Sanitation

Improving sanitation conditions for slum dwellers in Nairobi, Kenya

"With these sanitation blocks, people have a chance to keep themselves and their surroundings clean. The tendency to dump waste in the open trenches and drainages is slowly ending and our children are safer when they play about outside".

Mama Veronica, who uses the facility at Mukuru’s Kwa Reuben village

Context: Overcoming a sanitation crisis

With a staggering population of well over 600,000 people, the sanitation conditions in the Mukuru slums almost constitute a humanitarian crisis. The conditions in Mukuru are appalling, lacking basic drainage, waste disposal facilities and clean water supply. Worse still, most of the waste generated drains into the Ngong river, which traverses right through the middle of the slum, leaving it almost choked with litter and highly contaminated.

With funding from the European Union, a project to increase access to sanitation facilities for the Mukuru residents was implemented under CDTF between July 2005 and December 2006. The interventions were designed to establish reliable and sustainable arrangements for the provision and management of sanitation services. The main feature of the project included provision of ablation blocks, with combined toilet, bathing, laundry and water selling facilities; as well as training and social marketing to create behaviour change and stimulate demand for sanitation services.

Objective: Improving the health status of slum residents through provision of sanitation facilities and creating awareness and behaviour change in sanitation practices

- To promote environmental sanitation by providing water supply and appropriate human waste disposal facilities in Mukuru slums;
- To build the community capacity to undertake and manage water and sanitation facilities on a sustainable basis;
- To increase awareness and stimulate demand for sanitation services through training and social marketing events.

Impact: What did we achieve?

- Eight ablation units, each comprising 10 toilets, 10 bathrooms, a communal water selling point (kiosk) and a laundry pad, constructed in eight different villages. Therefore, in total, 80 toilets, 80 bathrooms, 8 water kiosks and 8 laundry pads were provided;
- 5Kms of waste water drainage constructed;
- Local ownership of the facilities developed through participatory planning and implementation of the project with local groups and training of their respective committees;
- 400 outreach trainers received training on Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation (PHAST) to equip them to carry out door to door awareness and behaviour change campaigns with regard to hygiene and sanitation;
- Over 4000 households reached through 8 social marketing events and door to door training by outreach trainers, to create a shift in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour with regard to improved hygiene and sanitation practices.
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Sanitation – A social dignity!

It is said that "water is life and sanitation is dignity"! This dignity is absent throughout most of the expansive Mukuru slums. The poor sanitation conditions found in the slum are aggravated by lack of planning which characterizes most informal settlements. The residents live in squalid conditions occupying tiny semi-permanent structures built from flimsy material such as timber, cardboard, plastic and corrugated iron sheets, which house numbers far beyond their capacity. Toilet and bathroom facilities are hardly provided and the few available overflow with waste. Human waste is often emptied into plastic bags and tossed out into the open drains, a phenomenon that has come to be popularly known as "flying toilets".

The aim of the EU intervention was to set up replicable, reliable and sustainable arrangements for the management of human waste and promotion of hygiene within the slum through partnerships with the local residents. Eight latrines, each with a capacity of handling 400 - 450 users were constructed in eight different villages to increase access to sanitation facilities, concurrent with sanitation improvement awareness campaigns and social marketing of the sanitation services to create a demand for the services. To ensure sustainability the sanitation blocks are based on a pay-for-use service model.

A comparison between the typical shanty, poorly used latrines and the improved, well managed ablution blocks which are easy to clean. The blocks are either connected to the main sewer lines or equipped with septic tanks, therefore providing safe disposal of waste.