

# Assessing users' experience of shared sanitation facilities: A case study of community ablution blocks in Durban, South Africa

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## Abstract

Despite significant financial investment, the effective implementation and sustained use of water and sanitation (WATSAN) technologies remains a chimera, with one billion people using unimproved water facilities and two and a half billion not benefitting from adequate sanitation. The poor success rate of WATSAN interventions results from a predominance of supply-driven approaches which lack recipients' inputs into planning and implementation to ensure that technologies are fully absorbed and adapted to users' needs. In the academic literature, users' feedback and experiences of technologies in the post-implementation phase have received scarce attention. The purpose of this study is to investigate users' experience of sanitation technologies in the early post-implementation phase, when opportunities for remedial intervention are still available. Fieldwork comprising semi-structured interviews was undertaken with users and potential recipients of three community ablution blocks (CABs) in informal settlements around Durban. Results suggest that non-technical aspects such as affordability or cleanliness of the facilities can affect acceptance among the investigated communities. User training is positively associated with higher levels of facility maintenance as well as satisfaction with its functionality. A comparison between users and potential recipients of CABs shows that perceived health benefits, attitudes in case of problems, and trust are affected by use of the facilities. Conclusions relate to how early post-implementation assessments of users' experience could enhance the process of acceptance and management of the technology, thereby increasing progress towards achievement of the related Millenium Development Goals.

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