

Toilets and leaving no one behind – Opportunities and limitations

Prof. Philippe Cullet, pcullet@soas.ac.uk

**World Toilet Day - Leaving No One Behind, IWRA
Webinar, 19 November 2019**

Toilets – A necessary component of the right to sanitation

- Access to a toilet as a way to end the practice of open defecation
- Building and using toilets at home, in the work place and in public places contribute to the realisation of SDG 6 and the realisation of the right to sanitation, including:
 - the positive health impacts associated with eliminating open defecation
 - positive impacts for women (dignity, safety, night outings etc)
- However, to be successful in terms of realisation of the right to sanitation, toilets need to be built alongside a string of other measures

From toilets to sanitation

- Access to toilets has often been seen as a goal in itself
- Sanitation must be seen as something more comprehensive, including the
 - Need to integrate the management of black water to the decision to build toilets (issue of sewage or septage management, issue of groundwater contamination etc)
 - Social consequences of building toilets – toilets built need to be emptied creating new opportunities for sanitation work – In the case of India, building new toilets must be directly linked to the prohibition of manual scavenging
 - Rights consequences, eg impacts on the realisation of the right to water where groundwater is contaminated by the toilets

From leaving no one behind to a universal right

- Access to toilets can constitute a first step in ensuring that no one is left behind on the sanitation ladder
- What is really required is to focus on the universal human right to sanitation, which frames the issue in terms of entitlements of individuals and communities and duties of the state
- Where the policy focus is on incentivising individuals to build individual toilets without investment in the (expensive) infrastructure that is required to treat the wastewater produced and without the (expensive) investment in public facilities, the SDG goal is not effectively attained and the right to sanitation is not realised
- The next step is to integrate toilets to a broader thinking about sanitation