

Sanitation and hygiene research in Malawi



SHARE aims to accelerate progress on sanitation and hygiene in developing countries by generating rigorous and relevant research, and ensuring new and existing solutions are adopted at scale. The consortium is represented in Malawi – one of SHARE’s four focus countries – by WaterAid Malawi and the Centre for Community Organisation and Development (CCODE).

SHARE research underway in Malawi focuses on ecological sanitation, and in particular its implications for sanitation markets and health – two of SHARE’s research pillars. The consortium’s more general research activities, including international meetings and global studies, are also relevant because of the severity of Malawi’s sanitation and hygiene challenges.

Malawi is one of the world’s poorest countries, with almost half of the population living below the poverty line; 46 per cent of children under five are chronically malnourished. Approximately nine per cent of all deaths in the country in 2002 were attributed to water, sanitation, and hygiene-related diseases, with diarrhoeal diseases contributing approximately 6.6 per cent of the total. While steps are being made towards the achievement of the sanitation target of Millennium Development Goal 7, progress is still “insufficient.” Ecosan options are being promoted in urban areas, but these options are expensive and it is not clear that there is sufficient demand for latrine compost and urine in urban areas. Malawi is one of the least urbanised countries in Africa, yet it is also one of the fastest urbanising countries in the world. The activities listed below under SHARE’s four research pillars are relevant to Malawi:

Sanitation markets

- Research is underway to investigate the strengths and weaknesses of ecosan in urban and rural areas in Malawi. Various criteria will be assessed, including the motivating and de-motivating factors for ecosan, the characteristics of households that have adopted ecosan, the use and marketing of human compost, and financial gains from sales of human compost. This research will also examine the levels of excreta-related pathogens in human compost.

Health

- A systematic review of the impact of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) interventions upon the nutritional status of children is being carried out at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. This work will help inform better policy on nutrition, health and WASH.

Urban sanitation

- SHARE is organising a roundtable meeting in London to discuss the data available for monitoring access to sanitation in slums with the intention of developing methods to make them more reliable. Discussions will also explore ways in which this data can be better used to inform investments at the national and city levels.

Equity

- In November 2010 researchers, policy-makers and practitioners met to discuss the neglected issue of menstrual hygiene management. Critical gaps in knowledge were identified, including the lack of guidance about what works in different contexts. Research is now underway to collect, review, and synthesise existing knowledge to produce guidelines for practitioners.
- In March 2011, researchers, policy-makers and practitioners met to share knowledge and identify research needs for people with disabilities to access sanitation and hygiene services.

SHARE PhD fellowship

- At LSHTM in the autumn of 2011, Richard Chunga will begin researching the participation of private operators in emptying household and communal ecological sanitation latrines in urban Malawi.

More information about SHARE

SHARE (Sanitation and Hygiene Applied Research for Equity) is a five-year initiative (2010-2015) funded by the UK's Department for International Development. The consortium includes the following partners:

- **International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh**
- **International Institute for Environment and Development**
- **London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine**
- **Shack/Slum Dwellers International**
- **WaterAid**

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