



Exploration into the Factors Affecting the Coverage of Household Latrines in Kagera, Tanzania

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Abstract

Low coverage of household latrines in the Kagera Region of Tanzania continues to exist despite past and current interventions to improve the situation. A limited understanding of the reasons for the low coverage was thought to be among the restricting factors in solving this problem. The research aimed to explore the perceptions of community members and latrine promoters, in order to obtain baseline information on the factors affecting the coverage of household latrines.

Keywords: Household Latrines

Study Design

The study was an exploratory study using a Phenomenology qualitative approach. The Muleba District of the Kagera Region was selected and qualitative research methods were used to facilitate the collection of information on community members' and latrine promoters' own experiences related to the coverage of household latrines.

Methodology

The study employed two qualitative research methods: focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. Guides were designed to facilitate the conduction of the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. One focus group discussion was held with elderly members of the community who have experience in latrine construction and other aspects related to the ownership of household latrines. Another focus group discussion involved Ward Development Committee members who are both community leaders and latrine promoters. In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants whose job descriptions included the promotion of household latrines at various levels in the administrative structure of government. These key informants included a community development officer, a district health officer and a regional health officer.

Data collection

Before the collection of data was initiated, ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the University of Western Cape and authorisation to conduct the study was obtained from the Kagera Regional Administrative Secretary. The researcher facilitated the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with the help of a research assistant. The purpose of the study was explained to respondents and confidentiality was assured and con-

sent obtained through the use of consent forms. After this, the researcher proceeded, using the guides mentioned above, to collect information on the perceptions of factors affecting the coverage household latrines.

Analysis of results

Content analysis revealed a thick description of respondent's perceptions in relation to factors which affect the coverage of household latrines in the Muleba District. The respondents acknowledged the importance of the study topic and a number of interlinked factors were revealed. The factors include: lack of community involvement and participation, urban and rural disparity, poverty, cultural beliefs and taboos, gender disparity, low technical capacity of latrine promoters and poor packaging. In the course of the study, the respondents were able to give suggestions which were incorporated in the recommendations.

Conclusions

This study revealed that there are multiple, interrelated factors which affect the coverage of household latrines in the Muleba District of the Kagera Region of Tanzania. In addition, a clearer understanding of hidden factors that challenge latrine promotion in the study area was achieved. A number of recommendations were put forward; the principal ones being the adoption of an integrated approach that takes the interlinked nature of the factors impeding latrine promotion into consideration, the inclusion and empowerment of all members of the community and the provision of capacity building interventions for the key latrine promoters identified in this study. It is believed that the insights gained through this exploratory study could contribute towards improving the coverage of household latrines in the Kagera Region of Tanzania.