

Communal latrines could be way to go

A section of the elite world thinks that shared latrines are an essential stepping-stone towards realising universal access to sanitation. Academicians, aid and development agencies and governments seem to profess this idea. They say this is a far better suggestion than that of using open spaces for human waste disposal.

In so doing, they are effectively implying that some cultures belong to the olden days. And that they should be placed firmly in the past. You will not contest this idea. Will you? The shared latrine concept, if properly handled, could be one of the final pieces to solve the open human waste disposal puzzle.

It could be the ultimate solution for the sanitation-for-all initiative that we have been looking for, for a while. If this idea is not tested, how shall we know that it works? How shall we get to a level where statistics of people having no latrines is reduced to zero? So, the shared-latrine idea looks good.

Caution! While implementing shared latrines, bear in mind that some things could go wrong.

Like, who is going to provide funding for safe, shared toilets? Who is going to collect user fees to facilitate cleaning, washing and ensuring good sanitation practices in communities?

Some people do not speak highly of shared latrines. That it could cause public health emergencies, especially in congested settlements. But through an analysis, we can be able to discover and fill the gaps.

In addition, cultures that encourage open human waste disposal must be discouraged. We could also come up with name-and-shame initiatives. It is a deterrent for the people that practise open human waste disposal. Naming and shaming allows leaders to swing into action and ensure that their people stop open defecation practices.

The idea of shared latrines is a good step towards ensuring wide access to toilet facilities by communities. At the forefront of this project should be the youth, who could come together and dig a pit-latrine in a day or two.

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