

Research into Use Summary

- 1. Research project:** A roundtable meeting to develop a research proposal on sanitation and hygiene issues for persons with disabilities
- 2. Lead researcher:** Sue Cavill, WaterAid
- 3. SHARE partners:** WaterAid, LSHTM
- 4. Research budget:** £9,910
- 5. Location:** London, UK

Research description:

This two-day meeting in London in March 2011 explored sanitation and hygiene issues for disabled people in low- and middle-income countries. The first session included a general review regarding the state of knowledge and evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, on these matters. Key issues and shortcomings in policy were highlighted, including the lack of inclusive facilities and discrimination against the disabled. Participants also discussed developing a research proposal using the gaps identified in the knowledge as well as their own expertise and interests. Consideration was given to the different methods used to measure the impacts of access to sanitation and hygiene for disabled people as well as the monitoring and evaluation tools available to understand how these methods could be implemented in order to determine suitable adaptations and interventions.

What is the relevance of the research to national and/or global sector challenges?

According to the World Health Organization, 10 per cent of people worldwide are disabled (690 million people). However, despite disability directly and indirectly affecting such a significant proportion of the world's population, for years the sanitation and hygiene needs of disabled people have been treated as a low priority. This has been to the detriment of disabled people and the wider community, especially families and caregivers as it affects health, dignity, education and employment. The barriers that disabled people face when using sanitation facilities have been categorised as environmental (such as steps and narrow doors), institutional (such as a lack of information from authorities) and attitudinal (such as prejudicial attitudes from the community and service providers), but little action has been taken to address these. There is a lack of both quantitative and qualitative evidence, but the emerging findings are clear: the cost of improving access for all is likely to be far outweighed by the benefits.

Who are the intended users of this research?

The results of this meeting are intended to provide guidance to sanitation and hygiene professionals so that future interventions in the sector can give appropriate consideration to equity and inclusion. Making facilities accessible will not only improve the lives of people with disabilities, but will also benefit other vulnerable groups facing similar challenges, such as pregnant women, the elderly and children. A briefing note based on the workshop has been prepared (<http://www.shareresearch.org/LocalResources/DisabilityWorkshopBriefingNote.pdf>), is available on the SHARE website and has been disseminated within the SHARE consortium and to a broad range of users. A podcast featuring interviews with workshop attendees has also been produced, and is available via the SHARE website (http://www.shareresearch.org/Resource/Details/sanitationmatters_episode2).

