

Use of Toilet Facilities in Ghana

Can the country achieve MDGs for sanitation?

A WSMP brief – August 2008

Introduction

Ghana is currently off-track in terms of achieving the MDGs for access to improved toilet facilities. Things can only change if radical measures (policies, programmes and plans as well as high commitment to implementation) are taken to “rescue” the situation.

Human faeces are the primary source of diarrheal pathogens. In Ghana, official statistics by the Ghana Health Service indicates that about 80% of all OPD cases are sanitation and water-related.

The presence of decent latrines at home reduces time spent on queuing at public latrines, the risk and shame of open defecation, and increased social dignity.

Globally, the United Nations has mandated UNICEF and the WHO to monitor progress on water and sanitation. These two agencies have also created a Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) to undertake this assignment. According to the JMP’s most recent report on sanitation only about 2.2m people in Ghana have access to decent household toilets.¹

Improved and unimproved toilet facilities (definitions – JMP)

To facilitate international comparison, the JMP has defined the following as improved OR unimproved latrine facilities.

Improved sanitation facilities ²	Unimproved sanitation facilities
Flush or pour-flush to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- piped sewer system- septic tank- pit latrine Ventilated improved pit latrine (VIP) Pit latrine with slab Composting toilet	Flush or pour-flush to elsewhere ³ Pit latrine without slab or open pit Bucket Hanging toilet or hanging latrine No facilities or bush or field (open defecation)

Shared and Public latrines

According to the Environmental Health Sanitation Directorate (EHSD) of the Ministry of Local Government Rural development and Environment, public toilets are mainly built for transient populations and areas of heavy public activity. However, there are still quite a number of communities in both rural and urban areas that use public latrines as their main place of convenience due to absence of household toilets. And the JMP reports that more than eleven million people in Ghana (51%) use shared or public facilities². But for the sake of international comparison, the JMP does not include shared or public facilities³. The main reason is that they are not hygienic enough compared to household latrines.

Open defecation

According to the JMP report on sanitation in Africa, open defecation rate in Ghana reduced marginally from 24% in 1990 to 20% in 2006. This negative practice is therefore still quite phenomenal in the country. Both local and international reports indicate that more than 4m

¹ A Snapshot of Sanitation in Africa, Unicef/WHO Joint Monitoring Programme, prepared for the AfricaSan+5 Conference in Durban, South Africa, February 2008.

² A Snapshot of Sanitation in Africa, Unicef/WHO Joint Monitoring Programme 2008

³ www.wssinfo.org

people in Ghana resort to defecating in bushes, drains, and in fields.⁴ According to the Ghana Statistical Service Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey report for 2006, open defecation is prevalent in all the ten regions but most widespread in the Upper East Region with about 82% without any form of latrine, followed by the Upper West Region with about 79% and then the Northern Region with about 73%.

Pan or bucket latrines

The most recent report from the Ghana Statistical Service⁵ indicates that about 180,000 people, representing about 0.8% of the population still use the pan or bucket latrines in Ghana whereas this has been declared globally as unsafe and nationally as both unsafe and illegal.

Sewerage systems

Sewerage systems are virtually non-existent in Ghana apart from Tema and some satellite systems in parts of Accra, Kumasi and a few other cities. This means that the sludge has to be removed from septic tanks or pits for treatment or disposal elsewhere. According to the Environmental Health and Sanitation Directorate (EHSD), only about 4.5% of Ghanaians have access to these sewerage systems. But even then, apart from Tema, many of those satellite systems are found within institutions like government ministries, academic institutions, and hospitals rather than in settlements.

Coordination in sanitation data collection and management

In addition to the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), sometimes a couple of other institutions also gather data on sanitation.

Since different institutions apply different data collection methodologies and definitions, we normally see different figures on sanitation, making it difficult to plan or formulate effective policies in the sector.

It is however refreshing to note that the EHSD is currently compiling a nationwide comprehensive baseline data on sanitation, which include data on latrines as well.

Progress towards the MDG

Since JMP standards are used as the yardstick for measuring global performance and progress towards achieving the MDGs, then instead of Ghana achieving about 30% as at 2006 so that the country could be at 53% by 2015, only 10% had been achieved as at 2006. This is an indication that if the rate of progress should remain as it is now, Ghana will achieve just about 15% by 2015.

=====

Compiled by WSMP Ghana, August 2008
Office Location: Within the Premises of the
Water Resources Commission (Annex)
Tel: 021-763648
Mob: 020-192586 /
024-4430759

⁴ JMP 2006-20%, MICS 2006-24%, National Population Council Fact Sheet four-20%

⁵ Ghana Statistical Service: The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 2006