

Recognition of best practices in public sanitary conveniences

1. Background

The provision of public toilets in transportation terminals, parks and recreational areas, marketplaces and other public locations is not only a convenience to the itinerant public but also a service that can promote a cleaner and more healthful urban environment. WHO considers it to be a basic human need that individuals have access to improved sanitation facilities at the household level. But inevitably people also need access to sanitary conveniences when they travel, work, study, play, shop and conduct other activities away from home.

Lack of public sanitary conveniences results in discomfort for many individuals and may to some extent discourage some visitors and residents alike from long periods of activity outside the home or, in the case of visitors, outside the hotel. Moreover, lack of public sanitary conveniences may result in some degree of fouling of public places, intrusion on patrons' toilets in commercial establishments by non-patrons, or both.

The provision of public toilets poses many challenges to city governments however, not least of which is the need to ensure that facilities are safe to use and to ensure security from crime and acts of violence. Closely related to this is the need to ensure that facilities are not utilized for unintended purposes such as temporary sheltering or illegal economic activities. A key challenge from the health perspective is to ensure that public sanitary conveniences are well maintained in order to prevent toilets, sinks etc. from being out of service and to ensure hygienic conditions of the facilities and environs at all times. Unless facility operations are subsidized from other sources, this may necessitate user fees -- a policy that has to be balanced with the principle of equitable access to services.

A further challenge with regard to equity is to ensure that facilities are accessible to and suitable for use by disabled, handicapped and injured persons, children and the elderly.

2. Good practice awards

Eligible awardees:

Any member of the Alliance for Healthy Cities that has sustained a programme of public sanitary conveniences for a minimum of five-years.

Materials to be submitted:

A concise written report and other supporting materials including, necessarily, still captioned high-resolution colour photographs in electronic format, which described the city's programme on public sanitary conveniences, including its development over time, estimated number of users per year, and measurable impacts on the urban environment and health.



Criteria for selection:

Recipients of the good practice awards will be selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- a. Evidence of increasing usage by the public over time and measured impact in the urban environment and conditions conducive to health;
- b. Effective measures implemented to ensure safety and security;
- c. Evidence of effective facilities maintenance programme, and prevention of malfunctioning and unhygienic facilities;
- d. Reliability of hand washing facilities and reliable provision of soap, safe running water and hand drying facilities;
- e. Equity of access and usage by diverse user groups.

Written reports submitted by Alliance members should address each of these criteria.

Award:

Winners will receive a plaque of recognition. Additionally, the mayors of two winning cities will be sponsored by WHO to attend the World Toilet Summit and Expo 2008 (Macao, 4-6 November 2008) as a learning experience to strengthen the cities, ongoing programmes, and to share experiences and lessons learnt with Summit participants.

Deadline for submission:

29 August 2008

3. Contact information

Applications and any queries should be sent to:

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