

Abstract: Third International Conference on Ecological Sanitation

Title	Acceptability of dry sanitation: a preliminary study in two informal settlements in Cape Town, South Africa
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Abstract: (For oral presentation)

Khayelitsha near Cape Town is an area with many socio-economic, environmental and health problems. Included are high rates of worm infestation and diarrhoea amongst the children in the informal settlements. A multisectoral initiative, Khayelitsha Water and Sanitation Programme (formerly Khayelitsha Task Team) was established as a response to this problem. The Water and Sanitation Programme has two main components: a schools programme, that includes deworming of children, the development of educational materials, and improvement of water and sanitation in the schools; and a community based sanitation pilot – the focus of this abstract

An initial pilot programme has recently been undertaken to test four types of dry ecological sanitation toilets in two informal settlements in Khayelitsha. The pilot programme was driven by a multisectoral committee that includes representatives from the local community, officials from the City of Cape Town, researchers from the Medical Research Committee and the School of Public Health at the University of Western Cape, with assistance from a water and sanitation NGO, The Mvula Trust.

The technical aspects of the toilets were monitored by the City of Cape Town, to assess their suitability for use in Khayelitsha, and to determine which type of toilet is most successful. The acceptability of the toilets by the community was assessed through a qualitative research study, using interviews with representatives from the households piloting the toilets. Representatives from each household were interviewed at the start of the pilot, to gauge their perceptions of the current sanitation situation. They were then interviewed approximately nine months later, to assess their views of the toilets after some months of use.

The overwhelming response was favourable. Despite some initial minor technical problems, the toilets are working well, and the users are very satisfied. The main reason given by the toilet users for liking the toilets is that they are their own. This means that they are able to maintain them, keep them clean, and importantly, they feel safe as the toilets are next to their shacks.

Interviews were also undertaken with officials (locally based, and from policy and planning departments) and with community committee members. These respondents all supported the view of the users. The report therefore concludes with a recommendation for the installation of dry sanitation toilets as a feasible option, as part of an integrated approach to sanitation for the informal settlements. (Other toilets being introduced by the council during that period were Pour Flush Toilets - linked to the sewage system and flushed with a bucket of water from a nearby stand-pipe - and containerised toilets)

The current situation:

The initial pilot showed many benefits as noted above. However as it was a small pilot programme over a short period of time, it was agreed that a more substantive study be undertaken. Funding has therefore been made available by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry and the City of Cape Town to expand the pilot programme. This will begin in early 2005

Involvement of the community:

An important part of the pilot programme was training, on both the use and maintenance of the toilets and health and hygiene. The pilot programme was developed with representatives from the community. This was an important aspect of the approach, and a reason for the success. Decisions about which toilets to test, who would test them, information to the wider community were all made in collaboration with the community. An intensive programme of capacity building to support the community is taking place (this is the subject of a second abstract)

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