



HIV/AIDS & WASH

The Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) is a global multi-stakeholder partnership organisation that has worked since 1990 to achieve sustainable water supply and sanitation for all people by enhancing collaboration among sector agencies and professionals. Through its Networking and Knowledge Management programme, WSSCC publishes thematic Reference Notes to assist professionals in different fields in understanding key issues and identifying key resources and institutions on selected themes and topics. This Note highlights the links between WASH (water supply, sanitation and hygiene) and HIV/AIDS. It also identifies implications for practitioners in both fields and presents brief case studies with suggestions for further reading.

ACCORDING TO THE LATEST REPORT BY UNAIDS [1], 33.2 million people worldwide live with HIV and new infections now number 2.5 million annually. Hundreds of millions more are affected through loss of parents, children or colleagues. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is everywhere, though sub-Saharan Africa is most severely affected with 22.5 million HIV-positive adults and children. South Asia and South-East Asia follow with 4.0 million infected. These regions have high levels of poverty and low access to the water supply and sanitation services critically needed to prevent and treat disease.

WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF WASH FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS?

Links between WASH and HIV/AIDS occur on several levels, affecting sick people, caregivers, families, communities and service providers. The access to improved WASH services is important for health and livelihoods in general because:

- ▶ People should not unnecessarily expose themselves to infection, since poor health increases the susceptibility to and severity of HIV/AIDS.
- ▶ The most common diseases for people suffering from HIV/AIDS are diarrhoeal and skin diseases, both of which are often waterborne and due to poor hygiene.
- ▶ When after the generally recommended six months of breastfeeding complementary foods are introduced, clean water and good hygiene are crucial for safe preparation of infant formula or alternative food.
- ▶ The water needed for adequate care of HIV/AIDS patients exceeds normal consumption rates by two to five times [2].
- ▶ Hygiene education and awareness raising for patients and caregivers is required to support safe handling of water and excreta and to avoid false linkages between HIV/AIDS and water.
- ▶ Household plots for growing vegetables and other small-scale income generation are vital pillars in livelihood security for people affected by HIV/AIDS and require water.



IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMMING (3)

WASH programmes

For the creation of adequate and sustainable WASH services, the following points should be incorporated:

- ▶ Mainstream HIV/AIDS into water and sanitation planning, including standards.
- ▶ Identify and address the particular needs of HIV/AIDS-infected and affected families, including their ability to pay for water and sanitation services.
- ▶ Integrate the perspective of affected families in community management to allow for sustainable operation and maintenance.
- ▶ Develop and promote new water collection technologies and strategies which bring water closer to the home.
- ▶ Incorporate HIV-infected people's needs in hygiene training.

HIV/AIDS programmes/home-based care programmes

For increased effectiveness, special attention should be given to hand washing with soap, safe storage and treatment of water at the household level, and sanitation and faeces management. Additionally, programmes should include practical hygiene improvement practices such as:

- ▶ Training in basic WASH information for home-based caregivers.
- ▶ Promoting point-of-use water treatment.
- ▶ Identifying water-saving technologies to optimize water available.
- ▶ Promoting the construction and use of patient-friendly improved pit latrines and handwashing facilities.

More indirect but equally important consequences of the HIV/AIDS pandemic affect the management and sustainability of WASH services:

- ▶ The number of *qualified staff* in service provision is decreasing, as is the time people have available for WASH operation and maintenance due to an increasing work load on the active and healthy population.
- ▶ *Water and sanitation budgets* are falling due to lower incomes and therefore less tax or fee-paying capacity, something which WASH-system planners must take into consideration.
- ▶ *Participation*, a cornerstone in decentralized water and sanitation management, is hampered as it requires time and energy.

These constraints add to already existing problems, such as poor payment behaviour, inadequate institutional arrangements or low tariff levels that are accentuated by the difficulties related to HIV/AIDS.

SELECTED COUNTY STUDIES

South Africa,

with 5 million adults and children living with HIV/AIDS, is one of the countries most severely affected by HIV/AIDS worldwide. A case study from IRC on the Bolobodu area northeast of Pretoria describes the importance of functioning water supply and sanitation services and investigates the impact when these important public services break down (4). The Mvula Trust, a South Africa-based NGO, offers similar insights (5) while other materials are available from the Water Research Commission (6), including video highlights (7).

In Zimbabwe,

the government (with support from UNICEF) compiled a comprehensive overview of the programmes, strategies and guidelines of the national water and sanitation sector and its response and co-operation with regard to HIV/AIDS. A key feature was the initiation of coordination among health and WASH-related stakeholders in a national coalition, which created a response strategy and identified WASH interventions in prevention, care, mitigation, advocacy and research (8).

In India,

although the HIV/AIDS numbers are lower than first estimated, the circumstances in the water and sanitation sector are all but favourable for those affected. In a World Bank Water and Sanitation Program (WSP) field note, the importance of incorporating improved, consistent and comprehensive water, sanitation and hygiene-related information into HIV/AIDS care interventions is emphasized. Findings show that people in the study area living with HIV/AIDS are more likely to be aware of hygienic practices related to water; however, adopting them is sometimes hampered by economic and time pressures (9).

Uganda,

a densely populated country with relatively high numbers of HIV/AIDS-affected people, has managed to reverse the trend of new infections through breaking a taboo by officially recognising high AIDS rates and committing to reduce these. The Ugandan national WASH coalition, supported by WSSCC, is contributing to the improvement of the water and sanitation situation for affected people through a partnership with the National Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (NACWOLA). Advocacy workshops with the media (10) and sensitisation meetings with NACWOLA members and community leaders (11) have resulted in increased awareness of the importance of improved hygiene and sanitation practices and links between improved access to WASH and a healthier life for affected persons.

REFERENCES

N°	Publication	Web location *
1	UNAIDS (2007): 07 AIDS epidemic update. UNAIDS/WHO. Geneva	http://data.unaids.org/pub/EPISlides/2007/2007_epiupdate_en.pdf
2	Ngwenya, B.N. and Kgathi, D.L. (2006). HIV/AIDS and access to water: a case study of home-based care in Ngamiland, Botswana. <i>Physics and Chemistry of the Earth</i> 31: 669–680.	http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=ArticleURL&_udi=B6X1W-4KYXHX4-3&_user=3824252&_rdoc=1&_fmt=&_orig=search&_sort=d&view=c&_acct=C000055308&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_userid=3824252&md5=ce4636a6803c06bd64a966684d833faa
3	USAID/Hygiene Improvement Project (2008): Programming guidance for integrating water, sanitation and hygiene improvement into HIV/AIDS Programs. Washington D.C.	http://www.hip.watsan.net/content/download/2032/10826/file/HIP_AEDcx.pdf
4	Kgalushi R., Smits S., and Eales K. (2003): People living with HIV/AIDS in a context of rural poverty: the importance of water and sanitation services and hygiene education. Mvula Trust, KIT and IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre, Delft.	http://www.irc.nl/content/download/11414/167794/file/Case_study_Limpopo_South_Af.pdf
5	Mvula Trust (2006): Water, sanitation and HIV/AIDS. Annual Diary, Chapter 11.2.	http://www.mvula.co.za/page/539
6	Obi C.L., Onabolu B., Momba M.N.B., Igumbor J.O., Ramalivahna J., Bessong P.O., van Rensburg E.J., Lukoto M., Green E., and Mulaudzi T.B. (2006): The interesting cross-paths of HIV/AIDS and water in Southern Africa with special reference to South Africa. <i>Water SA</i> Vol. 32 No. 3 July 2006.	http://www.wrc.org.za/downloads/watersa/2006/Jul%2006/1955.pdf
7	Water Research Commission: DVD for Councillors – Water Quality and HIV/AIDS.	http://www.wrc.org.za/hiv_water_vid.htm
8	National Action Committee for Rural Water Supply (2003): Zimbabwe water and sanitation sector HIV/AIDS response programme, strategies and guidelines. Harare.	http://www.sarprn.org.za/documents/d0001030/Water_HIV_AIDS_Response_Guidelines_June2003.pdf
9	Water and Sanitation Program (2007): Water, sanitation, and hygiene for people living with HIV and AIDS. Field Note. World Bank. New Dehli.	http://www.wsp.org/UserFiles/file/11302007114405_SAHIVAIDSFN.pdf
10	Report on WASH advocacy workshop for media and NACWOLA.	http://www.wsscc.org/fileadmin/files/pdf/For_country_pages/Uganda/Uganda_WASH_Workshop_for_Media_June_2008.pdf
11	Reflection report on WASH awareness workshop for NACWOLA members and community leaders in Kamuli and Lwero Districts.	http://www.wsscc.org/fileadmin/files/pdf/For_country_pages/Uganda/Uganda_WASH_Awareness_Workshop_July_2008.pdf

*In case of broken links, search for the resource at the main web address.

FURTHER INTERESTING LINKS

International Water and Sanitation Centre (IRC)	
General information	http://www.irc.nl/page/3462
Thematic Overview Paper (TOP)	http://www.irc.nl/content/download/4199/48511/file/TOP2HIV_AIDS05.pdf
Water and Sanitation Program (WSP)	
Thematic programme website	http://www.wsp.org/index.cfm?page=page_disp&pid=10538
WELL (Resource Centre for Water, Sanitation and Environmental Health)	
HIV/AIDS - water supply, sanitation and hygiene	http://www.lboro.ac.uk/well/resources/fact-sheets/fact-sheets-htm/hiv-aids.htm
Reaching the Millennium Development Goal on HIV/AIDS through improved access to water and sanitation	http://www.lboro.ac.uk/well/resources/Publications/Briefing%20Notes/BN%20HIV%20AIDS.htm
USAID	
Programming guidance	http://www.hip.watsan.net/page/2458
Information on HIV-affected Families and Water, Sanitation & Hygiene on the Environmental Health Programme	http://www.ehproject.org/ehkm/hiv_watsan.html
UN HABITAT	
Download of manual for community sensitization	http://www.unhabitat.org/pmss/getPage.asp?page=bookView&book=2068
World Health Organization (WHO)	
Information on HIV and Infant Feeding	http://www.who.int/child_adolescent_health/documents/9789241595971/en/
UNICEF	
Relation between diseases, water and sanitation	http://www.unicef.org/wes/index_wes_related.html

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