

IRC

THE HAGUE, THE NETHERLANDS | 12 – 14 MARCH 2019

All systems go!

Getting the politics right: understanding the political economy of rural and urban WASH in South Asia

Paper for the WASH systems symposium

A. J. James



50 years of IRC.
WASH systems that transform lives.



© 2019, IRC

This paper was drafted by A. J. James for the All systems go! WASH systems symposium, The Hague, The Netherlands, 12-14 March 2019.

Cite this publication as follows. James, A. J., 2019. Getting the politics right: understanding the political economy of rural and urban WASH in South Asia.

For all proceedings of the All systems go! WASH systems symposium, please check <https://www.ircwash.org/proceedings>

We grant permission for individuals and organisations to share and adapt this material, in whole or in part, for noncommercial use, educational, scientific or development-related purposes, provided that the appropriate and full citation is given. This publication is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Netherlands License. View the terms of the license here: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/nl/deed.en>

Abstract: Politicians are often ignored by development practitioners responsible for planning and implementing donor-assisted WASH projects in developing countries, who view them as corrupt, capricious, self-serving, uninformed and moved by short-term electoral gains. They focus their attention, instead, on receptive bureaucrats who appear to be the antithesis of politicians: suave, educated, perceptive, receptive and anglicised.

Politicians, however, shape the destinies of countries in more ways than we know, largely because development sector professionals – especially foreigners – are unaware of the influence they actually have on a country's development. Many professionals feel they know what's best for the country and they only need funding and formal permission to implement their ideas. They do not realise these may not only be inappropriate recommendations in the country's context, but that bureaucrats and politicians may have real solutions and are more entitled to feeling responsible for the welfare of their own country.

Given this scenario, it is useful for us development sector practitioners to understand why people do what they do (especially politicians and those who vote for them) and how to provide them the right incentives so they do what we want them to do, such as support WASH policies, behaviour change programmes and investment in WASH systems. While Political Economy Analysis (PEA) systematically studies these compulsions, it is often done separately and not with the intention of directly influencing intervention and activity planning. This paper shows, with real-life examples, how PEA can be used in practical ways in WASH system planning and promotion.

Political engagement is critical to effective WASH

Politicians are often ignored by those planning and implementing donor-assisted WASH projects in developing countries. They are viewed as being corrupt, capricious, grasping, self-serving and uninformed, moved more by

the short-term winds of political fortune than by sagacious long-term perspectives of their constituencies. At best, they are viewed as people whose blessings are needed to kick-start or trouble-shoot projects (invited to inaugurate the First Multi-Stakeholder workshop or an international conference) or who need to be taken on foreign junkets (shopping trips for their wives) in exchange for later support for the project. Attention is focused, instead, on receptive bureaucrats who often appear the anti-thesis of the politician: suave, educated, perceptive, receptive and anglicised.

Politicians, however, shape the destinies of countries in more ways than we know, largely because development sector actors are rarely aware of how political systems and procedures work, and how much influence they actually have on a country's development. Given that many development sector actors feel that they know what's best for the country – and only need the funding and the formal permission to implement their ideas – it may come as a pleasant surprise that bureaucrats and politicians also have the same feelings! And, given that they run the country, they are probably more entitled to those feelings than we are.

Given this scenario, it is probably useful for us development sector practitioners and professionals to take a step back, understand why people do what they do (especially politicians and those who vote for them) and then figure out how to provide the right incentives for them to do what we want them to do such as support WASH policies, behaviour change programmes and investment in WASH systems.

Political Economy Analysis (PEA) is a systematic study of these compulsions but these are often done in a disjointed fashion and without the intention of directly influencing intervention and activity planning. Accordingly, using real-life examples, this paper tries to show how PEA can be used in practical ways in WASH system planning and promotion.

Understanding political influence

Three examples from India may help to clarify the extent to which politicians can influence WASH performance on the ground.¹

¹ All three examples are from the World Bank supported study on Gender and Social Inclusion in Urban Water Supply and Sanitation in 200 slums in Pune and Gwalior cities in India, which also reviewed 10 major initiatives in urban WASH in India (see James, 2014).

Facilitating WatSan in Pune slums

Dwellers in the 1,300 odd slums in Pune city can call their local Ward Councillor in case they have any problem with the water supply and toilets in their houses or the public taps and public toilets installed and maintained by the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC). The Councillors then call the PMC staff to ensure that the problem is sorted out within 24 hours. This was not always the case and WatSan issues were major problems in these slums, just like in any other city in India. But because aspiring Councillors talked to slum dwellers – and discovered that they could win their political allegiance by ensuring that their WatSan issues were sorted out – this is a major win for Pune slums.

Unfortunately, however, few local councillors in other cities have made the simple connection between providing good WASH facilities and votes!

Stealing a promising initiative in Trichy slums

An astute City Police Chief who told his Mayor in 2000 that a growing law-and-order problem in the slums of Tiruchirapalli town (or Trichy for short) was largely due to poor lighting and poor sanitation facilities started a fascinating and celebrated initiative in urban sanitation in Trichy town. The Mayor asked three local NGOs (including SCOPE and Gramalaya) working with WaterAid on WASH to help him sort out the problem. Within a year, 25 Community Managed Toilets (CMTs) had been built by the NGOs; another 75 had been built by the government; and NGOs had trained users (largely women) in all 100 community toilets to operate these CMTs (under the World Bank supported Tamil Nadu Urban Development Programme (TNUDP) Phase I). Using the same model, the Tiruchirapalli City Corporation (TCC) increased the number of CMTs to more than 160. It paid for the construction, rehabilitation and repairs of CMTs, and provided subsidised electricity and water. The NGOs formed and trained Sanitation and Hygiene Education (SHE) teams of self-help group (SHG) women to run and maintain the toilets and conducted intensive awareness campaigns through door-to-door meetings, focus group discussions (FGDs), cultural programmes and street plays. The local community was happy to pay a nominal fee to use the toilets. By 2011, there were 167 CMTs, but only 67 of these were maintained by SHG women – while 30 were being run by some NGOs (including those set up and run by local politicians), and 70 had been given to private contractors (many operating under the patronage of local politicians).

SHGs were widely seen as becoming ‘prosperous’ from community collections – and were seen spending the money on celebrating festivals in the slums. A certain set

of TCC Corporators staged street protests on why the poor were being made to pay user charges and instigated covert resistance among slum dwellers to paying user charges in slums with new CMTs. Subsequently, the Councillors changed tack and sought to construct and take over the CMTs. Once CMTs are constructed, the Councillors either appoint their own persons to collect user charges or they make arrangements with other NGOs to be paid a share from the daily collections.

Thus, although a political initiative started a successful collaborative initiative between elected representatives, the bureaucracy, NGOs, a donor agency and the local community, its unexpected prosperity proved too much of a temptation for the local politicians to pass up!

Deliberately neglecting public toilets in Gwalior city

A concerted effort by UN-HABITAT, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Water Aid, a local NGO called Sambhav, and the Gwalior Municipal Corporation (GMC) saw the start of the Slum Environmental Sanitation Initiative (SESI) in 2005, to provide community toilets for about 5,000 households that lacked access to a water supply and sanitation infrastructure in the 16 worst slums of Gwalior city. Slum communities were mobilised over several visits, self-help groups were formed, training was conducted, education campaigns organised in schools, exposure visits made to Trichy, and by 2008, tripartite MoUs to maintain the CMTs built by the GMC were signed by the women’s groups (called Nirmal Samitis or Cleanliness Councils). Unlike in Trichy, however, the GMC refused to provide any further hardware support to the CMTs after handing over the newly constructed (or rehabilitated) CMTs to the groups – although it agreed to set up Revolving Funds to maintain the CMTs.

Over time, the 20 CMTs deteriorated due to heavy usage and the lack of adequate maintenance. There were two reasons for this. One, no one in the newly-constituted GMC seemed to be aware of the Revolving Funds or how they were to be used. And two, the ‘original purpose’ of the funds – that is, to support the costs of building household toilets or laying new sewer pipes – was considered accomplished, after which the funds were closed and the money reallocated. Using these funds to maintain CMTs would have required administrative approval but, without institutional memory (given the transfers of officials and the movement of elected representatives), the original purpose was lost.

An acute example was the CMT in Laxmanpura slum. Despite Laxmanpura being declared open-defecation-free (ODF) in 2008 and winning the National Water Award for Urban Sanitation that year (and being well-covered in

the media in 2008 and 2009), the CMT was subjected to systematic neglect: It occupied prime urban land at the heart of the city and had therefore attracted the attention of local political interests. The street lights were first damaged, then the indoor lights and the window panes were broken – all of which alarmed the women users, who consequently reverted to open defecation. Then the water supply was disrupted, and repairs postponed, causing the toilet to smell, and finally even the hardest of male users were dissuaded from using it. It was then publicised as an ‘eyesore’ that had to be demolished – because all the local slum dwellers were complaining about the smell. And the land, of course, would be put to ‘better use’ by the local politicians.

Engaging Politicians

Politicians usually have the same basic interest as we do – the social and economic development of their constituencies, especially the poor and the underprivileged, but there are several nuances that are good to know. The obvious one is that they want to ‘fly their flag’ on their achievements, and have roads, bridges, parks and schemes named after them so that their name lives on for posterity. There are, however, several smaller and critical lessons for practitioners wishing to engage more meaningfully with politicians.

1. Politicians need bureaucrats to work with them

All major policy changes in India, and possibly over the world, have come from a partnership between a visionary politician and a supportive bureaucrat – or vice versa.² In Ethiopia, for instance, the then President of the Amhara regional state was convinced of the utility of an exposure visit of his senior government officials to India, and so he not only personally organised it and selected the bureaucrats to come – but he came himself!³ A similar but slightly different example is from Afghanistan, where the Deputy Minister (Water) promised support to a working group of bureaucrats set up to revise the National Water Strategy in accordance with a Presidential Decree. These bureaucrats now had the opportunity to bring in new ideas for the development of the Afghan water sector.⁴

2. Politicians are interested in themselves

The basic preoccupation, however, is self-interest and is often expressed in votes, money or status (as illustrated by the differing perspectives of Councillors in Pune and Trichy in the examples above).

One Chief Minister of an Indian state who was pitched an innovative WASH idea listened to the hour-long presentation and finally asked, that’s fine, but ‘what’s in it for me?’ Fortunately, the team of bureaucrats presenting the initiative was prepared and quickly answered: satisfied villagers, and hence votes for you in the upcoming election. The Chief Minister pledged his support.

The tip, therefore, is to anticipate the question and be prepared with the answer.

3. Politicians want people to be interested in them

Sometimes the preoccupation with votes can become the prime motivation for the politician. After a review of WatSan problems in around 100 villages in a sub-district unit in Andhra Pradesh in India, the local politician asked to see the list of problems. When the team gave the list and (naively) asked whether he was going to help them address the problems identified, he startled them by saying: ‘Do you think I am mad? Of course I can solve all their problems but if I do that why will the people come to me tomorrow?’ This is an extension of a perspective most often seen in leaders of minority or disadvantaged communities – whose future political growth is somehow seen as being conditional on keeping the constituency disadvantaged! This is yet another nuance to be prepared for.

4. Politicians are interested in action

Politicians who are convinced of an action, for whatever reason, do not hang about. They are extremely conscious of the limited time they have and therefore tend to choose their issues carefully. Hence, the fact that a politician agrees to help you means that he or she is convinced that the answer to the question ‘what is in it for me’ was positive! For instance, as soon as the same Chief Minister mentioned above decided it was a worthy cause, he had a second question: ‘What do you

² This idea was first expressed in the Triple S review of rural water supply systems in India (see James 2011a).

³ A detailed account of this exposure visit is in Pragmatix (2011).

⁴ Based on work done for the DFID-funded Action on Climate Today project, a 5-year initiative (2014 – 2019) implemented by Oxford Policy Management Limited (OPML) in Afghanistan, Nepal, Pakistan and 6 states in India, to work with governments to develop strategies to build resilience to the impact of climate change. See <https://www.actiononclimate.today>. The revised Water Policy was approved internally in February 2019.

want me to do?’ Again, the team of bureaucrats was ready with a list of four actions which he readily agreed to. The tip, therefore, is to be prepared to be quizzed on plans and actions.

5. Politicians are busy people

Once you have worked out what interests politicians and what you need them to do, you need a clear plan of engagement. They are busy people and there is usually a long list of people wanting to meet them. To be treated more sympathetically and with greater attention than the rest, it is better to approach a politician through a mutual friend who has his/her ear: a good introduction cannot be underestimated. But that is only a foot in the door. Getting the elevator-pitch right, knowing when (or whether) to make a presentation, and having a concrete plan of action thought out with clear and detailed first steps are all necessary to open the door wider!

Mobilising political action

It is not just that we need to understand and involve politicians, but we also need to understand the political economy of the voters in order to get at those chasing the votes. We also need to understand the bureaucrats, who listen to politicians despite their brusque show of power in office. Some tips from experience are the following.

1. Politicians will usually support a plan that appeals to a large group of voters

The World Bank supported Karnataka Watershed Management project (‘Sujala’) used this insight to mobilise the community, do the participatory planning, and get these plans approved by local political structures (i.e. the village panchayats). Only then did they invite bigger politicians to chair the large stakeholder gatherings with farmers and other villagers which was meant only to approve plans. This ensured that the bigger politicians did not try to exert ‘undue influence’ on the planning process and direct them towards their favourite constituents and away from others, that is, those who did not vote for them in the last election!

2. Locals are often left unconvinced by government field staff in BCC

The converse also works. If locals do not buy into a plan, a politician usually will not support it, for fear of local resentment in the next election. A key reason why rural sanitation lagged behind in India was because of the inability of government field-level workers to address the questions and concerns of the local communities they were seeking to influence. From the first question of ‘do you have a toilet in your house?’ (and if the answer was ‘No’, as it usually was, that field worker’s impact was already close to zero!), to more detailed apprehensions (‘I eat one kilo of rice a day so this pit will fill in one month, who will then clean it?’) and resistance (‘My parents and grandparents did not use a toilet, why should I?’), the field workers were ill-equipped to bring about the expected behaviour change. And yet this aspect was never covered in the two-week training given to them prior to their work in the field. Fortunately, this was one of the issues taken up by the FINISH project in 2009 and later by the FINISH Society in India in their grassroots level work with rural field staff in over 10 states of the country. After a detailed brainstorming session, the FINISH Learning Guide (FINISH Society, 2013) came up with a list of common objections or concerns to constructing or using toilets that were frequently heard in the villages - and devised suitable ‘responses’ to each of these (see Annex 1) – both of which proved enormously useful in the field.

3. Local leaders prefer ‘tying up’ with local politicians above following a system

Politicians from village headmen (Sarpanch) to district-level politicians (e.g. Zilla Parishad chairmen) prefer to pledge ‘block votes’ to larger politicians or a party – in other words ‘our village/block/district will vote for you if you bring us government programmes and other benefits, never mind if it is out-of-turn’. This is how a village often gets things like multiple water supply systems, over-head tanks (OHTs) and mini-power pump (MPP) schemes. Elected politicians also get to know villages/blocks/districts that did not vote for them, and they sometimes strive to deny them development schemes and benefits. An NGO called FODRA operating on the outskirts of New Delhi city had to wait till a local politician was voted out in order to take up development work in a set of villages that he had deliberately neglected after he found out they had voted for his rival.⁵

⁵ Personal communication, Madhab Nayak, Director, Foundation for Development Research and Action (FODRA), New Delhi, during the India Knowledge Exchange Node (KEN) work of ISSUE 2 (2009 – 2011), implemented by WASTE, Netherlands.

4. Technocrats use and misuse data to keep politicians at bay

A Secretary of the Rural Water Supply Department in Andhra Pradesh refused to sanction funds for additional facilities until he knew how much had already been spent where and on what. When he found out that the Department did not have any data on the issue, he set up WaterSoft – a state-level database that systematically collected and stored data on WASH investments to date in all 76,000 habitations in the state. However, after he left, the system was not updated since engineers could not ‘afford’ to have accurate data in the public domain. In informal discussions, the engineers told the IRC WASH Cost team that they deliberately fudge data in order to give themselves ‘elbow room’ when Chief Ministers call them up and order them to ‘give water’ to a new housing complex or industrial establishment being set up as a result of their ‘tie-up’ with the builders/industrialists. Since they were invariably punished with transfers to inhospitable places or unattractive positions if they failed to comply, they had to find innovative ways to give the water and provide official statistics to district, state and central agencies as required. They did this by not revealing how much water there really was available, but the end result was senior officials telling the team: ‘Don’t trust official data’.

5. Politicians can be mobilised to overcome bureaucratic resistance

Politicians are powerful and can be used to further project interests. The Task Team Leader of a World Bank supported project (under preparation) in Sri Lanka personally met Ministers in Sri Lanka to ensure they gave the ‘right message’ down the line – and also suggested ‘preferred bureaucrats’ to be designated to work on the project. Politicians can also influence key decisions by, for example, inserting items into the agenda of planned Budget Finance Committee meetings (which decide on state-level or central budgets for the next financial year) or identifying the best sources of funding and other support, even if the official deadlines for these have passed.

Planning the engagement

These ideas have been used to plan the engagement in the India District Planning initiative of IRC India. The main steps are outlined below.

Steps in the India District Planning

1. Conceptual clarity

Starting with a concept note, an iterative process of getting comments, having discussions to brainstorm ideas, and revising the concept notes, is being used to work out what is to be done and how.

2. Working out political ‘hooks’

Given that sanitation has been highlighted by the Prime Minister’s Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), and that tackling solid waste, liquid waste and faecal sludge are fast becoming high political priorities (e.g. in Kerala and Tamil Nadu in south India), an option being considered is to select areas where sanitation and waste disposal are high political priorities. Another consideration is to work in areas where the local politicians (MPs and GP heads) are already interested.

3. Selecting ‘committed’ bureaucrats

District selection is being planned based on where district-level bureaucrats (Collectors) are likely to be interested and supportive. Experience suggests that this should not be a district where the previous Collector was a major supporter of WASH – since that is an almost automatic demotivation for a new Collector (because the credit of any future success will go to the predecessor!).

4. Timing the bite

The year before a Parliamentary or State Legislative Assembly election is a good time to start preparing the project (see Step 1 above) since elected politicians will have a long enough time-frame (4-5 years) to deliver results. However, it would be wise to wait till the elections are over to find out district responsibilities, appointments and/or transfers of bureaucrats, and then select districts according to who is where.

5. Sustaining awareness

Politicians and bureaucrats can change – and even if they don’t, they may forget the project, especially with year-long gestation periods and multiple agendas. It is vital therefore to have a ‘Champion’, the politician who stands to gain the most and therefore supports your initiative most meaningfully. Even then, it is useful to plan regular meetings (and exposure visits) to keep

these ‘champions’ updated on progress, request their assistance for trouble-shooting, and generally keep them feeling involved in the project. This is especially true for new politicians or those at lower levels such as councillors or village headmen, and it is not enough to just keep senior bureaucrats informed which is what happens in most cases.

Conclusions

Business as usual (BAU) in project planning and implementation is to work with bureaucrats – who are literate, aware and interested. But we forget that they are meant to obey their political masters, the politicians. Politicians are usually left out of regular project planning, for various reasons, or are dealt with only perfunctorily such as an initial meeting with the Minister. But this is an opportunity lost.

Dealing with politicians, however, needs planning and preparation. They ask more probing and direct questions to which we often do not have answers. For instance, during a flood or impending drought, they could ask you for a plan to provide assistance – and will not be satisfied if you tell them you need three months to come up with one! As an aside, the best answer to that question may be to tell them you will have a Concept Note by the next evening. You then do some frantic emailing and telephoning to get the right people (i.e. those with on-going research or past experience), the right core activities, and the right contacts for a one-page Concept Note (politicians are rarely interested in longer ones) and promise a longer ‘Action Plan’ in a week’s time!

Finally, a lot of good work can be undone if the local politician has not been appeased or feels slighted. Engaging with them regularly from the start can help reduce this risk. And with a huge task on hand such as changing WASH systems, it is better to use all resources at hand, and not leave opportunities unexplored.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all those who helped develop my ‘political antennae’ over the last 25 years of practice, including both helpful and unhelpful civil servants, donor agency staff at the World Bank, DfID, European Union, UNICEF, UNDP, work colleagues, NGO and INGO staff, fellow consultants, and friends.

Keywords

Rural WASH, urban WASH, political economy analysis, South Asia

Contact details

ajjames2005@gmail.com

+91 9810113698

References

- FINISH Society. 2013. The Learning Guide: Improving Individual and Institutional Learning for Sanitation and Waste Management, Part B: Sanitation, Unpublished monograph. Gouda: WASTE.
- James, A. J., 2014. Addressing gender and social inclusion issues in urban water and sanitation in India. Report submitted to the World Bank, New Delhi Office.
- James, A.J., 2011. India: Lessons for Rural Water Supply: Assessing progress towards sustainable service delivery. The Hague: IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre and Delhi: IMAcS.
- Pragmatix. 2011. Study tour on watershed management in India by a delegation from the Government of Ethiopia. Report submitted to the Project Coordinator, Tana-Beles Integrated Water Resources Management Project, Ministry of Water and Energy, Government of Ethiopia.

ANNEX 1: Community concerns and how to handle them

These responses to concerns were devised in FINISH Training Workshops held in Chennai and Ooty in May-June 2011 and finalized in the FINISH Master Trainers Workshop in Trichy in November 2011 (reproduced from FINISH Society, 2013, Chapter 3: Addressing Community Concerns).

	COMMUNITY CONCERN	HOW TO HANDLE
1	'Toilets are too expensive to construct'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It does not have to be expensive; there are low-cost options as well • You can build according to your need. Just like you can buy a shirt (or a saris) for a range of prices, ranging from the cheap to the very expensive, there are also toilets for a range of costs – and not all are expensive • The cost of a toilet will be lower than what you and your family will spend in health expenses, due to water-borne illnesses in the future
2	'Will you construct low-cost toilets in your own house?'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, if that is my choice, I will certainly do it • But my choice is to have a good toilet – why can't you also do so?!
3	'But people with toilets also have diarrhoea!'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, that is possible. And must be because someone is going for open defecation – or you are not washing your hands or you are letting flies sit on your food ...
4	'We have been going outside to defecate for generations; what is wrong in continuing our tradition?'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Times have changed! Tastes have changed. For instance, mobile phones were not there then, but are there now – can you stop the change? • Population density has increased. In earlier times, there were designated open spaces (defecation areas) where people would go, but now it is no longer so – and you have to go and sit along the roadside, in full view of passers-by ...
5	'We feel more comfortable going outside to defecate'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a result of one fellow going outside, the entire village gets spoilt! • In the rainy season, or at night, will it be as comfortable?
6	'We can socialize with friends outside'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can choose a better time – and a more pleasant environment – to socialize! • It can get dangerous if you are going outside, even with a friend, ... chain-snatching, molestation, snake-bite ... so what is more important? Enjoying 'socialization' even despite such dangers, or being safe and using a toilet at home?
7	'We get exercise when we go outside to defecate'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can still walk and get your exercise –after defecation! • You can walk around – and come back and defecate!
8	'We can smoke when we go outside to defecate'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can go outside the house and smoke– and then come back to defecate in the toilet! • It is all psychological. It cannot be a physical problem since it does not affect others ... So you can convince yourself that coffee or water will also work as well!
9	'To save time, I do on the way to my fields'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, but remember that you are affecting the health of other innocent people in the village, by helping the spread of diseases like diarrhoea.
10	'Toilets have a bad smell'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you sit next to a person who is defecating in the open, will it not smell bad too? • And what about during the rainy season? • A well-constructed toilet will not smell • If you use the toilet properly, it will not smell; if you use it wrongly, or don't flush, the smell will come. Also, the pit must have a tight cover, so that it does not smell • If you keep the toilet clean, it won't smell! If course if you don't wash your clothes for 3 days, won't it smell? • Don't worry about the smell – I will help you construct a toilet which will not smell • See, Ms. Y's toilet does not smell – come I'll show you!

	COMMUNITY CONCERN	HOW TO HANDLE
11	'There is no space to construct toilets'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much space do you think you will need? Come, I will show you the space in your house ... • Ok, you can share a toilet then? We can help you to build a shared toilet for you and your neighbours – we will show you different toilet options (including on your roof, or on your verandah)
12	'My father in law has just used the toilet; how can I go after him?'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you used a community toilet in a city? Do you know who used it before you? Then why are you bothered?! • But, you must keep it clean and we will help you keep it clean ...
13	'There is no water for drinking; how can we find water to pour into the toilet?'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a difference between drinking water and other uses – you don't have to use potable water for the toilet! • Even now, you are defecating and using water – so some water IS available – now we have toilet options that will use less water (3-4 litres only) ... • If there is acute water scarcity – have to go 2-3 km to get water – at that time, all people who want toilets can ask government for water – then govt will provide! Collective action can work ... • 'Scarcity of water' is relative – there is always some water, otherwise no life is possible. • Use stored water – that is usually poured out in the morning – for flushing? • You can collect water and bring home – instead of 5 people going out every day to defecate in the open, carrying water with them ...
14	'We will have to queue for a toilet inside the house; but there is no queue outside!'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How long does it take you to walk up to the defecation area? • How impatient can you get? In a family, normally, no one gets up at the same time ... so you can all go at different times
15	'How can we have a toilet in same house as a 'god' or puja room?'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember, a toilet is 'Arogya mandir' • Defecation is natural - part of the same body that God has created – all God says is to keep it clean • Don't cut off your finger to keep your nails clean – only need to keep the nails clean!
16	'This pit will fill in 3 months, then 'Who will clean the pit?' Not me, so won't build toilet'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If it is not constructed properly, it will fill up. But if it is constructed properly, it will last for at least 5 years. • Wet human faecal matter is 250g on average, but when it is dry, it weighs only 10g! (matchbox size) Thus, when dry, faecal matter will not take so much space and fill up your pit so quickly
15	'Cleaning is a problem; so we open or use the toilet only when guests come'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning is not a problem if you use it properly (i.e., first wet the pan, then defecate, then flush) • Cleaning must be shared – by everyone in the family!
16	'Toilet is only for women; men continue to go out'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • But if men defecate outside, they will make the whole village unsafe – polluting all the water and causing health problems!
17	'Children are scared to use the toilet'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go with your child to the toilet initially, show them, train them ... and they will no longer be afraid
18	'Defecating in the open is a long-term habit and very difficult to change'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change is necessary – as in the rest of the world – now that you know the dangers of ill-health – and the impact on others in your village - you need to change now
19	'The toilet used for storage – and so we can't use it now!'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think of all the benefits of having a toilet: Not only health benefits but also safety, security, convenience, dignity – especially for women, sick, disabled and elderly. Think about these people.
20	'A toilet is low priority, after 'roti, kapda or makaan'. We would rather spend money on better things!'	
21	'A toilet is a non-productive investment; it does not generate income'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits are not always in terms of money, there are intangibles such as time saving, better health, less leave, less wage loss due to days sick, more savings on health costs, less strain and tension (esp. women)



50 years of IRC.
WASH systems that transform lives.