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Glossary on Sanitation

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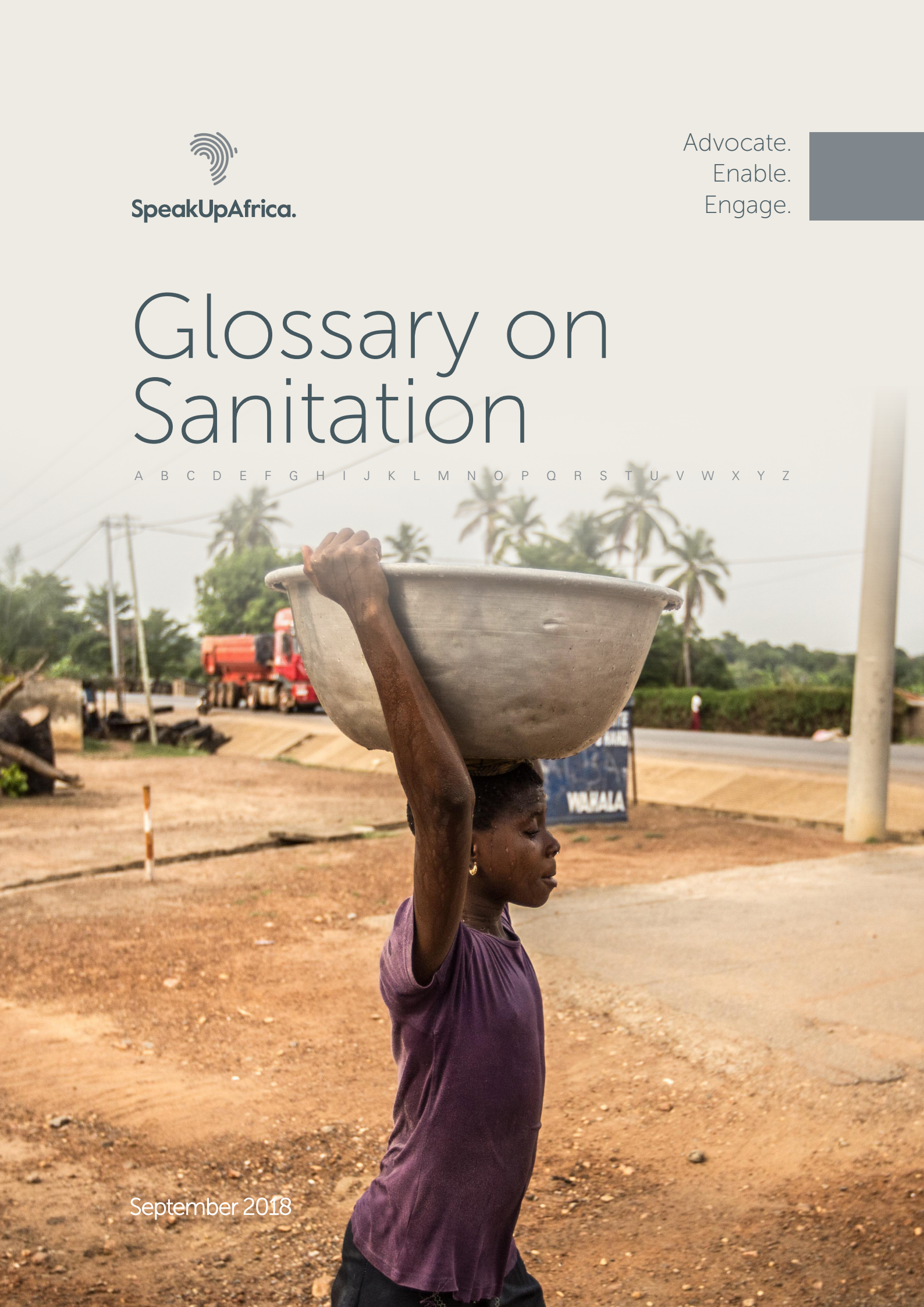


September 2018

SpeakUpAfrica.

Based in Dakar, Senegal, Speak Up Africa is a women-led strategic communications and advocacy organization dedicated to catalysing leadership, enabling policy change, and increasing awareness for sustainable development in Africa.

Speak Up Africa is a policy and advocacy action tank for sustainable development. Through our programs and networks, and with the help of our partners, we ensure that decision-makers connect with actors in the field, that solutions are tabled and that every sector—from citizens and civil society associations to financial partners and business leaders—makes key contributions to the dialogue and takes concrete action for health and sustainable development on the continent.

Biogas

Gas produced by the fermentation of organic materials, such as fecal matter. It can be used as a combustible or to generate electricity.

Certification

Certificate or license delivered by an independent organization certifying the pit emptying companies' compliance with the standards and regulations in force.

Collective sanitation

Contrary to on-site sanitation, collective sanitation refers to systems in buildings that are connected to sewers: collection networks that are hooked up to centralized treatment systems. Generally, their construction, use, maintenance and monitoring are public sector responsibilities.

Compost

A product obtained through the decomposition of organic waste mixed with mineral substances. It improves soil structure and provides nutrients for plants.

Delegation

Operating fecal sludge treatment plants is often a heavy burden on public sanitation suppliers. In most cases, they lack the technical and financial capacity to manage such plants optimally and make them economically viable. Therefore, plant operation may be delegated to a private operator.

Domestic waste water

All water from cooking, laundry, taps, bathrooms, and toilets.

Dumping

The action of emptying septic truck tanks, or any other fecal sludge container. Dumping may be "illegal" when the place chosen for emptying is random, unprotected and unregulated.

Environment

Sanitation of excreta and waste water provides residents with a higher-quality environment and reduces risks due to uncontrolled dumping of effluents on the water and the environment.

Environmental nuisance

Negative consequences on animal and vegetable life when a certain level of pollution has been exceeded (odour, toxic chemicals, etc.).

Fecal peril

This term refers to the risk of contracting a viral, bacterial or parasitic infection borne by the feces of diseased or symptomatic humans or animals.

It is spread through a fecal-oral route, involving the ingestion of food or drink contaminated with pathogens, which may also be swallowed after the mouth is touched with dirty hands. Individual and collective food hygiene is key to preventing these diseases.

Sanitation of waste water and excreta helps to significantly improve health, particularly among the most vulnerable groups. In addition, access to adequate sanitary facilities reduces risks of disease linked to fecal peril, thereby lowering spending on health.

Fecal sludge

Fecal sludge is a combination of feces, waste water, household waste and debris that accumulates in the bottom of latrine pits and septic tanks.

Fecal sludge management

Fecal sludge management, also known as urban sludge management, refers to the handling of the contents of septic tanks and latrine pits, including emptying, conveyance and treatment. It focuses on the mixture of water and human excreta stored in decentralized systems, as opposed to waste water conveyed in sewers and the resulting sewage sludge.

Fecal sludge management. is particularly important in highly populated urban areas where the inhabitants lack access to a collective sanitation network, which is the case in most cities in developing countries.

Fecal sludge treatment plant

Unlike water treatment plants, which treat waste water from collective sanitation, fecal sludge treatment plants are sites used for dumping and treatment of fecal sludge.

Grey Water

Grey water is relatively clean waste water produced by household activities. Examples include water from a shower or laundry.

Groundwater

Groundwater is all water found underground, as opposed to surface water.

Hygiene

Hygiene refers to rules and practices that help to maintain or improve health.

Improved sanitation

The World Health Organization estimates that poor access to sanitation causes 30 minutes of lost time per person per day, or 21 unproductive hours per week for a six-person household. Improved sanitation can save a household more than a thousand hours a year; time that could be spent working, studying, caring for children, joining collective initiatives or resting. Studies estimate that the time savings would be worth more than 100 billion dollars.

Sanitation is a real investment: according to the Human Development Report (UNDP, 2006), every dollar invested in sanitation yields an average of eight dollars thanks to decreased health spending and productivity gains.

Industrial waste water

Industrial waste water is produced by factories, workshops and farms. Disposal of this water requires prior treatment in most cases, since it often contains large quantities of highly toxic chemicals.

Latrine

A structure, usually consisting of a hole in the ground, used as a sanitary facility by human beings.

Compared to a toilet, a latrine is a more basic technology. Latrines are the most widely used basic method of sanitation in the world, as they are also the cheapest.

The purpose of a latrine is both to ensure the health of its users by containing or disposing of excrement, and to protect the environment. Generally, a latrine is made up of several elements: a slab, a pit and a structure.

Manual desludging

Manual desludging consists of "manually" emptying a latrine pit. This is done by small-scale, private operators who work informally. Using only rudimentary equipment, a desludging operator or team of two desludging operators removes fecal sludge with a bucket. In most cases, the sludge they collect is deposited near the emptying site; sometimes even within the compound itself.

Mechanical desludging

Mechanical desludging is done with a tank truck and suction pump. It allows fecal sludge to be conveyed to previously identified dumping sites, such as official fecal sludge dumping sites or treatment plants. This is the safest and most effective method. It significantly reduces risks of infection and contamination in households. Sludge is removed either on demand or according to a predetermined schedule.

On-site sanitation

Sanitation is described as being "on-site" (or individual) when it applies to buildings that are not served by community sewage collection and treatment facilities. On-site sanitation uses individual facilities located within the boundaries of each individual plot. The owner is responsible for the construction, use and maintenance of the facilities. Generally, such buildings are dwellings or other types of buildings that only discharge domestic waste water.

Open defecation

Refers to the practice of defecating outside of homes or public toilets. This practice leads to contamination of water supplies with fecal matter, causing numerous public health problems. On average, 13% of the global population practices open defecation.

Pollution

Direct or indirect introduction, through human activity, of substances into the environment which may contribute to or cause: a danger for human health, the deterioration of biological resources, ecosystems or material goods, or an obstacle to use of water.

Rainwater

Water from precipitation. Rainwater is not included in waste water sanitation.

Rainwater recovery and drainage serves a number of purposes:

- Recovery of roof runoff to water flower and vegetable gardens.
- Channeling of large volumes of water in case of heavy rains or storms to avoid flooding and submersion.

In on-site sanitation systems, rainwater should not be recovered in septic tanks or pits.

Cities often have rainwater drainage systems. However, these canals or pipes are commonly misused, through illegal sewage hook-ups, and the drains contain waste water. This leads to massive environmental pollution, since rainwater canal or pipe systems are not designed to deal with waste water, because rainwater is relatively clean.

Recovery (or reuse)

Recovery is linked to reuse of fecal sludge. It involves treating fecal sludge to obtain byproducts such as compost, electricity, drinking water, distilled water, etc.

Sanitation

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines sanitation as all tasks to be performed, in compliance with public health regulations, by individuals, communities and public authorities to rid urban areas of vectors of disease.

Sanitation involves control of: public water supplies, disposal of excreta and waste water, disposal of waste and vectors of disease, housing conditions, food supplies and handling, atmospheric conditions and work-place safety conditions.

2.5 billion people around the world lack access to adequate sanitation facilities.

Septic tank

Septic tanks are one of the basic components of on-site sanitation facilities. They receive water from toilet facilities only.

Septic truck

A truck equipped with a tank, whose size varies according to the model, and a pump system for drawing liquids, namely fecal sludge.

A truck is defined as a "flushing truck" when it contains a high-pressure pump that can be used for unclogging and cleaning in addition to collecting liquids.

Sewage

Procedure consisting of disposing of waste water of all kinds, drain water, household waste water and industrial waste water and all or part of rainwater, through the same drainage system, which sends domestic waste water into the sewers. This term refers to a collective sanitation system.

Sewers

Underground drainage systems for disposal of waste water and rainwater (see collective sanitation).

Solid/liquid waste

Solid waste refers to materials that are disposed of after they have done a job or served their purpose, i.e.: bottles, bags, tires, household appliances, etc.

The difference between solid and liquid wastes is important in the on-site sanitation sector. On-site sanitation applies to liquid wastes only, and does not include solid wastes.

Surface water

Runoff water that accumulates on the ground or in watercourses.

Toilet

A toilet (or washroom) is a place intended for urination or defecation.

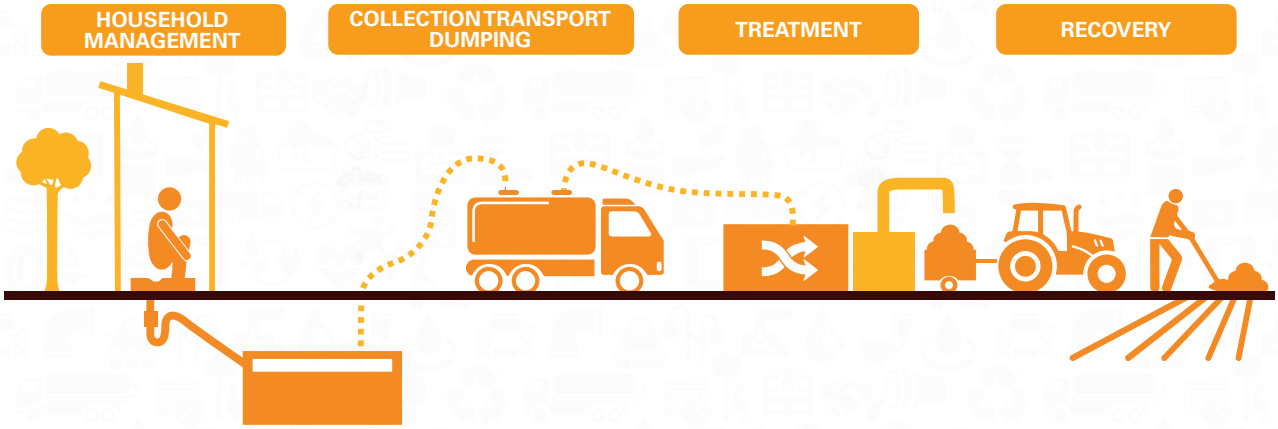
Treatment

Treatment of fecal sludge generally consists in a series of steps used to separate solids from liquids and treat each part to recover the highest possible amount of energy or nutritional value.

- The most common processes include:
- Dumping, when the sludge is unloaded by trucks;
- Preliminary treatment, notably using mesh to remove rubbish, sand and fats;
- Primary treatment, during which solids and liquids are separated physically or by means of microbial digestion.
- Treatment of liquids; and
- Treatment of solids, enabling recovery, where possible.

Value chain

The fecal sludge value chain comprises all fecal sludge management processes and steps: storage, collection, transportation, dumping, treatment and reuse/recovery.



Water table

Upper level of water present under the ground, which may feed springs or wells.

Water treatment plant

A water treatment plant is a place where waste water and rainwater are treated (cleaned) before being returned to the natural environment.

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