

Sanitation Ladder Instructions

What is it?

The sanitation ladder helps people to identify options for improving sanitation in their community and realize that this can be a gradual process.

Why use it?

This activity helps participants to:

- Describe the community's sanitation situation
- Identify options for improving sanitation
- Discover that improvements can be made step-by-step

How to use it

1. Depending on how many people and/or groups you are working with, print out as many copies as you need so that each group has a complete set of cards.
2. Introduce the exercise to the participants. Give the participants the pictures depicting the various methods of excreta disposal. It may be useful to have some paper and pen so that participants can draw other methods which are not included in the set of drawings.
3. Ask the participants to sort the pictures into steps according to improvements in sanitation practices. Participants can take 15 – 20 minutes for this work.
4. When the groups have completed this task, ask the group to explain its sanitation ladder to the other participants.
5. After the presentations, encourage a group discussion covering:
 - The similarities and differences in the way the options have been arranged as steps.
 - The options that have been identified as best for the community
 - The advantages of each option
 - The difficulties or obstacles that would make moving up the ladder difficult
 - How these decisions were reached
6. Explain to the group that the next activity will help it to develop a plan to get from where it is now to the situation it would like to have in the future.

Alternative Methods

If the size of your group is almost the same as the number of illustrations you have (about 16) give one illustration to each participant. Have the participants arrange themselves in a line, in order from worst sanitation practice to best. Starting from the worst end of the line, ask each participant to explain to the group why their illustration is a better practice than the previous illustration. The group and the facilitator can discuss whether they agree with the order.

This activity can also be used to deal with other questions and other problems. For instance the sanitation ladder can be adapted to make a water ladder. The activity would be conducted in the same way, but using drawings showing different water options for improving quality, quantity and access to water supply. The options shown would need to range from most simple to the more complex. Drawings of unsafe or unprotected

water sources and collection would have to be included since some communities would be starting from this step.

Facilitator Notes

- Before you begin this activity it would be helpful to have information on:
 - The design principles of different sanitation options
 - The effectiveness of different options
 - The use and maintenance of each option
 - The cost of different options
 - The durability and sustainability of each option
- The sanitation ladder shows that improvements can be made step by step. The idea that a community can progress up the ladder at different rates can be very appealing to groups. They realize that changes can be made over time, at a pace that is appropriate and manageable to them. When groups discover this, it can inspire them to become more involved.
- Some options are equally good. Two options can be placed side by side so the ladder has “branches”. The idea of progression and choosing for the future is more important than the shape of the ladder.

(Adapted from WHO, 1998)