2009/11/13/stories/2009111359600300.htm>
- Kolkata facing brutal future in warmer world- <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/environment/global-warming/Kolkata-facing-brutal-future-in-warmer-world/articleshow/5223335.cms>
- Human-animal conflict takes heavy toll on wildlife - <http://www.dailypioneer.com/215245/Human-animal-conflict-takes-heavy-toll-on-wildlife.html>
- River poisoning results in water scarcity in Aizawl - <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/details.asp?id=nov0509/ne7>
- Jabalpur High Court has passed an order which will have far reaching implication on status of local bodies in Urban Areas. The Court has stayed holding of civic body elections in Scheduled Areas inhabited by tribals. Though the order is for Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in Fifth Scheduled (dealing with provisions as to the Administration and Control of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes) areas of Madhya Pradesh but honourable High Court has asked Parliament to pass a separate legislation for ULBs in Scheduled Areas.

Upcoming Events

ADB has announced a new video competition – ***My View: The Asia-Pacific Climate Change Video Contest*** – to promote awareness of climate change, stimulate debate, and encourage climate change solutions in the lead-up to the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. Read about the competition at <http://www.adb.org/Media/Articles/2009/13052-asian-climates-changes/>

Managing Urban Air Quality - An orientation programme for regulators, city planners, NGOs, academicians and consultants. December 21 – 24, 2009. The programme intends to deepen the understanding of issues of air pollution challenges of urbanisation, assessment of pollution sources and their relative contribution, mitigation strategies and air quality management and governance. For details visit - http://www.cseindia.org/aagc/cleanair_imperatives.asp

Water harvesting, storage and conservation (WHSC - 2009) - IIT Kanpur. A three day conference which is expected to pave way for producing compendium of technological options, policy guidelines and implementing mechanisms for water harvesting, storage and conservation. Read about the programme at - <http://www.indiawaterportal.org/post/8332> (Source: IWP)

3rd International Perspective on Current & Future State of Water Resources & the Environment – January 5-7, 2010, Chennai. The conference will contain a variety of technical sessions with topics relevant to both developed and developing countries. The emphasis will be on global effect of regional issues and solutions. For details visit - <http://content.asce.org/conferences/india2010/index.html>

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India WASH Forum

India WASH Forum is a registered India WASH Forum is a Registered Indian Trust. It is affiliated to the WSSCC Geneva and is a membership based coalition of Indian organizations and individuals working on water, sanitation and hygiene.

A unique feature of IWF is its non-hierarchical set up. The organisation is a coalition and its Trustees are on the IWF as individuals and not representing the organisations they are associated with. The agenda and activities that India WASH Forum are determined at the initiative of the Trustees and Members and support from organisations and individuals. We receive a very small operations grant from WSSCC.

Our Charter includes the following commitments;

- ❑ **Promoting knowledge generation** through research and documentation which is linked to and supported grassroots action in the water-sanitation-hygiene sectors. Special emphasis is given to **sector-specific and cross-cutting thematic learnings**.
- ❑ **Supporting field-based NGOs and networks in their technical and programmatic work.** The IWF would also consistently highlight gender and pro-poor considerations, and provide a national platform for interest groups working in the sector to come together.
- ❑ **Undertaking policy advocacy and influence** work through
 - Monitoring and evaluations
 - Media advocacy and campaigns, and
 - Fact finding missions
- ❑ **Undertaking lobbying and networking to promote common objectives** in the sector.

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