

ABSTRACT

Access to adequate sanitation and improved hygiene is essential in ensuring prevention of diarrheal diseases in slums. However, despite numerous efforts to upscale sanitation systems in informal settlements, public hygiene still remains a challenge. The study investigated community toilets management strategies on promotion of public hygiene in slums using a mixed methods approach. The objectives of the study were to: examine the relationship between community toilet cleaning and operation strategies on promotion of public hygiene; establish the extent of relationship between strategies for management of anal cleansing materials on promotion of public hygiene; and to examine the association between strategies for making community toilets suitable for vulnerable groups on promotion of public hygiene in slums. Findings from the study showed that 86% of the slum dwellers accessed inadequate sanitation facilities where 5.1% used *flying toilets* and 1.3% used bucket latrines. Results also indicated that 96.2% of the toilets were shared between men and women, and majority were rarely maintained clean. Toilets users especially women poured ash on the toilet slabs as a strategy to avoid urine stagnation on the floors. As a strategy for toilet separation by gender, residents used charcoal to label toilets for males and females. The study also showed that 94.9% of the toilets lacked menstrual hygiene management facilities. The association between menstrual waste bins availability and avoidance of toilets was positive and significant ($r = -0.071$, $p\text{-value} = 0.037 < 0.05$). Women wrapped used sanitary towels in polyethene papers and threw them in garbage pits as a strategy to maintain cleanliness in the slums. As a result of lack of anal cleansing materials in toilets, local materials such as leaves and newspapers were used to promote hygiene among the residents. Majority of the community toilet users used local handwashing facilities made of jerrycans for the management of hand hygiene. The study showed that 16% of the toilets had caretakers to maintain cleanliness thus engagement of caretakers was a strategy for community toilets management. Toilet status improved with availability of care takers for community toilets ($r=0.767$, $p\text{-value}=0.000$). The findings from the study also showed that children feared using toilets with huge apertures and their mothers escorted them to the toilets or encouraged them to use potties. The study also established absence of special provisions such as grab bars, sitting pans, hand rails and wheel chair accommodative pathways in 94.4% of the toilets to support vulnerable groups with special needs. When the toilets were unfriendly for the disabled, they sat on local chairs which had holes as apertures at the middle fitted with a bucket for faecal disposal as a strategy to promote toilet use. The study showed that toilet usability by the vulnerable groups reduced chances of open defecation ($r=-0.698$, $p\text{ value}=0.000<0.05$). The study recommended community participation in deciding on the suitable toilets in slums. The study also recommended the need for consideration of the sanitation needs of the vulnerable groups to improve public hygiene in slums. A joint partnership between the stakeholders, government and non-governmental organizations should be encouraged in order to promote public hygiene services in the slums. The study also recommended increased caretaker services in slums in order to improve public hygiene in slums through community toilets maintenance.