

Water and sustainability

1 | Think beyond waste

Innovation can play a massive role in increasing consumer demand for sanitation systems, but we believe it can go beyond the toilet itself. We are nearing a tipping point between advances in health and technology, and the toilet is an invaluable tool in this. Health sensors, fertilisers, biogas – unlocking these business models can change the face of sanitation and the way we think about “doing our business”. I think we’re about to see what has happened with telephones over the last two decades happen with toilets.

2 | Induce change through competition

The [Sanitation Challenge](#) is a competition for local authorities in Ghana. It was launched in November 2015 and we are in the second stage of the programme. The competition is leading to a shift in the priorities of the government, making sanitation more visible and important. Local authorities are excited about having the opportunity to decide what they think is needed in their area. An innovation prize that can be broadly defined as “a financial incentive that induces change through competition” is bringing changes at political level, as well as incentivising local authorities to identify new service delivery methods

3 | Go mobile

Mobile phones have made paying for services easier, with lower transaction costs. Small payment amounts make pay-per-use more affordable for low-income populations as well. It is only one small piece in the puzzle, but it has opened up many opportunities.

4 | Make toilets a hyper-local marketplace

We also create the toilet blocks to be a hyper-local marketplace – users can recharge their mobile phones

Private entrepreneurs have to be encouraged to use unique business models which make toilet services an experience to remember, and a routine that attracts people to use them. For example, access to our toilets is free and they have all the basic facilities – sufficient lighting, ventilation, wash basins, soap dispensers – and we use stainless steel so the blocks are shiny. We also create the toilet blocks to be a hyper-local marketplace – users can recharge their mobile phones. Just think of the incentives that would be created if people had access to a free Wi-Fi hotspot at a public toilet

5 | Involve communities

It is critical that people accept the water and sanitation solutions that are installed. Even in Europe, there is great resistance to the idea of using faecal sludge on agricultural land. Involving communities in the design and choice of technology is key to ensuring that the result is what users want. One great example is from Paraguay, where communities helped to select the technology and the design of the facilities to ensure they met their values. This is a long process and requires investment in the construction and participatory processes, but considering the current low sustainability rates of many Wash [water, sanitation and hygiene] investments, it will pay off in the long term

Analysis How do you solve a problem like a broken water pump?

Long considered a symbol of development aid, up to 40% of handpumps in sub-Saharan Africa are broken at any one time. Technology is offering smart solutions

6 | Create standards for innovation

If we want to promote sanitation as a sustainable utility service, it is important to come up with more standards for technologies and services. The [International Organization for Standardization](#) is developing a new standard for non-sewer sanitation systems that kill pathogens. The standard provides guidelines for the industry to develop new technologies, and can help countries shape their policies and promote the best systems.

7 | Keep your audience in mind

Innovation can be done in different ways but it should be focused on the key audience for the right reasons and for the right end value-add. This might be around working on aid effectiveness, scaling action in supply chains, focusing on marginalised communities, hygiene behaviour, water stewardship, capacity building or working with the private sector – a whole number of things. It can take longer but buy-in is greater in the end

8 | Accept and share failures

We need to have a cultural attitude that supports innovation. This also means that we must accept failure when new techniques don't live up to expectations and share these lessons. This should not be an excuse for ill-considered experimentation, however, as the stakes are high.

Communication and Development

Pumping money into development projects and rolling them out without having a good communications policy in place makes it unlikely the programmes will achieve their desired goals, as communications is vital to connect with stakeholders.

Development projects will thrive if the messages are effectively shared as it helps build an enabling atmosphere, communications experts said while addressing a multi-stakeholder knowledge-sharing meeting titled 'Communicating for Development: Rural Transformation' in Dhaka on Dec. 20.

They said one needs to be clear about project goals and messages while communicating in any form. Connecting people across the board with communication helps identify vital issues, build a sense of belonging and pave the way to move ahead.

Emphasising the need for collectivism, Bangladesh's noted economist Prof. Abul Barkat told the event that project officials often fail to make their key messages clear.

Referring to the weakness in coordination and communication, the economist noted that only four percent of rural land in Bangladesh is 'effectively' owned by women, while a whopping 72 percent of urban land is owned by women as the property is often transferred to women by their male family members in a bid to evade taxes. "Where's this message? No one knows," he said.

The multistakeholder event held under the auspices of the Inter Press Service (IPS) and entities of the Government of Bangladesh.

S.M. Shameem Reza, Associate Professor of Mass Communication and the Journalism department at Dhaka University, said, "Most development projects, particularly those are related to rural transformation, have the lack of a strong communication approach. Communication doesn't get much importance in project implementation. In many cases, communication is considered as a project subcomponent."

For better outputs, there needs to be a very effective and sustainable communication strategy so that the project implementers can identify appropriate channels of communication, the mode of communication, core messages, and can establish communication and feedback mechanisms.

"If so, the system loss can be minimised," Reza said.

There should be a communication strategy for development, rural transformation and agricultural projects, he said.

According to Adam Smith International, a UK-based award-winning professional services business, effective development communication is the result of a logical series of steps that demands a consistent approach. The steps are defining goals, identifying stakeholders, developing messages and selecting media, testing and reviewing, launching, defending and responding, and assessing and evaluating.

At the event, separate presentations were made to share communication approaches of the six projects of IFAD. The projects are Participatory Small-Scale Water Resources Sector Project, Char Development and Settlement Project IV, Haor Infrastructure and Livelihood Improvement Project/Climate Adaptation and Livelihood Protection (HIIILIP/CALIP), Coastal Climate Resilient Infrastructure Project (CCRIP), Promoting Agricultural Commercialisation and Enterprise Project (PACE) and National Agriculture Technology Programme II (NATP-II).

Dr. Barkat told the event that the total beneficiaries of these projects would be around 10 million households, and this vital message needs to be spread.

Barkat said Bangladesh needs to accelerate the process of humane development rather than concentrating exclusively on GDP growth. It is essential to ensure just rights and distributive justice, he added.

However, he added that humanising development within the framework of a free market economy is a very difficult task. "If somebody comes up with a formula how to humanise development within the free market economy, he or she will get the Nobel Prize," he noted wryly.

Taking part in discussions, representatives of the projects said their aim is to make communication for development an integral part of rural development policies and programmes.

By bringing the media along with other stakeholders onboard, they stressed the importance of raising awareness, acknowledging the cultural dimensions of rural development and valuing local knowledge, experiential learning, and information sharing.

They also talked about giving priority to the active participation of smallholder farmers and other stakeholders in the decision-making process with the ultimate objective of building a Bangladesh that will have food security.

Communication is no longer an issue that can be ignored as it is the key to success for development programmes.

