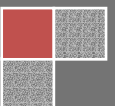


FELT TRUTH BUT UNFELT NEED: ASPECTS OF DRY SANITATION IN FARWEST REGION



RITU PRASAD CHAULAGAIN
GIRA KUMARI BASENT



Title: *Felt truth but unfelt need: Aspects of Dry sanitation in far west of Nepal*

Name of author: Ritu Prasad Chaulagain

Address: Hetauda -5 Makawanpur Nepal
Telephone no: 9741113488, 9849044254

Address (Office): Rural Village Water Resource Management Project (RVWRMP)
Telephone no: 091-526262, 091-526263, 093-420266

Position: Water Resources Advisor (WRA)

Email address: ritu.chaulagain@gmail.com

Academic Qualification: Master in Rural Development
Bachelor in Management

Photograph:



Name of author: Mrs. Gira Kumari Basnet

Address: Dang District, Nepal
Telephone no: 9849063629

Address (Office): Women Development Office, Darchula
Telephone no: 093-420114

Position: Women Development Officer (WDO)
Darchula

Email address:

Academic Qualification: Bachelor in Art (BA)

Photograph:



FELT TRUTH BUT UNFELT NEED: ASPECTS OF DRY SANITATION IN FAR WEST OF NEPAL

KEYWORDS: Dry Sanitation, Eco- San toilet, MDGs

Authors: *Ritu Prasad Chaulagain*, Rural village Water Resources Management Project (RVWRMP) and *Gira Kumari Basnet*, Women Development Office, Darchula

ABSTRACT

Sanitation coverage is critically low in developing countries including Nepal. Despite better coverage in urban areas, sanitation status in rural areas of Nepal is alarming. The conventional sanitation practices are leading to severe environmental problems. Such practices demand a large amount of water for flushing toilets. The irony is that, a large proportion of the population is not getting sufficient water for drinking. Considering the current context and sanitation situation of Nepal, Dry Sanitation is one of the most sustainable and eco-friendly alternative.

The paper has been prepared with data from several articles, publications, field visits, focused group discussion, interviews as well as authors' own experiences. It is divided into four parts. First part deals with the general introduction of sanitation in the context of Nepal and particularly far west region, and linkage between Dry Sanitation and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Second section describes the methodology. Third part explains the key finding mentioning social, cultural, and economic and gender aspects. Similarly, prospects and challenges of Dry Sanitation have also been explored into in the overall context. Finally conclusion and recommendations have been mentioned in the last section.

Dry sanitation has become obvious for environmental sustainability. It is historically accepted practice of Nepal. Although several social, cultural and behavioral barriers exist, field experience shows that dry sanitation has a prosperous future. There is a challenge to increase the Dry Toilet coverage and ease the accessibility through massive awareness campaigns in the community. Strong political commitment and favorable policy environment are also essential for successful implementation of Dry Sanitation.

Introduction

Sanitation is a basic component of development of any society. Over the years, Nepal has made important reforms to institutional frameworks, in recent years; Nepal has made rapid progress in sanitation coverage. Sanitation coverage had reached 46 per cent by 2007, and water coverage had reached 78 per cent. The growth trend of sanitation coverage and increasing hygiene and sanitation achievements indicate that Nepal is on the track to achieve the MDG target. (Nepal country paper for the third south Asian conference on sanitation, 2008 New Dehli). Despite this situation, there are still 54% of people have not got sanitation facilities which is a basic development for all. In the context of far west of Nepal, the situation is not satisfactory and far behind of national averages where only 9% of people have sanitation coverage. Due to massive illiteracy, awareness of people found very low.

Considering the poor sanitation condition of far west region, Rural Village Water Resources Management Project (RVWRMP) is supporting in sanitation sector through increasing awareness and providing subsidy to the people based on economical hierarchy. Eco village concept was introduced in some of selected villages for the purpose of holistic and integrated development through eco- friendly sanitation for developing as an eco model village. The project has supported constructing various forms of toilets such as Sulav and eco- san which are fully and partially supporting the concept of dry sanitation. The concept of dry sanitation is not new in Nepal but it is focused in the surrounding of urban area. Considering the situation, paper describes focusing in different aspect of dry sanitation basically in the far western region of Nepal

Methodology

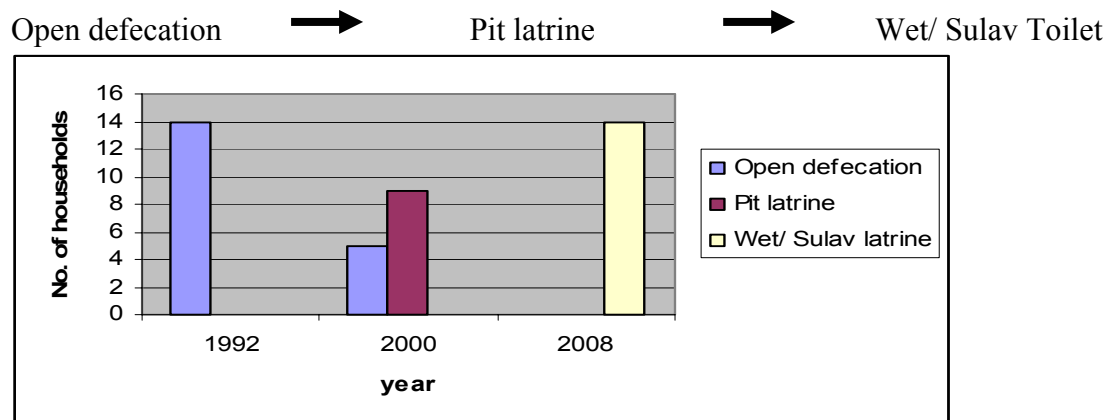
While preparing this paper, relevant literatures were studied that were published or were searched on website. Focused group discussions were done in sanitation scheme implementation site, program VDCs of RVWRMP. Similarly, some of information has been collected interviewing with key informants. Filed observations were another important tool for collecting primary information. During field observation, constructed or construction ongoing toilets were observed and discussed with concerned households. To explore the dry sanitation in the region, sanitation practices of different timeline and existing status have been discussed and analyzed.

Key findings

Aspects of Dry sanitation

Primarily, the socio- cultural factors crucially determined the pace of society. Sanitation practices particularly in toilet construction were found shifted or evolution can be observed in the different timeline. There was a practice of open defecation as a common in most of the rural areas. In decade of ninety, only 6% of households of Nepal had toilet facility. Gradually people have started to construct pit latrine* when population of people increased and scatter settlement developed as agglomeration model.

Major Trends of toilet construction and defecation practice found like as in the rural village of Far West region of Nepal.



The status of using toilet in Lasku, Chhapari VDC, Darchula

* A kind of traditional form of dry pit toilet in Nepal

Cases from Darchula District

When density of population increased, people faced problem to find out appropriate place for defecation. Particularly for children, it was difficult to go a long distance for defecation and dry pit latrine had been constructed near by the house but a separate place. A Lasku village of Chhapari Darchula, 9 households had dry pit latrine out of 14 households in 2002. There was found common problem is that pits were not covered properly and pits were filled by flood water in the rainy season and bad smell was spread surrounding the toilet. When enter the village a bad smell was felt from dry pit latrine. Some of the toilets had been prepared only plinth level without supper structure. Some of people had constructed such toilet in the mobile basis. After filling the pit by faeces it was covered by mud for decomposition.

In the field visit most of people do not want to use human excreta as fertilizer. In the some place, people have grown vegetable or have planted fruit species. The plant had been found nicely grown up in the place where dry pit was built previously.

Women role in construction of toilet found active. They spend most of time in the village rather than male.



Toilet constructed by women initiation,
Chhapari, Darchula

In the Thapagaun of Chhapari VDC, Darchula; women were suffered due to lack of toilet and had to wake up early in the morning to go for open defecation. Most of male in the village go out side for employment. Mrs. Januka Dhami, aged 30, selected as chairperson of sanitation committee from the mass meeting of Lasku village. Before formation of this committee, most of the households did not have any toilet. She committed to promote sanitation in the village and initiated building toilet in each household. In her initiation, all women built toilets in their households. After building the toilet they use toilet properly.

The concept of eco san toilet is not new in Nepal, but most of these toilets have been built in the Kathmandu valley. The application of this technology has been slowly spreading to other part of the country as well (WaterAid, 2008). RVWRMP has started some initiation to promote eco- san toilet in far western region of Nepal. In the beginning, some of eco san toilets were introduced as demonstration. People, who have such toilet, have started to use urine as fertilizer especially in the vegetable farming. It shows that the production of vegetable has been increased. As demonstrative effect, other people have also demanded and started constructing eco san toilet. However, deep rooted culture of not using of any human excreta, people are in general reluctant to use such waste as fertilizer. Using of human excreta as manure has been taken as lower level of work in the society.



Ram Singh Oda, resident of district headquarter Darchula, has constructed an eco- san toilet 2 years ago. He uses urine in vegetable farming in each alternative day which increases production significantly. He shares his experiences that, his wife mostly hesitate to use urine in the kitchen garden because of her unusual practice and she denies using such vegetable as curry.

Eco san toilet of Galphe, Darchula

Some of other people have been found using faeces as manure in his/her farm land especially in vegetable farming. However, they have used human excreta without decomposing properly.

Prospect and challenges of Dry sanitation

Prospects

- In some of the place, water is a scarce resource for using different activities, top hill of far western region they have been collecting water from far distances. So they have not enough water for flushing toilet. Due to this reason, people were found hesitate to build wet toilet. Dry toilet could be a better option particularly for this area. Some of place there is not any water resource nearby their surrounding and depend on rain water which is harvested in rainy season. This collected water is not sufficient for flushing the toilet.
- Many surface water resources such as streams, rivers, springs are used for domestic uses such as drinking, washing in the far west region as well. Open defecation and poorly managed animal waste and drainage have polluted these water sources. Household toilets waste has been discharged to the river. The whole ecosystem of water bodies is being gradually affected.
- From the field observation and discussion, people have been practicing dry sanitation in their own traditional way. It is found indigenous practice of most rural areas of Nepal.
- In eco- san toilets, people have started to use urine as fertilizer in vegetable farming. Gradually people will have practice of using faeces as fertilizer.
- Sulav type of toilets have double pit for the purpose of composting faeces as manure. Some aspects of dry sanitation have been incorporated in the Sulav type of toilet as well.

Challenges

- Very few people have used the human excreta as fertilizer for using in the farm land. The practice of using excreta is not found properly handling. Culturally, using of human excreta is taken as a lower level of works and it is a kind of unusual practice in the rural community of far west of Nepal.
- Due to high level of poverty, people have low level of awareness. They are basically fighting to achieve survival level of needs rather than environmental protection. Despite being bright concept of dry sanitation, there are a rigorous support is needed for convincing the people.
- The previous experience shows that the pit latrines have failed because of poor construction and lacking of technological modernization. There are challenges of making dry toilet as locally acceptable, economically viable and cultural friendly.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion,

- Dry sanitation is a historical accepted practice of Nepal. Flushing toilets have been introduced recently in most of rural village of Nepal. Pit latrines were developed as common practice. It has been constructed traditionally based on people's own knowledge and skill using locally available materials. Pit latrines could not move ahead because of various technological weaknesses as well as locally built without considering the sustainability and environmental impact. Thus, it has not been constructed incorporating the whole concept of dry toilet.
- Due to high level of poverty and deep rooted traditional culture, there is less attention of far west people to protect the environment on sustainable basis. Sanitation is taken as low priority of development.
- In spite of being dry sanitation as one of the sustainable and eco- friendly technology of sanitation, in general, people of rural community have not owned and internalized. Some of socio-cultural practices are not supportive for the development of dry sanitation. Different supporting stakeholders have not taken any initiation promoting dry sanitation as an option of sanitation.

Being lack of sufficient awareness, people of far west region could not draw the attention significantly on dry sanitation. Massive awareness is needed for exploring different aspect of dry sanitation. Technological modernization is essential on previously adapted pit latrine considering the socio-cultural aspect of community. Similarly, supportive policy framework including subsidy policy and political commitment is crucial for the promotion of dry sanitation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Rural Village Water Resources Management Project team participating the Third International Dry Toilet Conference 2009 gratefully acknowledges the financial support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finland, and the Finnish Consulting Group International. Similarly, we express our gratitude to organizer of dry toilet conference, 2009 providing us an opportunity to participate in the conference. We also thank our colleagues and villagers of Far Western Nepal for continued inspiration and encouragement

Reference

Water aid, 2008: *Assessment of urine diverting Eco San toilet in Nepal*, Kathmandu
Water aid, 2008: *Ecological sanitation latrines: The experience of Nepal*, Kathmandu
Nepal country paper for the third south Asian conference on sanitation 16-21 Nov. 2008, New Delhi