

# Women in sanitation innovation: Co-producing knowledge with communities

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**WASH R&D CENTRE**  
Water Sanitation & Hygiene Research & Development Centre

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# Who I am ...

- My name is Sibongile Buthelezi, I work as a researcher in the School of Built Environment and Development Studies, UKZN
  - my role is to collect quantitative and qualitative data from different communities on urban and environmental governance
  - Our research portfolio includes studies on housing, water governance, sanitation services, and livelihoods.
- I became involved in sanitation work in 2010
  - as a researcher I learn and document how people feel about sanitation systems that have been provided by eThekweni Municipality
  - I engage with communities to understand their perceptions and level of satisfaction of sanitation services
- I love doing this kind of work as I am part of the process of working with the municipality and communities to provide services which bring solutions to sanitation practices



# What I see as woman in sanitation innovation

- eThekweni Municipality has allocated free basic household sanitation systems (rural and peri-urban areas) and free shared sanitation systems (informal settlements) to different communities
- These services aim to provide dignity, privacy and a healthy living environment(**no defecation in open spaces**)
- Informal settlement CABs are monitored by caretakers who are employed by the municipality
- The criticism from communities is not about the technology of the toilet itself, but rather what happens when a person starts using it
- Flush toilets have now been installed in peri-urban areas but the challenge is they are not connected to water pipes and so when you use the toilet you have to bring water to the toilet and pour water in to the cistern
  - Women say it is difficult to tell a visitor or neighbour that they must take water with them so that they can flush the toilet after they have finished using it



# Greatest challenges in sanitation as woman

- Shared sanitation systems are a problem especially for women
  - women are worried to share a sanitation system because of the spreading of diseases to women and children
- Women are restricted from accessing sanitation systems at night
  - women do not feel safe
  - toilets are far from the houses
- In some areas SDG Goal Number 6 has not been achieved due to a lack of provision of services, or poor management of services and this impacts on women and girls
  - ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all; achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all; and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations
- Women are the ones who clean or empty the urine diversion dehydration toilet (UDDT) because young family members (culture) believe they will have bad luck if they are involved in emptying the faeces in peri-urban areas
- The smell of waste from using the UDDT forces women to change their clothes before they take a journey, as they do not want to carry the smell with them on their clothes



# Greatest opportunities for innovation in sanitation

- The greatest opportunity is that through sanitation innovation we are seeing sanitation improving all the time (we see engineers and social scientists working together with eThekweni Municipality to come up with new sanitation technology)
- Water and sanitation facilities are not just technical. Life improves when technology is designed to include people such as people and women socializing while doing washing or fetching water as it builds social cohesion ( this happen in rural areas as well as in informal settlements)
- To learn about new technologies that are treating wastewater for re-use (recycled water)
- To have the chance to see and use sanitation innovation that is using low flush water and saving water
- To learn how to create a good septic tank which will not impact on the environment or on neighbours (pits are now emptied every year although it is costly)
- The home-made pit latrine toilet has decreased in numbers and many households rely on free sanitation systems provided by the municipality