Human waste: A story you can change

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At some point in our life we have found ourselves stuck for somewhere to go to the toilet, so imagine also having nowhere safe and dignified to go either. Harder to imagine is the life of a slum dweller, so poor and socially excluded because their caste or religion, that their only means of earning a living is to take on the vital yet appalling role of emptying the inadequate toilets in their slum, with their bare hands. For sweepers like Manosha, this is the daily reality.

Since Manosha’s husband died, she desperately needs to provide for her children and grandchildren. She does a job that no one else wants to do, simply because she has no other choice, even though it is affecting her health, and makes her an outcast in her community.

Why we need your investment into this vital project

Your support is vital in tackling the problem of HUMAN WASTE in the slums of Bangladesh. You could provide the pit emptiers with the much need equipment to enable them to carry out this vital life-saving work safely, and at the same time ensure some of the poorest most vulnerable people have access to basic sanitation services; something that is part of their human right.

A donation from your church family could also do so much more:

- On-going training is key
  - Workshops will be implemented and training manuals created, focussing on health effects, handling sludge etc. These valuable resources will be made available to all pit emptiers.
- Awareness raising
  - Sludge management and the available services will be taught in schools

- Feeding the community
  - Once the collected sludge has been treated and dried it is turned into fertiliser and used for growing fruit and vegetables like tomatoes and green beans, providing the sweepers with a much needed income and food to feed the families in the slum.

Please help us today to lay down the foundations that will improve the health, safety and hygiene status for the sweepers, and provide the slum dwellers with their basic human right to have access to a safe, clean place to go to the toilet.

£140 could provide collection, transportation and health and safety training for a sweeper like Manosha.

£246 could provide a non-motorized rickshaw to transport the sludge to the treatment plant.

£385 If your church family donated £385, this could provide one pair of steel toe caps for the sweepers to wear on their bare feet.

£771 By raising £771, your church could provide all of these things: a pair of steel toe caps, health training that could help to make a sweeper’s job safer, and a gulper.

Tackling the problem in the slums of Bangladesh

We have not shared Manosha’s picture with you in order to protect her dignity. However, she knows that telling her story is vital in helping transform lives for herself and other sweepers.
Overview
The urban population of Bangladesh represents almost one third of the total population – approximately 50 million people. It is the most densely populated country in the world with an average of 1,050 people per square kilometre. Today, around 7 million people are estimated to live in urban slums characterised by high population density, poor housing, and most significantly, limited and inadequate sanitation and hygiene facilities. This number is rising rapidly. This proposal seeks to explain how, with investment from your church family today, Practical Action will work with slum dwellers to create solutions to the life-threatening impact of inadequate sanitation facilities and services to protect lives and bring dignity to those affected. This project aims to directly help 200,000 of the most vulnerable slum-dwellers across seven cities and secondary towns, and indirectly help over 1 million people.

FACT: The under five mortality rate in the slums is 95 per 1,000 live births compared to 53 in other urban and 66 in rural areas.

The impact of inadequate sanitation
Existing sewer coverage reaches just 11% of the total urban population of Bangladesh – and excludes completely the rapidly growing urban population of Faridpur. The environmental health hazards are enormous. The reality – for the poorest people, living in squallid slum dwellings – is the use of inadequate pit latrines. Shared by up to 50 people they quickly fill and overflow, and as they cannot be emptied by municipal services due to lack of access, they often get abandoned – ultimately leading back to open defecation.

From toilets to total sanitation: for health, wealth and dignity
Providing a safe and dignified place to go to the toilet is just the first step in achieving the level of sanitation required to keep communities healthy. The next step is to maintain them. Currently the only option for slum dwellers is to hire an informal worker – a sweeper. sweepers are generally from low-castes, who are further socially excluded by the only profession where they can find work – open defecation. Many open defecation practices are considered to be unhygienic and unhygienic practices are still heavily discouraged.

1. Safe pit emptying
The safe removal of human waste deposited in pits is necessary to ensure the toilets remain safe to use. This is a huge problem in unsewered settlements that are unconnected to sewage pipes and where services traditionally used for ‘de-sludging’ pits are ill-equipped or unsuited to the densely packed slum dwellings. Mechanical exhausters and gulpers (hand-drawn pumps) can be used to empty the pits without the need for sweepers to climb inside. Providing safety equipment, including gloves and facemasks that ‘professionalise’ the service will further protect the health of the sweepers. £385 if your church family came together to raise £385, this could provide one gulper; stopping the sweepers emptying the pits with their bare hands. This simple solution will prevent the spread of disease and give the sweepers back their dignity.

2. Safe transportation
As well as the health risks, transporting the sludge creates an incredible burden for sweepers. Non-motorized tricycle rickshaw vans hold a greater volume of sludge and give the sweepers somewhere to deposit the sludge they collect (instead of dumping it into the water supply). £246 could provide a non-motorized rickshaw to transport the sludge to the treatment plant. This simple solution will protect the environment and reduce the spread of water-borne disease.

3. Safe disposal and appropriate treatment technologies
Together with the sludge collectors, slum dwellers and municipal councils, Practical Action is helping to identify suitable ebs and innovative technologies that will treat the sludge, remove the unacceptable pathogens, turning it into a valuable bi-product, including fertilizer or gas – creating a new income opportunity for the women and men who do this vital job. The image to the right shows a treatment chamber the faecal sludge is transformed to once the water has been removed. The plastic cover works along the sun and the rise in temperature causes the moisture inside the faecal sludge to evaporate. 90% of the pathogens are removed resulting in a bio-fertilizer that is safe to use.

FACT: Solid waste (faeces) is responsible for 49 vector borne diseases in Bangladesh, including dengue fever, a mosquito-borne viral infection which causes a flu-like illness which if not detected early on and treated, can be fatal.

FACT: 83% of slum dwellers have no choice but to use a toilet shared by up to 50 people.

FACT: Poor sanitation produces excrated pathogens and contributes to high levels of acute respiratory infections (ARIs) and diarrhoea, which kills thousands of Bangladeshi children every year.

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Help put an end to HUMAN WASTE today, call 0800 389 1624, visit practicalaction.org/tent2017, or use the form enclosed.