

# Sani Tweaks

Best practices in  
sanitation





**OXFAM**

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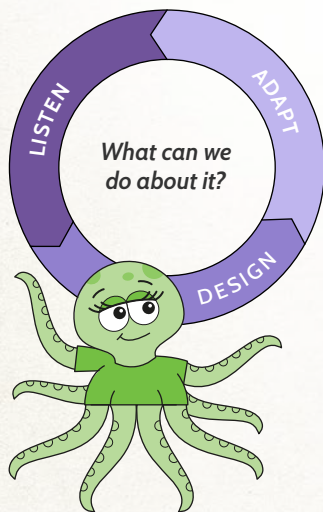
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This illustrated booklet is part of the Sani Tweaks series:  
communications tools to promote best practices in  
sanitation programmes.

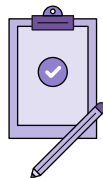
[www.oxfam.org.uk/sanitweaks](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/sanitweaks)

# Purpose of this guide

*Studies have shown that agencies are failing to properly consult or collect and act on feedback from the users of the latrines they build, leading many people – especially women and girls – to stop using those latrines as they find them inaccessible, unsuitable and/or unsafe. Consequently, this increases public health risks in emergency situations.*



To address this, the Oxfam WASH team has developed a series of communications tools that seek to promote best practices in sanitation and ultimately provide universal guidance for the benefit of the sector.



Derived from the Sani Tweaks Checklist, the following illustrations are intended to inform technical field staff, to encourage them to consult and listen to the users, and to inspire them to make continuous improvements to their designs.

***For it is these small 'tweaks' that will ultimately make the difference between whether a woman uses a latrine or not.***

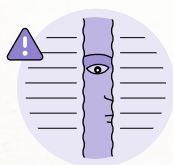
# Excreta disposal is a continuous service, not a one-off installation

*Recent research from a number of latrine programmes has shown that on average 40% of women are not using the latrines provided.*

## Primary reasons



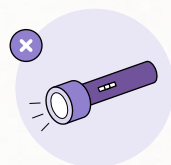
Latrines in inappropriate locations



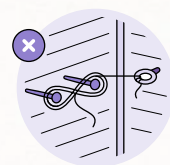
Lack of privacy (fear of people peeping in)



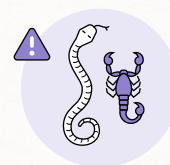
Fear of sexual harassment



Lack of lighting at night



Lack of proper, durable locks on doors



Fear of vermin

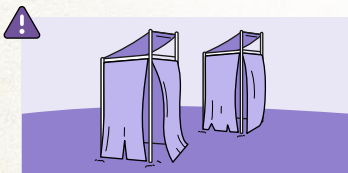
“ I feel happy using a latrine when I can lock the door so nobody can get in. I need a clear pathway and lighting along the way. It’s also important to me that it’s clean and free from vermin. ”



*If latrines are not used, time and resources are wasted and we are failing in our responsibility to the communities we work with. This may also result in greater levels of open defecation and other alternatives, which will put people at risk of disease.*



Going to the latrine at night is one of the most dangerous things a woman does in a camp.



Time constraints are no excuse for poor quality latrines or a lack of community consultation.

## Designing for women, with women

will result in facilities that are better and safer for everyone.



“ I feel happy using a latrine when I can enter and leave unobserved. When inside, I need privacy. I don't want to be seen through gaps in the door or walls. ”



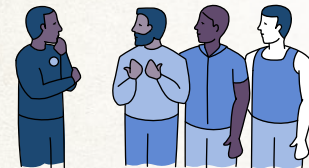
# It's important to consult and involve users at every stage of the process.



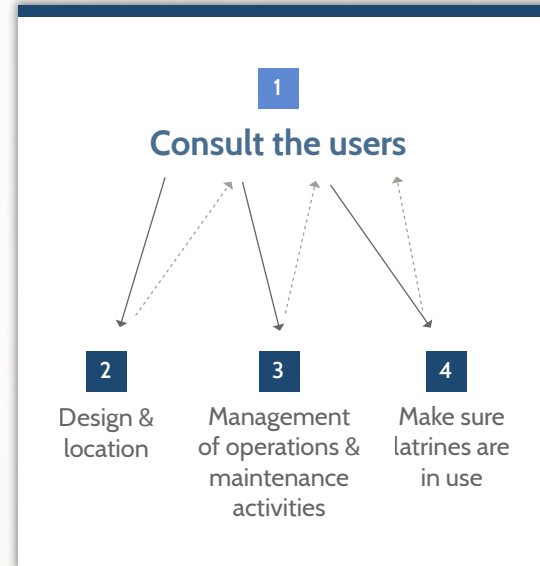
Listen to children



Listen to women and adolescent girls



Listen to men





“ I feel happy using a latrine when I can see what I am doing inside, day and night. I care for my child and elderly mother, who has a disability. I need the latrine to have space for my mother and her crutches, and for the hole to be the right size for my child to use. ”



# Ask key questions

to develop the most appropriate latrine

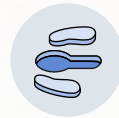


**Do women and men have an equal voice in the conversation?**



What are the cultural habits and anal cleansing practices?

—  
What are the religious practices?



What were they doing before, and what are their current practices?

—  
Are there other options they would find acceptable?



What are their main concerns about using public or shared family latrines?

**Think:**

- Location?
- Privacy?
- Harassment?
- Lighting?
- Locks?
- Sharing with others?



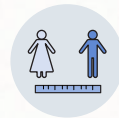
What do women, children, disabled and elderly persons do at night?

—  
What alternatives can be provided for 24 hour access?



Can a latrine be shared between families?  
What if they don't know each other?

—  
If so, do they still need separate male and female latrines?

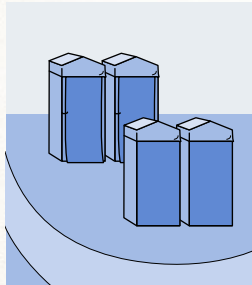


What is the minimum acceptable distance between female and male latrines?



# Discuss practicalities

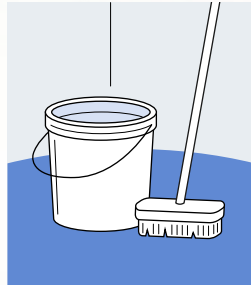
with the community



## Location & design

Involve users when deciding on the location of latrines.

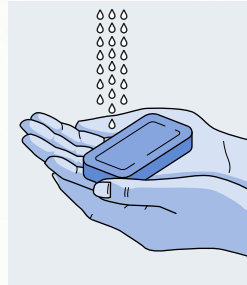
Where possible, also show users models and/or pictures so they can comment on the design.



## Maintenance

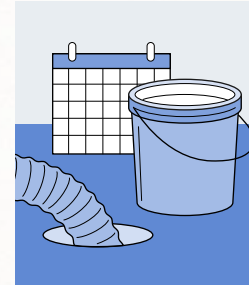
Who will be responsible for cleaning and maintaining the communal latrines?

WASH staff need to determine the most appropriate maintenance strategy for the **short and long term**, and to be mindful of **a handover**.



## Handwashing

What is the best way of ensuring users wash their hands with soap and water after defecation?

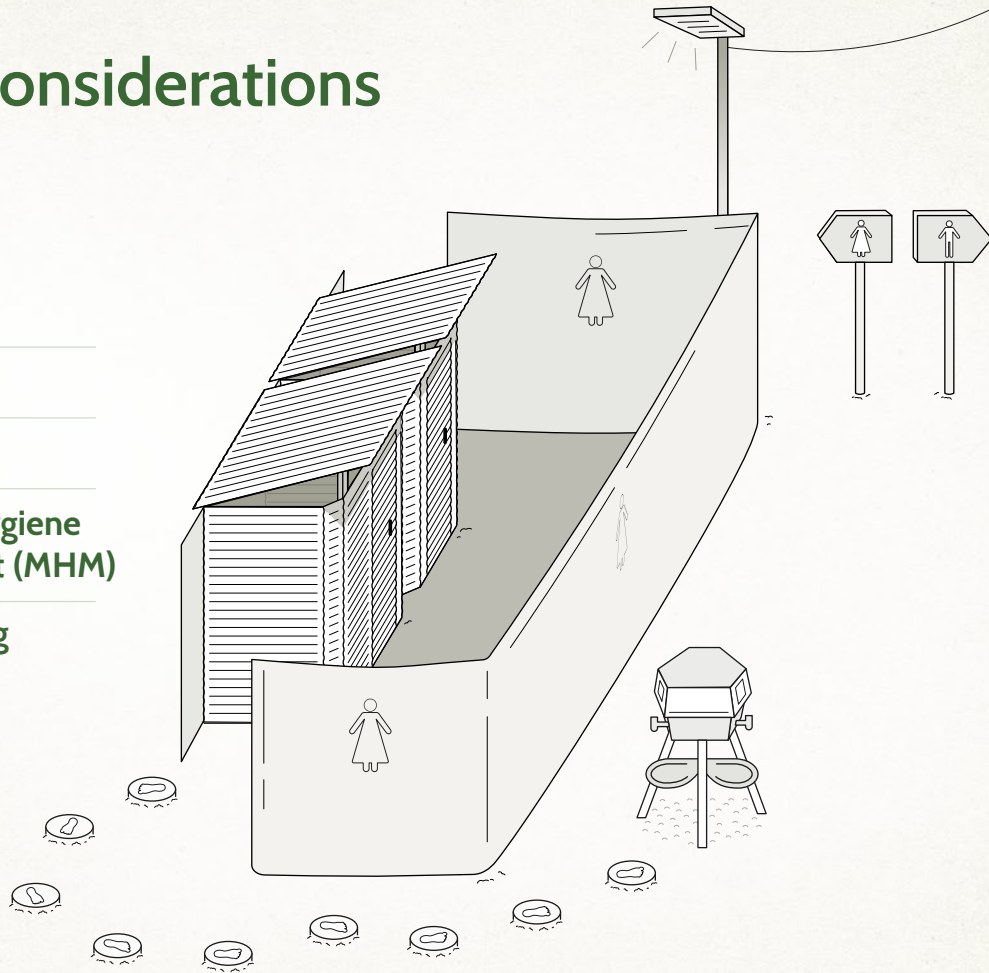


## Operations

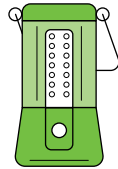
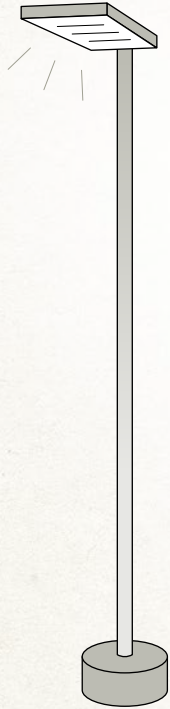
Consider how quickly latrines fill up, how they'll be emptied, and where sludge will be disposed of.

# Design considerations

- ✔ Safety
- ✔ Privacy
- ✔ Accessibility
- ✔ Menstrual hygiene management (MHM)
- ✔ Handwashing



# Safety



## Lighting

What is the most appropriate lighting to ensure people feel safe when going to/from the latrine, and when inside?

Can you position overhead lighting in a way that avoids casting dark shadows and does not illuminate the silhouette of the user?



## Locks

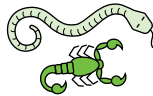
Is there a functional internal lock, even in rapid-onset emergencies?  
Does the height permit use by both adults and children?



## Location & access

*Think distance, safety, clear access, and privacy.*

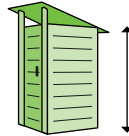
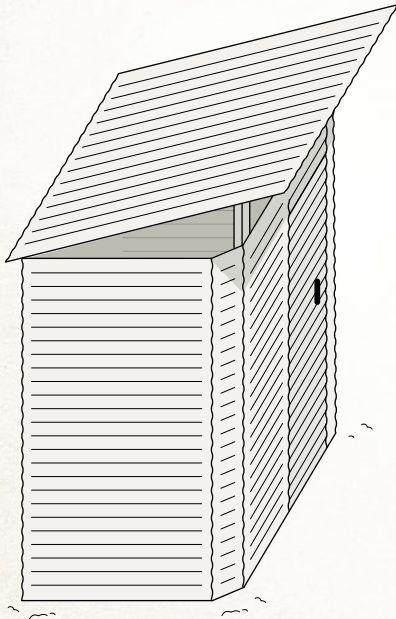
Does the location enable women to feel safe when they go to the latrine? (Latrines should be within 50m of a dwelling, but not on a busy road.)



## Surroundings

Clear the area of bushes that could house snakes and vermin.

# Privacy



## Wall height

Are latrine walls tall enough to provide full privacy?



## Wall material

If plastic is used, can someone be seen through it? Check for damage and repair as required.

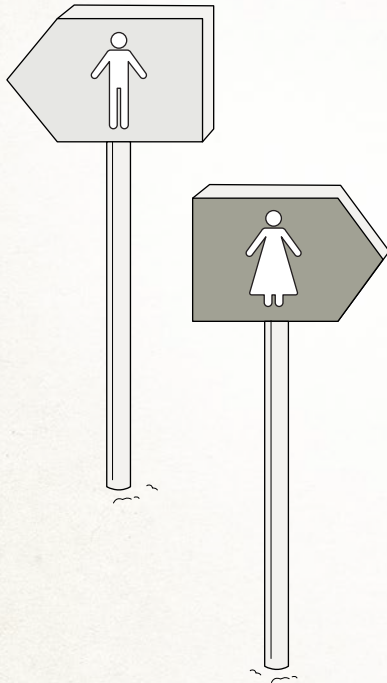


## Doors

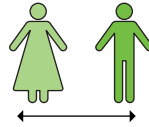
**Think:**

Are there any gaps in the doors?  
Are the user's feet and head hidden?  
Are there properly fitted locks?

# Privacy



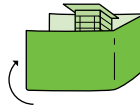
## Male/female segregation



Are male and female latrines far enough away from one another? They should never be back-to-back.

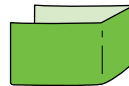
Is the signage clear and easily understood by the community?

## Discreet entrance



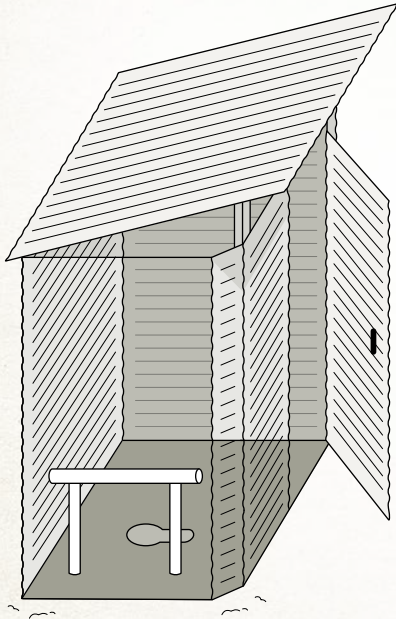
How can the latrines be positioned or screened so people can enter the latrine area unobserved?

## Screen



If users want a screen, ask them what type and shape.

# Accessibility



## Interior space & door width

Is there enough room for someone to enter with a child, or a family member who needs assistance?



## Disabled & elderly

Are there any barriers for vulnerable members of the community?



## Children

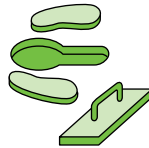
Consult with boys and girls to design appropriate facilities.

### *Babies & toddlers:*

Is there a safe way to collect and dispose of small children's feces?

### *Hole:*

Is the hole an appropriate size? Does it have a cover?





# Menstrual hygiene management (MHM)



## Consult

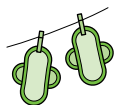
*Speak to women and girls about their current practice.*

What would they find acceptable?  
What are the taboos?



## Reuse

How can women wash and reuse MHM materials?  
Are there ways to **wash** MHM materials?  
Are there ways to **dry** MHM materials?

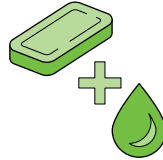
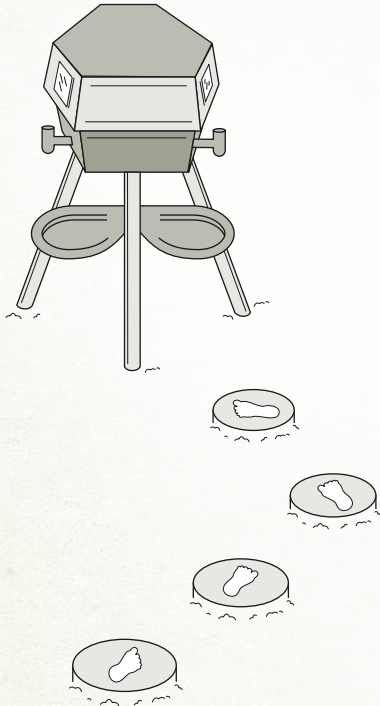


## Disposal

Where bins are provided, ensure a full disposal system is considered.



# Handwashing



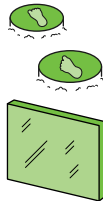
## Essentials

Are both soap and water made available?  
How are these maintained?



## Handwashing station type

Is the handwashing solution appropriate for  
the community and circumstances?

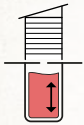


## Nudges/motivators

How can handwashing be encouraged  
after defecation?

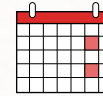
Think colours, mirrors, notices, and footprints.

# Management of operations & maintenance activities



## Planning

Given the number of users, have you calculated how long it will take to fill the pit? Have you planned for desludging/decommissioning?



## Maintenance

Within a month, most plastic sheeting superstructures will be damaged. Regular monitoring and repair is essential to ensure the latrines are still being used.



## Desludging

If desludging is planned, is the pit lined and does it have easy access for a hose or slab removal?



## Latrine cleaning kits

Ensure latrine cleaning kits are distributed and used where appropriate. How will they be shared among families?



## Feedback

What system will you use for people to report damage/design issues and give feedback? Make sure the system is accessible to everyone, including the illiterate.



“ We feel happy using latrines when we feel heard and confident that our concerns have been listened to. ”

*Community consultation throughout the project cycle is critical to ensure latrines adapt to the feedback, and provide dignified, safe, and accessible facilities.*

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In collaboration with the Sustainable Sanitation Alliance, Oxfam produced the Sani Tweaks series to promote best sanitation practices for the benefit of the sector. It was produced for the purposes of all agencies to adapt and use in accordance with individual needs.



sustainable  
sanitation  
alliance