

Manila Women's Forum

A Network of Women Professionals

February 2007

Sanitation, Sewage and Clean Water

By Natasha Davis

Is sewage and wastewater disposal a topic you prefer not to think about? You know it exists somewhere and that seems good enough for you. That is, until the day comes when living in your lovely village house, the sewage tank in your yard or under your house overflows. Sewage flows down your driveway and you have the challenge of leaving your house without stepping in it. Does this sound familiar to you? For many of us city dwellers, sewage and wastewater disposal is definitely a topic given no thought at all.

January's meeting of the Manila Women's Forum addressed this topic. Lisa Lumbao explained the more about the problem and one project that is working to address it: the Local Initiatives for Affordable Wastewater Treatment (LINA) project funded by the United States

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**CHECK YOUR SEPTIC TANK
OR SWALLOW THE CONSEQUENCES.**

POSO'DI NEGRO
A Septic Tank Maintenance Program for Safe, Reusable Water
A PROJECT OF
USAID USAEP

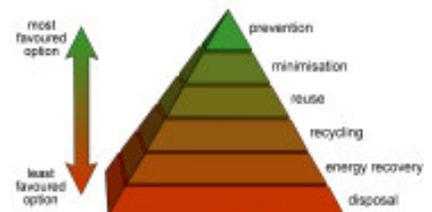
Next MWF Meeting

When: 6:30 p.m. Monday 2007 February 19

What: Cyndy Tan-Jarabata, founder of

Advocates for Youth, will speak about their campaigns to prevent teen pregnancy, sexually-transmitted diseases and HIV by encouraging responsible decisions among the youth. Strategies include communication through text messages, an interactive website, media advocacy and Club K youth hub. **Where:** Mathilda van Weerden's house, 1791 Pomelo Street, Dasmariñas Village, Makati **Bring:** Something to share for the potluck dinner (to serve 30). **March meeting:** Monday, 2007 March 19.

Waste Hierarchy *on page 3*



(Sanitation... from page 1)
 Agency for International Development (USAID).

Did you know that only about 7% of the sewage generated in the Philippines is treated, mainly in the Makati business district, some areas of Alabang, and small pockets in Metro Manila? What happens to the rest of it? We were intrigued and later surprised to learn it flows untreated into the drains, esteros, rivers and bays. All this pollution leads to annual economic losses of P67 billion (\$1.3 billion) from the fisheries, health and tourism sectors.

Do you drink water from the tap, or do you buy bottled water? Lisa cited a statistic that more than 50% of the drinking water wells in a recent study were contaminated, but the water from

the Santa Mesa dam that supplies part of Manila is relatively clean prior to traveling through the pipelines to your home. The contamination comes from seepage into the pipes due to illegal tapping and old pipes that are not water tight.

Every day, about 18 Filipinos die from water borne diseases and one third of all diseases in the country are due to pollution. This is definitely a sector that needs more financial resources. Generally, when funds are tight, any available money is directed to the supply of clean water. The removal and treatment of sewage is generally an after thought, but the two are completely intertwined.

Lisa gave us the basics about how septic tanks work and how they should be designed. We learned that

some of the septic tanks in the Philippines are not completely sealed at the bottom – they have an opening that leaches the sewage directly into the water table. Some septic tanks are connected to a piped sewerage system, in which case a 50% surcharge is added onto the water bill in Metro Manila.

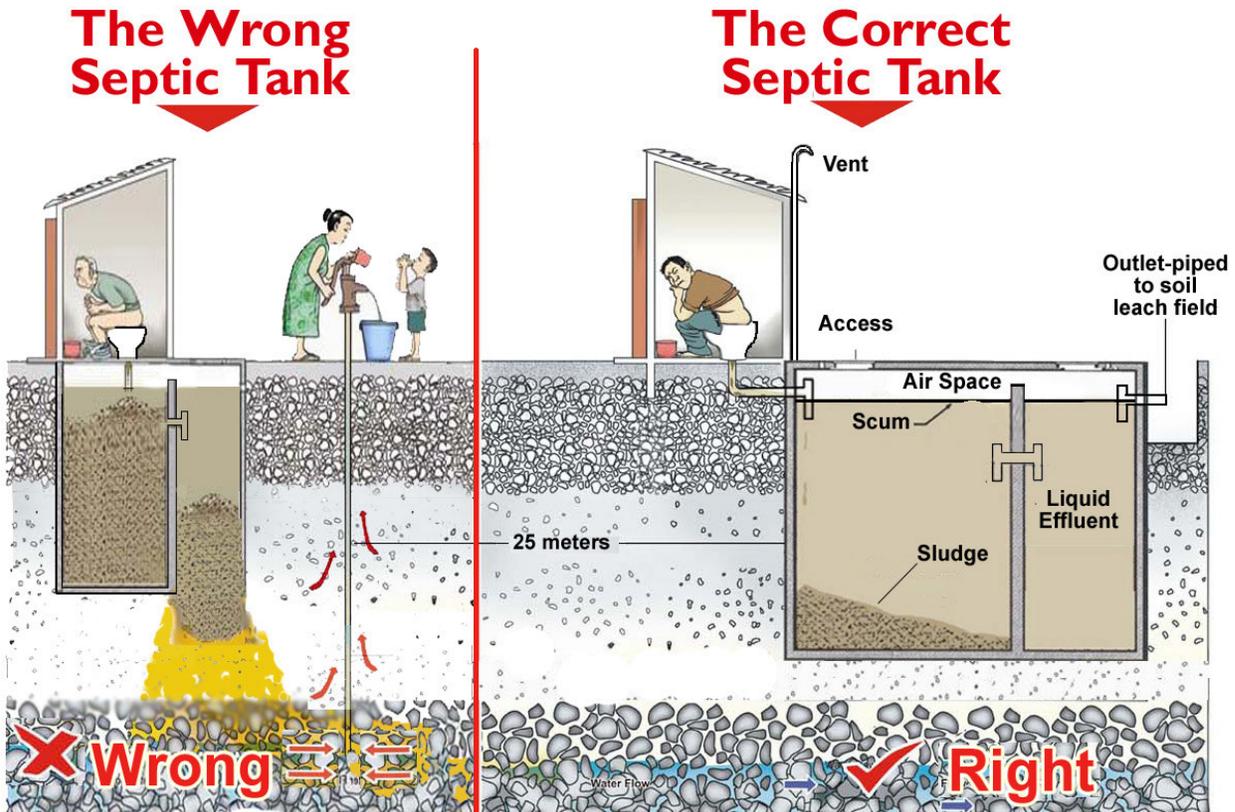
Should you wait until your septic tank overflows or get the sludge (septage) pumped out regularly? And where does it end up? Lisa said septic tanks should be emptied every three to five years and the contents taken to a treatment facility. Currently, Manila Water and Maynilad Water in Metro Manila are emptying septic tanks and treating the septage, but at a slow pace. Outside of Metro Manila the

(Continued on page 4)

LINAW

Dumaguete City

LOCAL INITIATIVES FOR AFFORDABLE WASTEWATER TREATMENT



This will contaminate our water and cause diseases.

Desludge your septic tank every 3-5 years to maintain its proper functioning.

“Clean Water, Healthy Environment”



What does water have to do with women? "As water is fluid, so are the social constructions which shape each individual woman's life," says Professor Jody Bart.



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KaWoMeNaN

Selected and edited by
Beaulah Pedregosa Taguiwalo

Women and water

Shaping the river of women's lives

As water is fluid, so are the social constructions which shape each individual woman's life; gender, class, ethnicity and personal experiences flow into and out of one another, shaping the river of women's lives, first one way, then another. From birth out of water, healthcare of children, the sick and elderly, work in agriculture, feeding of families and the inevitability of death, the basic element of water is an apt material from which to come to a basic understanding of the variety of ways "women's" lives are constructed across categories.

(Professor Jody Bart, [Sweet Briar College] assistant professor of philosophy and women and gender studies; B.A., University of North Carolina; Ph.D., Florida State University. Professor)

Gender and water

"There is a need to ensure that the water sector as a whole is gender aware, a process which should begin by the implementation of training programmes for water professional and community or grass root mobilizers."

(Gender and Water in Central Asia Initiative, Global Water Partnership/Integrated Water Resources Management)

Gender and water governance

Water is a basic element essential to all forms of life. Women are most often responsible for domestic and community water management in developing societies. On average

women and children travel 10 to 15 kilometers, spending 8 or more hours per day collecting water, carrying up to 20 kilos or 15 liters per trip. In South Africa alone, women collectively walk the equivalent distance of 16 times to the moon and back per day gathering water for families.

In this role, women are responsible for determining sources of water to collect, quantity of water to be taken and the water's hygienic quality. However, in this era of globalization, women's decisions in regard to water management are often dictated by their social position, geographic location and increasingly by market forces.

(Facts and Figures from WaterWiki at <http://europeandcis.undp.org/WaterWiki/>)

Women's rights and water rights

According to a Consumers International (CI) report, high prices for water is an issue that mobilizes women around the world. Women are

in the forefront of consumer campaigns against skyrocketing water prices in the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, India, Malaysia, Mali, Slovenia and elsewhere.

CI plans to make a difference by campaigning hard through consumer organizations on water issues that particularly affect women.

There are many links between the social movements for women's and consumer's rights, the CI report says. Promotion of women's rights has been a powerful force behind campaigns for consumer protection against infant formulas, tobacco, pesticides, pharmaceuticals and sexist advertising, the report says. And now women need to act over their needs as consumers of water.

(From CommonDreams.org Newscenter. Breaking News & Views for the Progressive Community)

"Thousands have lived without love, not one without water." (W.H. Auden)

The Waste Hierarchy

There's such a thing as a waste hierarchy. This refers to the "3 Rs" reduce, reuse and recycle, which classify waste management strategies according to their desirability.

The waste hierarchy has taken many forms over the past decade, but the basic concept has remained the cornerstone of most waste minimisation strategies. The aim of the waste hierarchy is to extract the maximum practical benefits from products and to generate the minimum amount of waste.

Some waste management experts have recently incorporated a "fourth R," "Re-think." This has the implied meaning that the present system may have fundamental flaws, and that a thoroughly effective system of waste management may need an entirely new way of looking at waste. Some "Re-think" solutions may be counter-intuitive, such as cutting fabric patterns with slightly more "waste material" left - the now larger scraps are then used for cutting small parts of

the pattern, resulting in a decrease in net waste.

This type of solution is by no means limited to the clothing industry. Source reduction involves efforts to reduce hazardous waste and other materials by modifying industrial production. Source reduction methods involve changes in manufacturing technology, raw material inputs, and product formulation. At times, the term "pollution prevention" may refer to source reduction.

(Adapted from Wikipedia
The Free Encyclopedia)

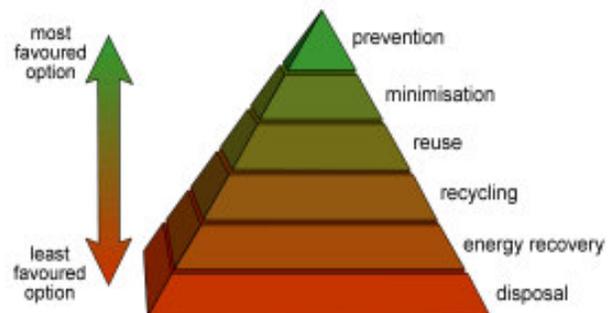


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(Sanitation... from page 3)
septage is usually dumped without treatment into water bodies or onto land.

The Clean Water Act of 2004 requires that within five years all households and buildings in the Philippines should be connected to a sewerage system. If no sewerage system is available (which is the case for about 93% of the population) then septage management should be

More about women and water

Every year, women and female children spend more than 10 million person-years carrying water from distant sources.

During times of drought in the Brazilian northeast, most men migrate for wage employment and women become the heads of the household. These women are known as widows of the drought.

In some mountainous regions of Africa, women spend up to 27% of their caloric intake in collecting water; in other parts, as much as 85% of their daily energy.

The economic value of this unpaid contribution is enormous. In India it is estimated that women fetching water spend 150 million work days per year, equivalent to a national loss of income of 10 billion Rupees.

employed (emptying of septic tanks and treatment of the septage).

To help local governments comply with the Clean Water Act, USAID developed the LINAW project to demonstrate affordable solutions in six pilot cities in the Philippines. Other cities are encouraged to replicate the pilot city projects, which are being implemented in Calbayog, Dumaguete, Iloilo, Naga, Malaybalay and Muntinlupa Cities. Lisa works for an American consulting firm contracted by USAID to implement the LINAW project.

With assistance from LINAW, Muntinlupa City has built a low-cost, low-maintenance treatment facility for its public market in Alabang, and is reusing the treated water for flushing toilets and street cleaning. The technology has since been replicated by El Nido resort and Plantation Bay on Mactan Island in Cebu. Many other cities have visited the facility and plan to build their own. The city of Dumaguete has passed a city ordinance requiring all septic tanks in the city to be emptied every three to five years and is building a lagoon treatment facility for the septage. Once fully implemented, it will be the first city in the country to have a city-wide septage management program. LINAW is working with the cities to come up with appropriate user fees and is providing assistance in accessing financing from banks. But all the costs of building the treatment facilities are being paid by the cities, not by USAID. This insures ownership of the projects, makes them more sustainable,

and encourages other cities to replicate the projects on their own.

Lisa was especially excited about the public awareness campaigns that LINAW has done with the cities. They have developed eye-catching and innovative information materials that focus on behavior change, such as encouraging people to have their septic tanks checked, or “swallow the consequences.”

The topic of sanitation, sewage and clean water is important for all of if we wish to continue to live a happy and healthy life. ■

The Manila Women's Forum

The Manila Women's Forum (MWF) is a cross-cultural network for women. It provides opportunities to build friendships, to talk to women of various cultures, and to share information about resources. Our meetings are intended to provide intellectual stimulation and lead to personal and professional development. All women are welcome to join. The current officers are **Lisa Lumbao**, Chair, Programs, Treasurer, and Newsletter. **Cecilia Leung**, Programs. **Beulah P. Taguiwalo**, Newsletter, Website.

Cost of membership is P300 per year. Members receive a copy of the current mailing list in addition to the newsletter, which is also sent to non-members. A contribution is collected at each monthly meeting: P20 for members, and P40 for non-members. Please contact Lisa Lumbao at Tel. 813-0168, or at lumbao@mozcom.com for more information about MWF.

Visit our website – a work in progress
www.geocities.com/manilawomensforum

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