

Determining the Indicators of High Quality Shared Sanitation Facilities

Shared sanitation has immensely contributed to sanitation access, but is at best considered a ‘limited’ solution due to the lack of quality standards within SDG6. The Quality Indicators of Shared Sanitation Project (QUISS) aims to identify key criteria of what constitutes ‘high quality’ shared toilets in urban contexts. Vasco Schelbert¹, Christoph Lüthi¹

Introduction

Between 1950 and 2018, urban population increased from 751 million to 4.2 billion, comprising 55 % of the global population [1]. Urbanisation rates typically surpass economic growth rates and infrastructure development, particularly in low-income urban areas. High population density coupled with high poverty levels often make shared sanitation facilities (SSF) the only viable sanitation option, and the number of SSF users has increased from 249 million in 1990 to 603 million in 2015. SSF is three times more likely in urban contexts of low- and middle-income countries than rural areas.

Shared sanitation is an appropriate solution if adequately managed and the new *WHO Guidelines on Sanitation and Health* has recently acknowledged this [2]. Yet, the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) categorises SSF as a ‘limited’ solution. This excludes it from the ‘basic’ category and may incentivise donor agencies and governments not to allocate resources to SSF.

Research targets

Excluding SSF from the JMP framework is usually justified because of operation and maintenance (O&M) problems, particularly, lack of cleanliness [3]. Better understanding of user preferences, priorities and behaviours regarding SSF, including a gender focus, and of O&M, cleaning arrangements and cultural barriers is required. QUISS is commissioned under WSUP’s (Water & Sanitation for the Urban Poor) Urban Sanitation Research Initiative to identify key criteria of what constitutes ‘high quality’ shared toilets in urban contexts.

Qualitative Research Phase

QUISS takes place in Bangladesh, Ghana and Kenya and its qualitative research phase was designed to provide insight about user perceptions and priorities, and of the social organisation aspects of O&M, which is essential to sustain SSF quality, functionality and cleanliness. A literature review was done to draft ‘quality categories’. Then, community meetings were held based on the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) [4].



Photo: GALS meeting (Kumasi, Ghana): Women presenting collected priorities and related issues from the women’s group to the plenary.

Gender-sensitive information about user’s individual sanitation priorities and challenges was gathered and discussed. In each country, two gender-balanced meetings were held with 30 to 50 participants each.

Information from the GALS meetings contextualised the guidelines used for the Focus Group Discussions (FGD), in which user needs and priorities and the challenges of how O&M is socially organised among the users were discussed. At least two women-only, two mixed and one men-only FGDs were conducted in each country. The data was analysed using directed and inductive qualitative content analysis, and led to the determination of qualitatively deduced categories, relating to SSF quality, which were used in the design of an evidence-based quantitative user survey.

Quantitative Research Phase

The categories and drivers of high-quality shared sanitation will be tested in large-scale quantitative surveys, and the sample size is a minimum of 1 200 participants in each country. There will also be structured quality inspections of a minimum of 600 SSF in each country. For triangulation purposes, a remote visual quality inspection of each SSF will be done, and an independent third party will evaluate the SSF photos. Regression analysis, cluster analysis and machine learning techniques will determine the main drivers of high-quality sanitation, and enable the development of key indicators of high-quality shared sanitation.

Conclusion

The expected deliverables are a detailed empirical assessment of the drivers and determinants of user experience and the identification of the minimum standard criteria for ‘high-quality’ shared sanitation. The analysis will support the current agenda-setting debate and provide the basis for implementation decision-making and assist policy makers. The developed criteria will also provide the basis for high-level progress monitoring for future funding decisions and programme design.

- [1] United Nations (2018): *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision*.
- [2] WHO (2018): *Guidelines on Sanitation and Health*. Geneva.
- [3] Mara, D. (2016): Shared sanitation: to include or to exclude? *Trans R Soc Trop Med Hyg*, 110 (5), 265–267.
- [4] Mayoux, L. (2010): *Tree of diamond dreams. Visioning and committing to action on gender justice. Manual for field-testing and local adaptation GALS stage 1*. Oxfam/Novid, The Netherlands.

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