Synopsis of 3rd Community of Sanitation Practice Meeting
Sanitation at the urban & policy level in low income countries
5th December 2008, Development Planning Unit (DPU) UCL, London

Dr. Andy Cotton (WEDC) kicked off the day with a round up of the previous two meetings of the series, held in January and May 2008. The morning comprised of four presentations, the first being a background paper on governance issues, followed by three topic presentations. The main points of each are summarised below.

1. Governance and Sanitation that works for the urban poor – Adriana Allen (DPU)
   Adriana reflected upon the changing debate of sanitation in development and the legacies which continue to feature in current discourse and governance.
   - Sanitation has evolved from a purely technical to a governance challenge,
   - Recognised provision has shifted from centralised to a wide spectrum of sanitation service providers.
   - Citizens have a role in service co-production
   - Call for need-driven approaches to link policy to the realities of sanitation provision for the poor.

2. Policy, planning and legislative processes in urban sanitation: participation by the poor – Lucy Stevens (Practical Action)
   - How to improve the participation of the poor in policy decisions?
   - Difficult environment, lack of coordination, diverse planning frameworks.
   - Reality of what is going on HH sanitation and policy is delinked
   - What works? platforms to support decisions of poor and maintain a systems view.

3. The Challenge of Financing Sanitation – Sophie Trémolet (Trémolet Consulting)
   - Challenge of public of private good; diversity of sanitation needs; legacy of twinned watsan; legacy of failed supply-driven investments.
   - Insufficient financing AND lack of knowledge of effective use of funds
   - What works? (Appropriate hardware subsidies, demand promotion & community mobilisation, credit mechanisms to mobilise finances)
   - Many unknowns (financing needs, actual costs, sources of finance, appropriate financing mechanisms.)

4. Engaging the Health Sector in Watsan Programs : Why and How ? (Beth Scott – DFID)
   - Why? Common goals of watsan and health sectors (health, economic returns)
   - Challenges? Finance streams, different languages, emphasis…
   - Solutions? Combine complementary skills of health professionals and engineers
   - How? Output focused, lead by example.

Summary of morning session
The difficulties of institutional fragmentation in the sanitation sector were considered. They persists both horizontally, where institutional coordination is problematic; and vertically, where national policy is largely delinked from the realities of household
decisions and local government capacities. In each of the three topics, the need for greater coordination in the sanitation sector was raised. Suggestions of how to do this were:

- Coordinating bodies
- Speak the same language (or providing platforms to connect);
- Focus on outputs, identify common goals
- Need for evidence based knowledge (to serve as universal language)
- Better define the roles and responsibilities to meet sanitation challenges.

The presentations can be found on http://sanitationcommunity.grouphub.com.

**Afternoon Discussion & Intergenerational Panel**

The afternoon session was introduced by Maggie Black’s account of learning how the ‘Great Stink’ brought sanitation on to the political agenda of 19th century Britain. It was a reminder the political negligence which persists towards sanitation, and how little is known of the current networks of small and informal providers who are involved in the business of sanitation.

This was followed with an intergenerational panel discussion giving the perspectives of five sanitation practitioners with different backgrounds and experiences on what each considered to be the known’s and unknowns of sanitation for the poor.

### Topic | Known’s | Unknowns
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**Planning** | • Different systems work in different places (JP)  
• Complex urban intervention programs don’t work, total integration is complicated. (AC)  
• The sheer number of people in urban environments is a challenge (DSJ)  
• Water and sanitation are linked (DSJ) | • How to deal with mix and match solutions in planning (DSJ)  
• How to reconcile shared toilets in MDG’s (DSJ)  
• Know people shit but not how much (JP) |
**Participation of Stakeholders & Partnerships** | • Sanitation is both household and government responsibility (DSJ)  
• Small providers are prevalent (DSJ)  
• Limited agency of local organisations working on their own (MM)  
• Can’t do it without government (AC)  
• Benefits from participation (JP)  
• Charismatic leaders are essential (AC) | • Where to draw line for government intervention, re: small providers (DSJ)  
• How to link the many and varied institutions? (DSJ)  
• How to make partnerships work, different backgrounds, common language.(CdS)  
• How to integrate participation into planning (JP) |
**Working at Scale** | • To achieve work at scale need to engage with governments (MM) | • What will work at scale? (JP, AC)  
• Is scaling up the right approach? (JP, AC) |
| Technology | • Many different technologies available (JP)  
• Technology led approaches don’t work (AC)  
• “On-site sanitation” is a misnomer, just a temporary holding site. (DSJ) | • How much the different technologies cost (life cycle)? (JP) |
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| Tenure | • Land tenure is a big issue (DSJ) | • how land tenure is really playing out in practice (DSJ)  
• How to responds to high rental rates (DSJ) |
| Communication and information | • Identified good practice (JP)  
• Sanitation is driven by merits of good health, but this is not what really motivates people. (CdS)  
• Value of learning alliances, learning lessons around particular topics (CdS). | • Are we learning lessons from the past? (AC) |

**Final thoughts of the COP series 2008**

Several recurrent themes have emerged throughout the series of meetings. These will be expressed in a consolidated synopsis of the series, however the main points include:

- Need for a more sophisticated discussion on what sanitation is and trying to achieve
  - to go beyond the latrine and “toilet counting”
- Demand for sanitation at household level is relatively well understood
  - But how to meet this demand with appropriate and adequate supply of services.
- Time frame of implementation
- The modular networks of small providers in sanitation provision
- Need for improved definition of roles and responsibilities in sanitation
- Institutional fragmentation
- Sanitation as a political issue
  - Improved advocacy & problem representation
  - Building a case of negligence

**Outcomes**

There is a consensus that the opportunities to share knowledge and networking were valuable to participants. BPD offered to host the next meeting in 2009 and commitment was expressed by participants to continue the initiative.

**Actions**

- Synopsis of COP2008 series to be circulated for comments & published.
- Output a list of researchable questions.
- Next meeting to be hosted by BPD, London (further info to follow.)
5th December 2008

Announcements

- 34th WEDC International Conference: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene: Sustainable Development and Multi-sectoral Approaches, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 18-22 May 2009. [http://www.wedcconference.co.uk](http://www.wedcconference.co.uk) **Please note: Submission deadline 05/01/09**


- A role play exercise CD is available on 'Reaching informal settlements: Water and sanitation for the urban poor' for more information contact [jeff.broome@arup.com](mailto:jeff.broome@arup.com), Tel: +44 (0) 113 242 8498