

Community-managed Sanitation Blocks

In high-density low-income urban areas, including slum areas, often the only viable sanitation system is community-managed sanitation blocks of the type promoted by SPARC, the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres, an Indian NGO (www.sparcindia.org). These sanitation blocks are designed, built, owned and managed by the communities they serve: they are for the use of the community members, who pay for its upkeep - they are in no sense public facilities, although a community may allow casual use on payment of a per-use fee. The basic reference is Burra et al. (2003) which is detailed below.

These sanitation blocks are better designed and managed than conventional government-funded and contractor-built communal toilet blocks and they cost less. This model of community-designed, built and managed sanitation blocks is easily adaptable to other sociocultural settings: the key point is that each sanitation block is designed, built and managed by the community it serves. Generally help from a local NGO is required initially to catalyze community activity and to interact, on behalf of the community, with and obtain financial support from the local city or town council, which may not at the beginning take the views of poor and very poor communities seriously.

The SPARC approach has been successfully transferred to Africa, in Kibera slum in Nairobi, by the Kenyan NGO Maji na Ufanisi ('Water and Development') and the UK organization Water and Sanitation for the Urban Poor (see Further information below) (Figures 1- 2 on next page).

Reference - essential reading

Burra, S., Patel, S. & Kerr, T. (2003). Community-designed built and managed toilet blocks in Indian cities. *Environment & Urbanization* **15** (2), 11-32; available free at: <http://eau.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/15/2/11.pdf>

Further information

Maji na Ufanisi, 'Kibera Integrated Water, Sanitation & Waste Management Project', webpage at: <http://www.majinaufanisi.org/projects/k-watsan.htm>

SPARC, 'The Sanitation Crisis in Indian Cities', webpage at: <http://www.sparcindia.org/iprojects.html>

Water and Sanitation for the Urban Poor, 'Gatwekera, Kenya', webpage at: <http://www.wsup.com/projects/gatwekera.htm>

University of Leeds, 'Community Sanitation Blocks', webpage at: <http://www.personal.leeds.ac.uk/~cen6ddm/CommunalSanitation.html>



Figure 1. Community-managed sanitation block in Gatwekera village, Kibera, Nairobi. The ground floor is the sanitation compartment, and the top floor is a 'community room' used for meetings, weddings, parties, etc. Underneath the ground floor is ...



Figure 2. Anaerobic digester which receives all the wastewater from the sanitation block. The biogas generated in the digester is used for cooking.

Figures 1 & 2 by courtesy of Rob Clarke, Halcrow/WSUP

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