

## Affordable sanitation for rural India

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INDIA IS ONE of the densest populated subcontinents in the world and has the lowest sanitation coverage.

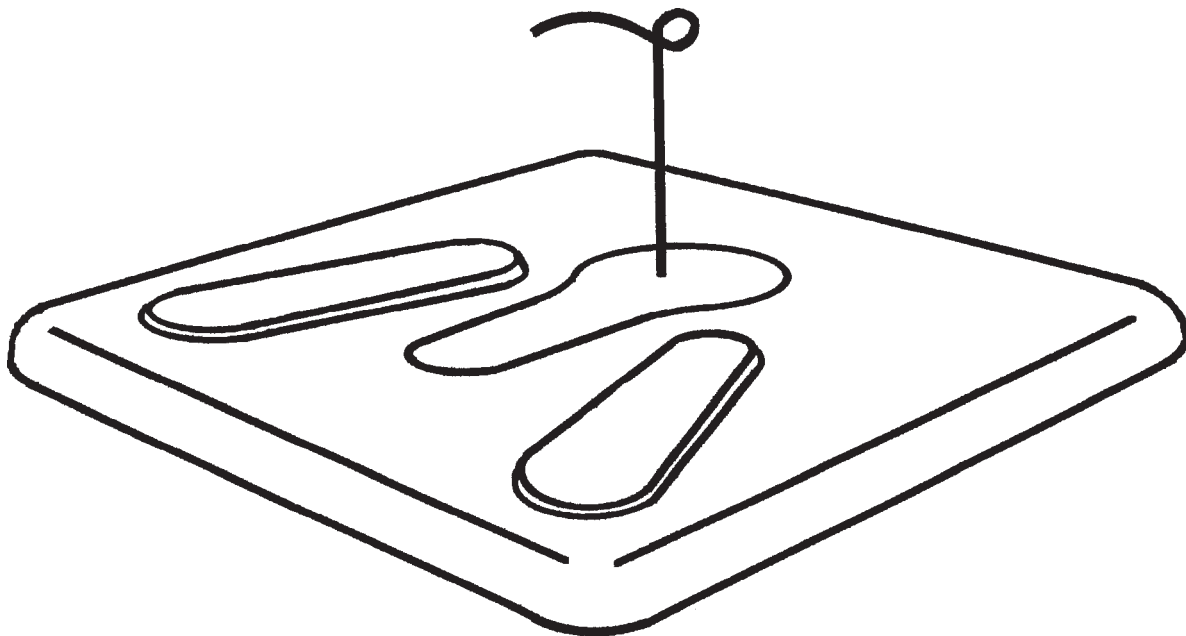
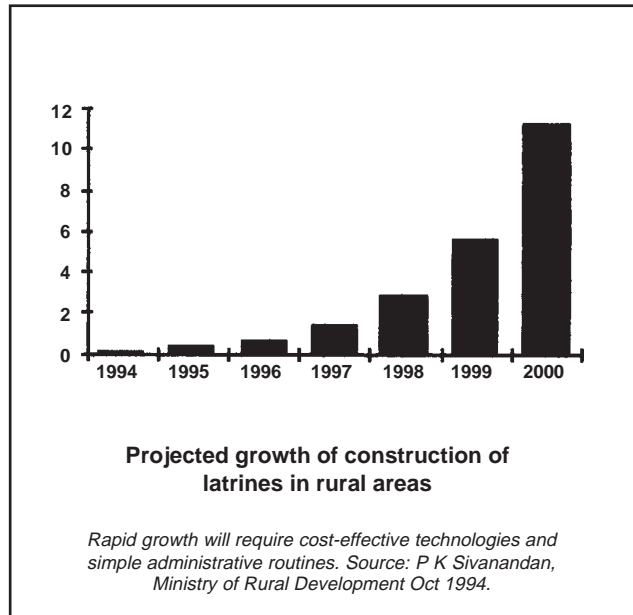
Promotion of subsidised water-sealed pour flush latrines has become a major problem for affordable sanitation, where approximately 100 million new latrines are needed to increase the coverage from the present 15 per cent to some 85 per cent or more. 24 million new latrines are estimated to be built before the year 2001

For this to happen a drastic increase in construction of latrines has to take place, requiring effective methods for commercial and social marketing and cost-effective technologies.

### Meeting the need

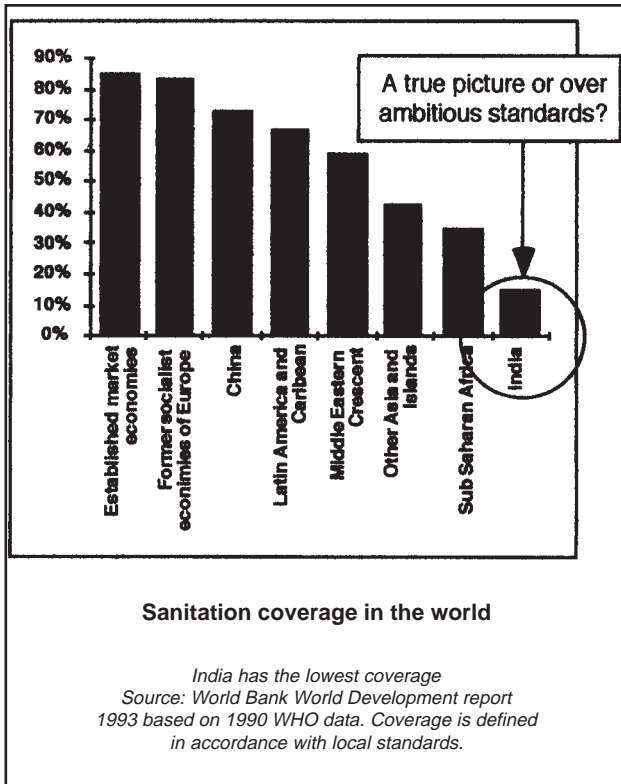
Meeting the need is presently hampered by:

- affordability;
- social acceptability;
- availability of water;
- institutional and administrative capacity.



**The small SanPlat 60x60 cm**

*The SanPlat is ideal for improving existing latrines of the people who already have built their own latrine, hence boosting status, acceptability and demand for better sanitation. Using simple moulds high quality SanPlats can easily and rapidly be cast in large numbers.*



Meeting the need win require a flexible approach where the individual family as well as NGOs and the private sector are able to chose between affordable and cost-effective options.

**Subsidies**

Government resources are best used to promote improved sanitation and hygiene education rather than subsidising technology. In a transitional period subsidies may need to be maintained, but in a way which promotes what the individual families can afford.

Introducing simple but cost-effective technologies will allow for a considerable increase in number of families benefiting.

**The SanPlat system in India**

The SanPlat system has so far not been used in India. It offers a range of alternative solutions bridging the gap between the traditional latrine and more sophisticated technologies.

With water-sealed sanitation and the SanPlat system side by side in Sanitary Marts (as promoted for example by UNICEF) and other marketing systems, considerable progress can be achieved, offering affordable and socially acceptable latrines benefiting especially low income families and local contractors in rural areas.

**Affordability and acceptability; a problem and a possibility**

Promotion of water sealed pour flush latrines has been combined with high subsidies resulting in promotion of

complicated expensive technologies and administrative bottlenecks which if implemented at large scale leads to severe affordability problems not only at family level but also at government and donor level. Changing this policy would allow India to increase its sanitation coverage to the level of the rest of the world.

**An integrated need**

Control of faecal borne diseases depend critically of three components Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Education. Ignoring sanitation will lead to that improvements in water supply and hygiene education will not result in health improvements. People are not able to improve sanitary habits until latrines physically exist and can be used.

Simplifying the sanitation implementation will rapidly bring the sanitation component to the level of water and hygiene education resulting in immediate and considerable hygiene and health improvements.

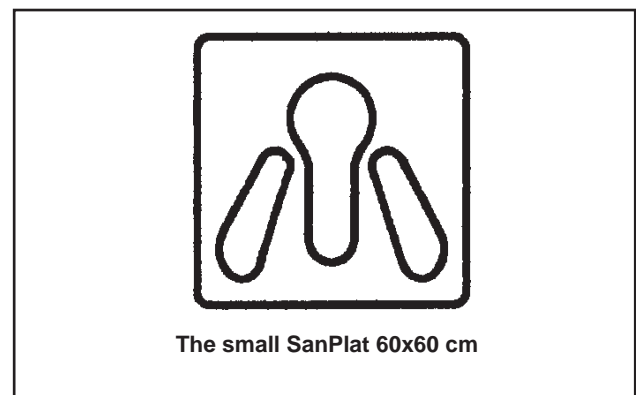
**New trends**

UNICEF and other institutions are recently changing their approach to sanitation. The double pit pour flush latrine is no longer seen as the sole technical option but as an element in a range of technical options where the individual families will be given opportunities to chose a technical solution corresponding to needs and possibilities.

Government is presently questioning its subsidy system which it realises is expensive and complicated on medium to long term. A number of NGOs, dedicated to sanitary improvements, are also questioning the present situation where non affordable solutions and policies are blocking the development and implementation of practical and affordable systems.

**Sanitary marts**

In order to unlock the present problems and pave the way for large scale implementation of alternative sanitation systems UNICEF together with Government and NGOs is supporting the establishment so Sanitary Marts where builders and individual households can buy components for self help building of improved latrines.



SanPlats can be made in different sizes and shapes but should all have:

- smooth and sloping surfaces which are easy to clean;
- elevated footrests;
- a child safe drop hole;
- a tight fitting lid (optional).

### SanPlats

The SanPlat is a sanitary platform, a building element ready to be installed in a new or exiting latrine. It can be used for traditional long drops as well as for conventional pour flush latrines with waterseal but may be more important for intermediate solutions where the water seal has been simplified or even excluded, depending on the preferences and affordability of the individual households.

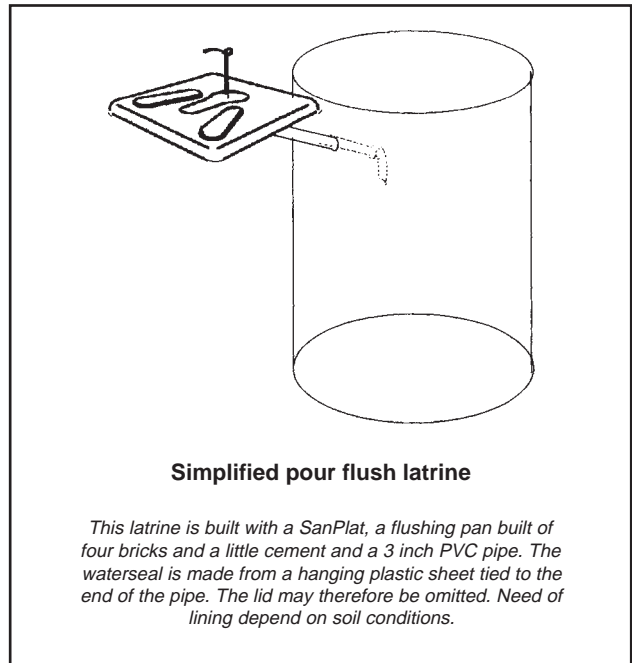
Seen in the light of the present conditions and new trends the flexibility of the SanPlat system opens a range of possibilities. SanPlats can easily be produced at village level using locally produced moulds or if a higher finish is desired from promotional reasons using plastic “all in one” moulds.

### Simplified implementation

With the introduction of the Sanitary Mart system the administration of the subsidy system can be simplified. Instead of subsidising the latrines with complicated administrative systems the Sanitary Mart system allows for subsidising sanitation specific elements. Even in this aspect the SanPlat seems to fit well into the new Indian system for sanitation promotion.

### Advantage for low income families

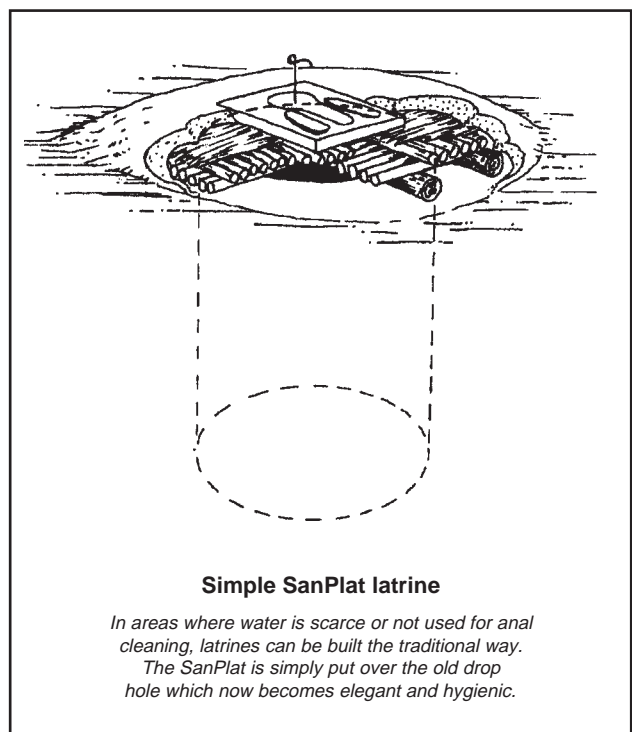
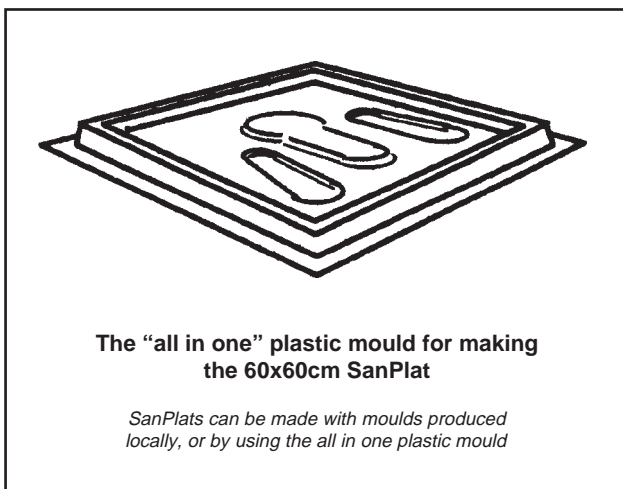
The SanPlat is sanitation specific, which means that subsidies on SanPlats will promote construction of latrines only. The SanPlat is family specific which means that the subsidies on the SanPlats will benefit all families equally. For the low income families opting for a simple latrine the benefit will be relatively high.

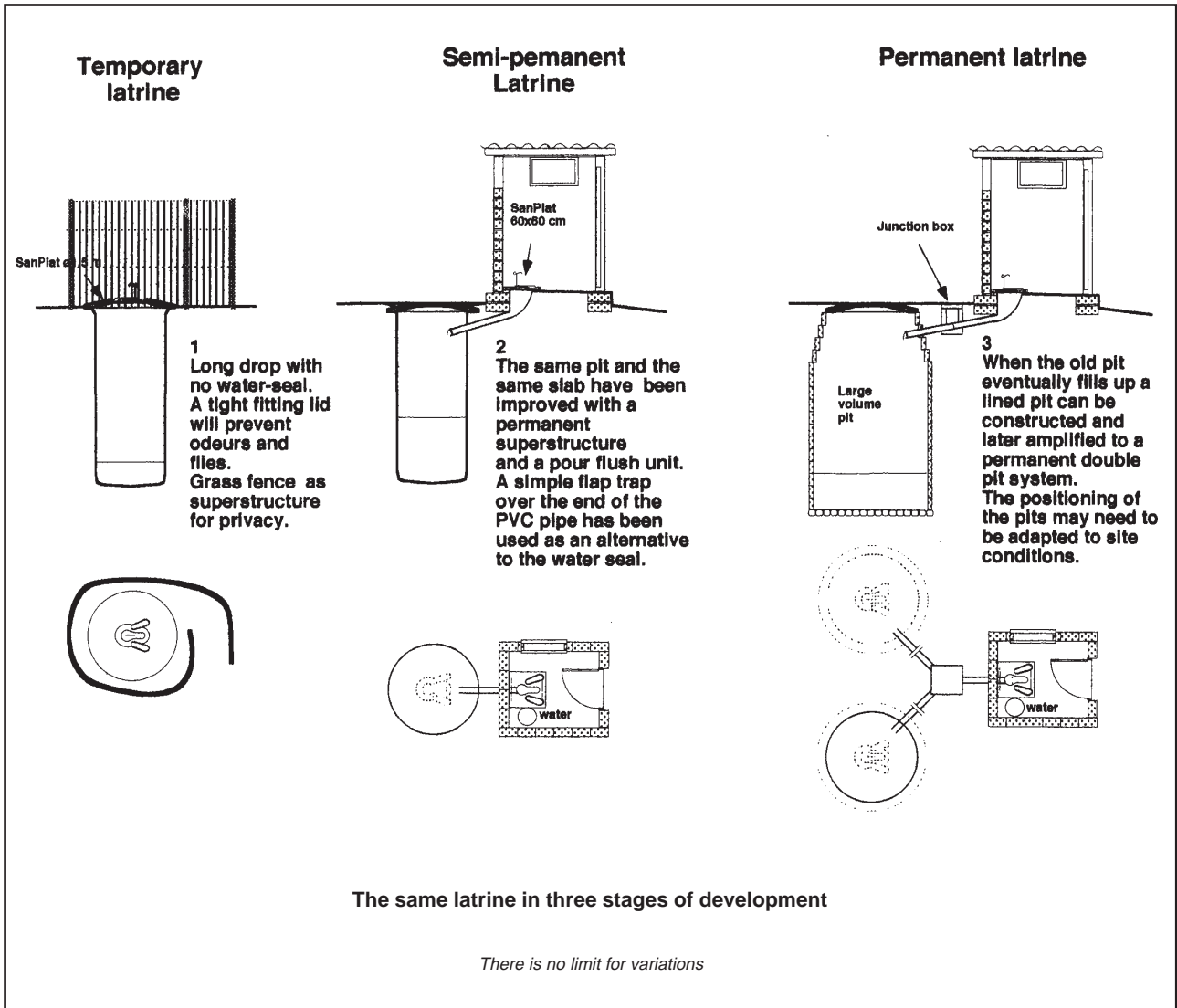


### Local entrepreneurs benefiting

SanPlats in combination with the Sanitary Marts system opens a number of possibilities for local entrepreneurs which because of the complexity of the previous system did not come in. Today local entrepreneurs can:

- Produce SanPlats and other prefabricated elements to be sold at the Sanitary Marts.
- Buy SanPlats and other material at the Sanitary Mart for construction of individual latrines.





**Conclusion**

Sanitation in India is presently undergoing an adjustment aiming at raising the coverage from the present 15-20 per cent to almost total coverage in the beginning of the new millennium.

The realisation of these plans will critically depend on affordable and cost-effective technologies and imple-

mentation systems which are easy to implement together with new administrative systems.

The Sanitary Mart system and as well as the SanPlat system support these conditions.

*The Sanitary Mart is the market place for affordable sanitation and the SanPlat is in India to stay.*