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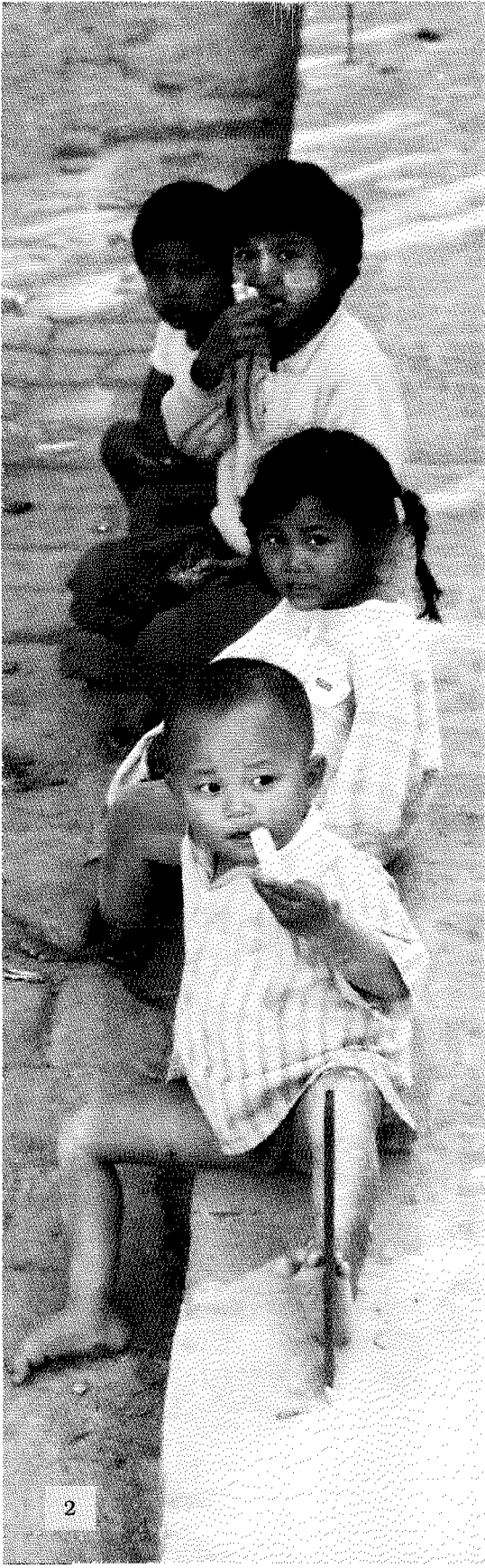
A better future for the Children of Myanmar

Inadequate sanitation is a major contributing factor to the deaths caused by diarrhoea of approximately 17,000 children under five years of age annually in Myanmar. This is a loss, which can be easily prevented.

Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child specifically urges countries to take appropriate measures to combat disease and malnutrition, and requires,

“among things, the provision of clean drinking water and sanitation services.”



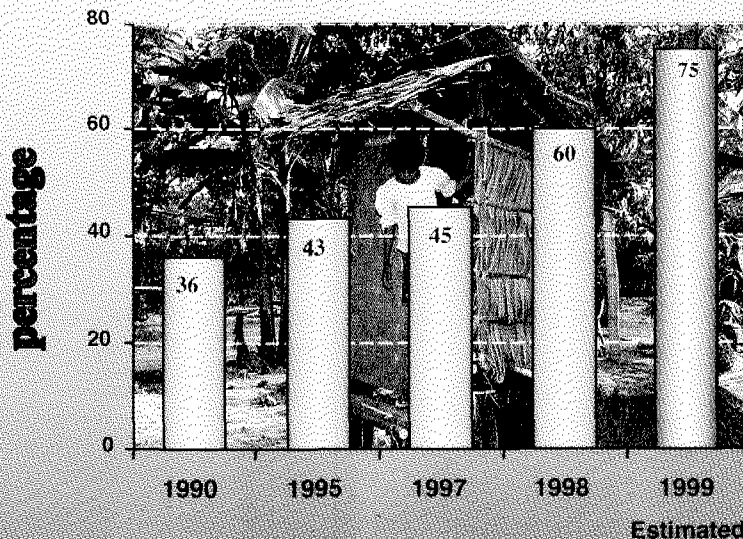


The World Summit for Children goals include universal access to safe human excreta disposal. Recent studies suggest that an insanitary environment has adverse effects on children, beyond those associated with bouts of illness, with possibility of affecting their nutritional status and normal growth. Immediate actions and continuous efforts are required for the welfare of the children.

Success breeding success

With the declaration of "Sanitation for All by Year 2000" as a high priority national commitment under the National Health Plan, the national programme was revitalised in 1996 with the promotion of the self-help approach, supported by social mobilisation and the application of affordable technologies. The programme was given a big boost with the launch of the 1st National Sanitation Week in 1998, which was sponsored by UNICEF. A high level of commitment from decision-makers and planners led to a successful implementation. The Ministry of Health, being the key implementing agency contributed great efforts with support from Ministry of Progress of Border Areas and National Races and Development Affairs as well as Ministry of Information. By end of 1998, estimated national sanitation coverage was about 60%, an increase of 14%

Sanitation Coverage



from figures reflected in the 1997 national survey. The programme also brought high-level government health officials from Bhutan and Indonesia to observe and learn from the programme's implementation.

Encouraged by the successful and strategic shift from latrine pans provider to promoter of self-help approach, a 2nd National Sanitation Week was launched in 1999. This time, the event has also brought about participation from top level government officials, particularly from the Health sector, and UNICEF. In addition, a senior government delegation from Pakistan sponsored by UNICEF participated to learn from the event. The event also generated great interest from countries such as Cambodia, China and



Field visit of the senior government delegation from Pakistan during the 2nd National Sanitation Week.



Minister for Health H.E. Major General Ket Sein made a presentation on Myanmar's 1st National Sanitation Week at the Regional Ministerial Consultation in Bangkok, November 1998.

Vietnam; plans have already been drawn up to visit Myanmar as part of their agenda for observation of policy implementation.

Myanmar also reflected the success of the programme by the choice of sanitation as the theme for the Regional Ministerial Consultation held in Bangkok in November 1998.

More learning for improvements

The elements contributing to the success of the 1st National Sanitation Week were obvious. National awareness was achieved resulting in a far-reaching impact. Though small in numbers, 15 new sanitary latrines in each village and ward, the results for the 66,000 villages and wards in the country were substantial — 800,000 new family latrines constructed.

Conviction of success is another important element. The strategy was convincing, with targets being clear and realistic, and the tasks distributed to well defined groups.

The shift in mentality and change in mindset as demonstrated by the use of local film stars as talents in posters on 'the construction of latrines' and the 'promotion of handwashing' posters was evident. The posters were welcomed by the general public. Promotion of community-wide transfer of technology and application further propelled the implementation.

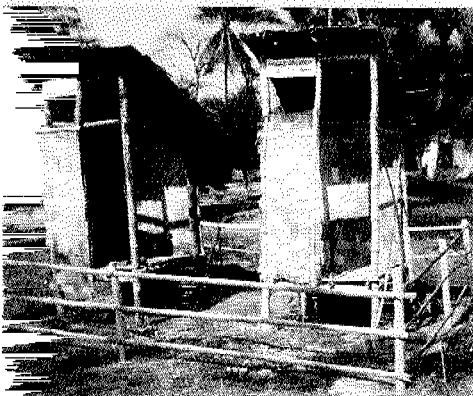
2nd National Sanitation Week : Another 1 million new sanitary latrines

Spurred on by the enthusiasm of the community, the goal of the 2nd Sanitation Week was to motivate 20 families in all of 66,000 villages and wards to build their own sanitary latrines. This would result in another 1 million new family latrines. Besides building new latrines, efforts were also made in encouraging the upgrading of as many insanitary to sanitary latrines. Handwashing, was also emphasized during the campaign. Eventually, the goal is to also achieve 75% national coverage by end of 1999.

UNICEF Representative and Chief of Water Supply and Environmental Sanitation Programme monitored the construction of latrine during field visit.



Preparation for 2nd National Sanitation Week



Preparation for 2nd National Sanitation Week was initiated as far back as January 1999. There was more planning this time around, which included briefing of township medical officers (TMOs), village tract and village leaders; setting up of billboards, posters and distribution of IEC materials. Mass media was again deployed, which included the airing of PSA (public service announcements), documentary on sanitation, radio announcements and publication through periodicals.

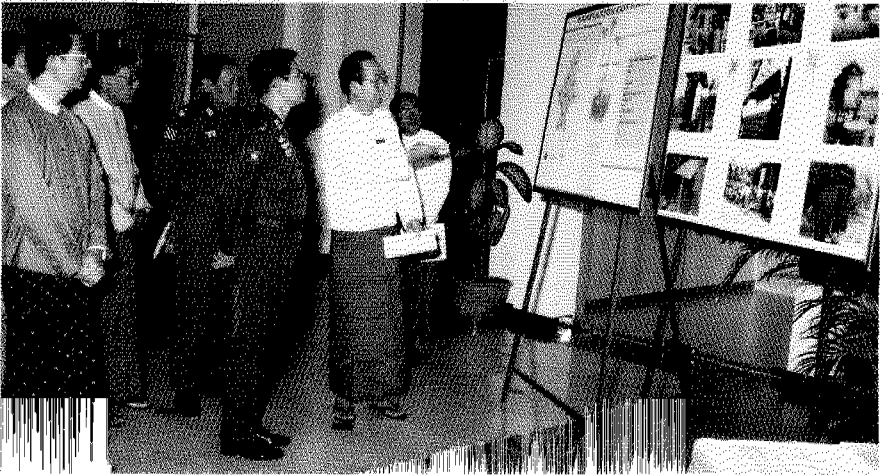
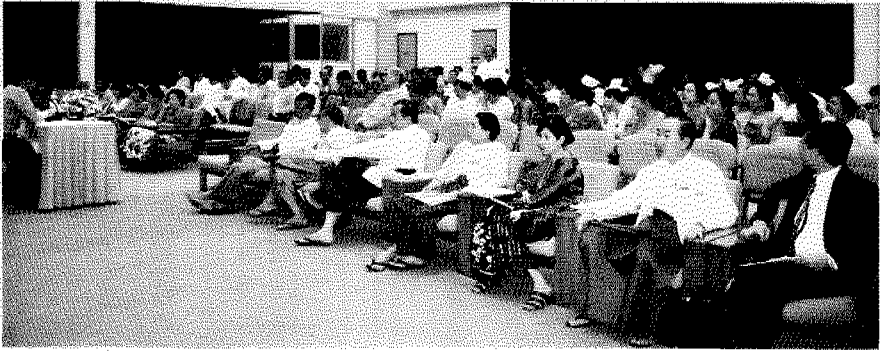


*Preparatory activities for
2nd National Sanitation
Week*





*Launching ceremony
of the 2nd National
Sanitation Week,
30 March 1999*



2nd National Sanitation Week in Action

The 2nd National Sanitation Week took off with the official launch on 30th March 1999. Field observations later revealed intensive community mobilisation and participation. Families mobilised their own resources, ranging from less than Ks 500 to as much as Ks 30,000 for latrines ranging from the simple pits to the septic tanks by some families — averaging Ks 1,200 per latrine.

The outcome was the construction of 750,000 new sanitary latrines, in addition to the upgrading of insanitary ones — all carried out by individual families using their own resources. This achievement added 10 per cent to the national sanitation coverage. The total investment by the people was estimated at an average cost of Ks 1,200 for each of the new latrines, which would amount to over almost Ks 1 billion, an equivalent of, US\$ 3 million. Some poor families however, were able to receive assistance in terms of materials and labour from neighbours and well wishers.

The number and type of latrine designs to suit individual choice and the effective ways in which local materials were put to use demonstrated a high sense of innovation among community members. These included the introduction of septic tanks, lighting by electric bulb, location of latrine within and closer to home as well as variety of materials used for roofing and walling.

UNICEF invested about US\$ 42,000 for advocacy, awareness and orientation of staff of implementing agencies for the 2nd National Sanitation Week. This investment translates into US\$ 5 cents per latrine – a small investment to yield such a substantial impact on the lives of the people of Myanmar.

Towards 2000 and beyond

As we approach the decade-end, the possibility of reaching universal access by end of the decade seems far more achievable. This is due to the fact that the sanitation initiatives have reached a critical mass of users in many places, encouraging other non-users to change their behaviour. Furthermore, the high coverage will enhance programme sustainability and impact on disease reduction. Efforts though, have to be made to encourage townships to aim for steady progress throughout the year instead of concentrating their efforts during the National Sanitation Week only. Interactive monitoring by Department of Health headquarters staff along with regular interaction with townships showing low performance will also pave the way to achieving the goal of Sanitation for All by Year 2000.

UNICEF Myanmar also produced a 5 minute video on “The Second National Sanitation Week — Moving towards the Goal”. It outlines the sanitation programme philosophy, activities leading to the event, and captures the key interventions at the grassroots.

For more information please contact:



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