

Lesson Learned from Haiti

- Good internal communication, about internal Oxfam PH activities and partnerships, is a prerequisite in such a big emergency operation. This not only avoids duplication, but also stimulates team ideas and promotes more effective use of resources.
- PH activities involving the use of labour intensive activities need to have clearly defined objectives and adequate levels of supervision in order to achieve the desired results. Such activities may be best achieved through targeted casual daily labour rather than CFW activities.
- Careful consideration is required on how to make activities more sustainable in the long-term. This is particularly true when undertaking clean up campaigns. In certain instances, 2nd phase follow up programmes will be necessary to capitalise on initial gains.
- Effective community mobilisation at many of the Oxfam supported sites was the key to successful interventions. Establishing good working relationships with the beneficiary community allowed innovative PHP activities to be identified, and also permitted accountability, protection and gender to be mainstreamed through the programme.
- Security issues for blanket NFI distributions need to be taken seriously, particularly when there is pressure to distribute to large numbers of people. Good practice includes: (a) always work with camp committees to check and double check registration lists and organise security. (b) be flexible in the distribution approach – be innovative in dealing with specific security issues.
- A range of excreta disposal options, based on site context, proved more effective than one unique solution. Weak coordination between the WASH Cluster and donors resulted in large numbers of chemical toilets being imported with little consultation taking place implementing agencies. Although innovative ways of using the units were found, valuable resources were ultimately wasted.
- The O & M of communal latrines/toilets is best achieved using paid daily labourers. Adequate supervision of staff is also required. Voluntary labour should be encouraged when latrines/toilets become shared family or individual family units.
- Provision should be made not only for O & M of latrines, but also hand washing stations, particularly when they are communal. As with communal latrines, attendants should be paid to ensure water and soap is readily available and stations are clean and maintained.
- Provide support to specific groups such as “Bayacoos”, not only to make latrine emptying activities more dignified, but also to raise awareness on environmental issues such as:

dumping latrine waste randomly and impact of pouring environmentally unfriendly products (i.e. diesel fuel) into latrine pits.

- When defining an exit strategy for water supply activities, multiple approaches should be considered rather than assuming the local water authority will be able to make a simple network connection. Municipal water companies are notoriously complex, and opportunities for small quick fixes can be quickly obstructed at higher levels. Developing a plan B is always useful.
- A number of innovative partnerships were established with both existing and new partners, producing a number of positive outputs including safe excreta disposal (SOIL), rubble collection & processing (DWR), and the development of a national policy for waste management (DWR). Other initiatives, though partly successful, would have benefited from clearer oversight and better internal communication about the aims of the partnerships.

Further Information

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Excreta disposal in emergencies: Bag and Peepoo trials with internally displaced people in Port-au-Prince. Waterlines, Vol. 30, No. 1, Jan. 2011, pp. 61-77 (Practical Action Publishing)

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