Introductory Guide to Sanitation Marketing
Conducting Formative Research

The Water and Sanitation Program is a multi-donor partnership administered by the World Bank to support poor people in obtaining affordable, safe, and sustainable access to water and sanitation services.
II. Conducting Formative Research

### Key Points

#### 2.1 Why Formative Research?
- ✔ Formative research is the foundation of any evidence-based sanitation marketing initiative
- ✔ Developing an effective sanitation marketing program starts with understanding the big picture, including current gaps and conditions
- ✔ Gathering primary and secondary data is necessary to assess supply and household demand for sanitation products and services

#### 2.2 Define Research Objectives, Questions, and Purpose
- ✔ Clear research objectives and questions are necessary to focus the study on the most critical information needed to inform decisions
- ✔ Determining factors that influence open defecation or other behaviors in a given population is a specific research objective in sanitation marketing

#### 2.3 Develop the Research Approach and Design
- ✔ Qualitative and quantitative research methods serve different functions and answer different types of research objectives and questions
- ✔ Mixed research methods can be conducted by phase or sequentially to strengthen demand and supply analysis

#### 2.4 Conduct Data Collection, Analysis, and Reporting
- ✔ Program managers should stay informed on progress during the data collection
- ✔ Top-line results should be made available ahead of the final report so that findings can be used to inform the marketing strategy as soon as possible

### Key Terms
- For definitions, see Appendix, p. 51
- demand
- formative research
- primary research data
- secondary research data
- supply
- behavioral determinants
- research objective
- research purpose
- research questions
- SaniFOAM
- sanitation suppliers
- social drivers
- social norms
- analysis plan
- focus group discussion
- in-depth interview
- informal assessment
- key informant interview
- pre-test
- qualitative research methods
- quantitative research methods
- skip patterns
- study protocol
- backward research
- basic frequencies
- dummy table
- fieldwork report
- observation
- top-line results
II. Conducting Formative Research

2.1 Why Formative Research?
Formative research is the foundation of any evidence-based sanitation marketing initiative. It is used to collect evidence on current practices, the factors that influence them, and the types of sanitation products and services needed. Formative research also informs the intervention continuously, from design to implementation and monitoring. Broadly speaking, formative research can help answer questions such as:

- What is the current situation? Who (and how many) does what, where, how, and why?
- What are the consequences of the current situation and what will the consequences be if nothing changes or if changes are made?
- What is the goal for change?
- How can the goal be reached?
- How well is the intervention being implemented or delivered?
- What needs to be done differently?

Figure 2 summarizes the steps required to conduct formative research and the program manager’s key role at each step.

In the first step, the program manager determines which decisions must be made and what information he or she needs to make those decisions. For example, it might be important to determine which sanitation products and services would best meet households’ expectations. The program manager would ask such research questions as:

- What are current sanitation practices?
- What is the target population’s prior experience with sanitation facilities?
- Which sanitation facility features/benefits do households most desire?
- How much are households willing to pay for these features/benefits?
- What products/services are currently available to the household and at what price?

Answering these questions requires data to assess both the supply (availability of sanitation products and services from the local private sector) and household demand (current practices and the sanitation products and services desired). This data might already be available in existing sources such as research reports or other documents. Information mined from existing sources is referred to as secondary research data. Possible sources for secondary data include:

- Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS)
- Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS)
- Joint Monitoring Program (JMP) reports issued by the World Health Organization (WHO)/UNICEF

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10 Determining current practices could also serve as a pre-intervention baseline.
11 This process is often referred to as backward market research, which was pioneered by Alan Andreasen.
Secondary sources are useful for investigating broad research questions. For example, in Indonesia, WSP analyzed the 2004 Susenas National Socioeconomic Survey data set to determine the extent of open defecation in East Java. Through simple tabulation, WSP determined that the rate of open defecation varied considerably across the 29 districts, ranging from 5.6 percent to 76.4 percent. In addition to answering more “big picture” questions, secondary research can help identify gaps in information needed to design the interventions. For example, in India, WSP used results from recent surveys by two organizations—Knowledge Links and Feedback Ventures—to analyze factors influencing sanitation behaviors in the state of Himachal Pradesh. WSP used this research to narrow the focus of the Terms of Reference for a planned survey, thus avoiding unnecessary duplication.

In some cases, secondary research might be recent and complete, and no additional research is required. More commonly, however, gathering the evidence needed to develop an effective sanitation marketing program will require primary research. This is particularly the case for assessing the supply side because the private sector typically does not, for competitive reasons, widely publish data. Primary research involves obtaining information directly from the source. For example, it could include conducting a survey of households or local private-sector players such as masons, hardware stores, materials suppliers, and microfinance institutions.

The two main approaches for conducting primary research are qualitative and quantitative (see 2.3, Develop the Research Approach and Design).

2.2 Define Research Objectives, Questions, and Purpose
Once the program manager has identified the primary research needs, the next steps are to define clear research objectives (Why do this study?), formulate supporting research questions (What specific questions need to be answered?), and clarify the purpose (How will the results be used? What decisions will the findings support?).

Clear research objectives and questions will help focus the study on the most critical information needed to inform decisions. Good research
objectives include a general objective and specific objectives; use action verbs such as “to determine,” “to compare,” “to verify,” “to describe,” and “to establish;” and avoid vague terms such as “to understand” and “to study.”

Defining research objectives, questions, and purpose might require consultation or consensus building with a wider team, including key stakeholders and implementation partners, particularly if they will use the results. Research objectives, questions, and purpose will form the cornerstone of the Terms of Reference in the procurement phase. They will also serve as a checklist and reference point throughout the research process and guide discussions about the research methods, tools, and

<p>| TABLE 1: SAMPLE RESEARCH QUESTIONS RELATED TO BEHAVIORAL DETERMINANTS |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Determinant</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access/availability</td>
<td>How does the availability of reliable masons in the community influence a household’s ability to improve its sanitation facility? Are cement and other supplies easily available to households wishing to self-build?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product attributes</td>
<td>Do available sanitation options have the features and benefits desired by households? What advantages/benefits does open defecation offer?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social norms</td>
<td>Under what circumstances is open defecation considered acceptable in rural communities? At what age are children expected to start using a toilet?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctions/enforcement</td>
<td>What are negative consequences, if any, for those who defecate in the open? To what extent are sanctions enforced and effective in influencing behaviors? Who are the community whistle-blowers and how influential are they?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>What do people consider a safe or sanitary toilet? Do they know where to go to get quality sanitation services? What sanitation products are they aware of?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills/self-efficacy</td>
<td>Among individuals who intend to build a toilet themselves, how confident are they in their skills/ability to build a good one?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social support</td>
<td>To what extent in the community are disabled, elderly or children assisted to go to a toilet? To what extent do people let neighbors use their toilets and under what circumstances?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles/decisions</td>
<td>Who initiates the discussion about sanitation in rural households? Who decides on the budget? Who influences decisions on features? Who “shops” for the toilet? How does gender affect decision making?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>What can the household afford to pay for a toilet all at once? In multiple installments? How is affordability influenced by seasonality? How does perceived affordability differ from actual?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs and attitudes</td>
<td>At what age is children’s excreta considered harmful? What beliefs might explain this? What taboos and beliefs exist with respect to feces and menstruation that would influence behavior?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Which social or cultural values, if any, does sanitation support (such as modernity and progress)? To what extent is improved sanitation seen to increase a home’s value?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drivers</td>
<td>What are the principal drivers (social, physical, or other) that motivate people to stop defecating in the open, stop sharing, or to improve their facility? How do these vary by gender and life stage?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competing priorities</td>
<td>What is sanitation’s closest “competitor” (for example, cell phone, TV, refrigerator)? How are household expenditures prioritized when extra money is available?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intention</td>
<td>Does the household intend to build a toilet in the next year? Have they started saving? Have they chosen a toilet model yet?13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to pay</td>
<td>To what extent are expectations of subsidies affecting willingness to pay? How much are households willing to pay and/or borrow for their preferred model?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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A research objective of specific interest in sanitation marketing is determining which factors influence open defecation or other behaviors in a given population. The factors that influence behaviors must be understood if they are to be changed through sanitation marketing. These factors, called behavioral determinants, include social norms, what society views as acceptable behavior; access to sanitation suppliers such as hardware stores; and social drivers such as status, among others. Table 1 lists sample research questions to support formative research on determinants.

To help identify key behavioral determinants for sanitation, WSP and partner organizations developed a simple behavior change framework, called SaniFOAM (see Figure 3). SaniFOAM makes explicit that improving knowledge alone, for example through information, education, and communication, is often insufficient to stimulate behavior change. Other factors, identified through research, might need to be targeted.

### 2.3 Develop the Research Approach and Design

This stage of the research process involves formulating the research approach, developing Terms of Reference, reviewing research proposals, and procuring a consultant firm to conduct the studies. Most programs will require research to probe both demand and supply.

More than one study approach might be required, using quantitative or qualitative research methods. Qualitative and quantitative research serve different functions and answer different types of research objectives and questions. The summaries in Box 1 and Table 2 can help define the scope of work, develop Terms of Reference, and evaluate study proposals.

In Tanzania, WSP conducted qualitative interviews of sanitation suppliers to research the supply side. The sanitation suppliers interviewed were part-time, informal, small-scale providers. Sanitation services supply was not their primary source of business and was supplementary to other economic activities, such as farming or construction. Anecdotal evidence from the field suggested that although

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14 See WSP’s Introducing SaniFOAM: A Framework to Analyze Sanitation Behaviors to Design Effective Sanitation Programs, available in the online resources.
15 SaniFOAM is based on the AMO (Ability-Motivation-Opportunity) frameworks used in a variety of fields, including commercial and social marketing and human resources management.
16 For procurement of research firms, see Chapter 5, Implementation.
17 WSP/Pricewaterhouse Cooper, Market Research Assessment in Rural Tanzania for New Approaches to Stimulate and Scale up Sanitation Demand and Supply, available in the online resources.
Roughly half could construct a pit latrine with slab, and half could construct flush/pour systems. The range of sanitation services provided to consumers was limited. For example, few offered emptying services. In India, WSP used an informal assessment to better understand the supply chain for sanitary pans and other materials in the state of Himachal Pradesh, where the sanitation market is well-developed and largely managed by the private sector. The assessment revealed an important geographic element: the manufacturers of ceramic pans are mostly based in Gujarat, and they sell wholesale to distributors based in Chandigarh and Delhi for onward supply to Himachal Pradesh. Chandigarh

**BOX 1: QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS**

**Qualitative research** uses methods aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of a given situation, behavior, attitude, belief, or other behavioral determinant. Common methods include:

- **Focus group discussions** (FGD), usually conducted with a small group of participants who share one or more characteristics of interest such as age group, gender, or sanitation status. A moderator leads the group through a series of topics. Researchers can use techniques such as *pocket-voting* (a technique for encouraging participants to express a preference among options in a private way) to probe sensitive topics such as open defecation. They can use *projective techniques* (for example, what would this imaginary family in your community do in this situation?) and *diagnostic role plays*, in which participants try to show “typical” community behavior, to understand social norms and stimulate group discussion. Sessions can be audio- or videotaped with participants’ consent.

- **In-depth interviews** (IDI), conducted with key informants, stakeholders, and members of the target populations (such as suppliers or households) to probe certain areas and obtain information that is too sensitive (for example, anal cleansing), complex, or detailed to share in a focus group session or when there is no benefit in having participants interact.

- **Informal assessments**, which can provide a big-picture view of topics such as the supply chain and the range of sanitation products and services. This technique can also be used to identify providers who have overcome barriers and developed a business model that is worth replicating in whole or in part as part of capacity building. Assessments can include *key informant interviews* and pictures of products and suppliers found in the marketplace. Note that informal assessments are more challenging for at-scale projects.

- **Non-participative observations** of houses, facilities, and community spaces, which can reveal sanitation and hygiene practices.

**Quantitative research** targets a larger representative sample of the population, using a structured and standardized research instrument. Interviews can take place in fixed settings such as the household or the workplace (in the case of suppliers) or in settings such as marketplaces (using intercept surveys). Sample size and sampling method will determine whether the survey findings are representative and can be generalized to the wider population. If well-designed, quantitative formative research can also provide a baseline for monitoring and evaluation.
Scaling Up Rural Sanitation

For many men, open defecation has distinct benefits such as social interaction and physical comfort (in the case of defecation in a river).

Many consider open defecation “normal” and believe the feces can feed the fish or provide fertilizer for the rice paddy.

Masons are often the frontline providers in the shopping process.

Negative appeals such as fear of gossip tested more favorably than positive appeals.

The Indonesia team quickly shared these insights with the advertising agency to improve the campaign approach and messaging. They also used the findings to formulate other aspects of the marketing strategy such as supplier training. Next, the team conducted quantitative research to confirm which behavioral determinants were associated with open defecation and use of improved latrines.

Once the research firm has been contracted and is ready to start work, the team should hold a kick-off meeting with key personnel. Meeting participants might review and discuss the proposal; discuss methods of collaboration, roles, and lines of communication; develop a timeline; and confirm the scheduled expectations and deliverables.

The research firm will develop a study protocol based on the accepted proposal or bid and discussions and agreements.

Qualitative and quantitative studies can be effective when phased or conducted sequentially. For example, in Indonesia, the team developed Terms of Reference for a two-phased study, qualitative followed by quantitative. The former aimed to inform the development of the sanitation marketing component—in particular, the communication campaign. Key research objectives were to determine how decision-making works for major household expenditures (in general and for sanitation in particular) and how households prioritize competing expenses; to identify what benefits, if any, are associated with open defecation; to probe beliefs around feces and open defecation; to describe the “shopping process” for sanitation facilities; and to pretest early communication concepts to be developed by an advertising agency.

Key insights gained from the qualitative research included the following:

- Sanitation ranks low among household priorities and “competes” with luxury goods such as refrigerators and televisions.
- For many men, open defecation has distinct benefits such as social interaction and physical comfort (in the case of defecation in a river).
- Many consider open defecation “normal” and believe the feces can feed the fish or provide fertilizer for the rice paddy.
- Masons are often the frontline providers in the shopping process.
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TABLE 2: COMPARISON OF QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Qualitative</th>
<th>Quantitative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General objective</td>
<td>Understanding, exploring, probing—asking “why” and “how” questions</td>
<td>Counting, quantifying, segmenting—confirming “what” is the current situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data form</td>
<td>Words, quotations, themes, images, pictures</td>
<td>Numbers, percentages, statistics (such as averages)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representativeness</td>
<td>Findings cannot be generalized to wider population with a known degree of confidence</td>
<td>Can be generalized to a wider population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection and analysis tools</td>
<td>General discussion or interview guidelines, ethnographic software, researcher-led interpretation</td>
<td>Standardized questionnaires and data entry, statistical software</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18 “Understanding Sanitation Habits, A Qualitative Study in East Java Indonesia,” unpublished presentation, Nielsen, 2008, available in the online resources.
at the kick-off meeting. Once this is approved, the firm will most likely develop one or more survey research tools or questionnaires. These should be pretested with a small sample of the target population to ensure that the respondents understand the questions, that the skip patterns work, and that the interview is not too long. Questionnaires might need to be translated; if so, a back translation is required for quality-assurance purposes. It is critical to review the questionnaire before pretesting takes place (Box 2 gives some tips on reviewing the questionnaire). After pretesting, the firm reports back to the team on the results.

It is also important to clarify what the top-line results should include. It is best to clarify this before finalizing the questionnaire and before the data collection phase.

2.4 Conduct Data Collection, Analysis, and Reporting

Program managers should stay informed on progress during the data collection phase. They should also periodically ask the research firm questions so corrective measures can be taken as needed. Sample questions might include:

- Is data collection progressing on schedule? If not, what will the firm do to get back on schedule (for example, increase the field personnel)?
- How are respondents reacting? Are refusal rates unusually high? The firm should provide answers based on regular visual inspection of completed questionnaires and data capture.
- Are there any issues to flag (for example, inability to access a remote area)? If so, what will the firm do to address these issues?

The research firm typically produces a fieldwork report at the end of the data collection phase.

Once the data is entered and cleaned, the research firm will perform basic frequencies and cross-tabulations such as responses by socioeconomic status and gender to uncover patterns. Backward research can be used to develop a dummy table (see Figure 4) that the research firm can use to develop an analysis plan.

The formative research process culminates in a reporting phase. Preliminary results, commonly referred to as top-line results in market research, should be presented first. This is best

**BOX 2: REVIEWING A QUESTIONNAIRE**

- Develop a two-column table. In one column, list the indicators from the results framework as well as other research questions. In the second column, list the question numbers from the questionnaire that correspond to the indicators. This pinpoints extraneous questions and identifies indicators that remain unaddressed.
- Use existing questions from available national questionnaires. Not only have these questions been tested, they offer a quick way to externally validate the survey.
- Ask colleagues to review the questionnaire on the basis of the research protocol. Weigh comments against the study objectives.
- Flag problems or issues and address with the research consultant. Do not rewrite or craft questions unless you have research experience.
- Review possible response categories for close-ended questions to ensure that the mostly commonly expected responses are included.
- Check for sufficient filters (for example, to filter out respondents whose answers are not of interest in a particular question) and functional skips.
- Review focus group discussion guidelines to ensure that questions include sufficient probing and are formulated to elicit more than simple “yes” or “no” responses.

19 It is standard practice in surveys to skip over some questions to filter out interviewees for whom these questions are not relevant or appropriate. Pretesting helps ensure that appropriate “skips” are present and functional.
20 See Alan Andreasen’s work on backward market research.
21 Dummy tables are mock tables to help visualize possible relationships among datasets and guide analysis.

www.wsp.org
done in two phases: an initial report to the program manager and the program team, including any implementing agencies; and another report to a wider in-country audience that includes stakeholders, donors, and non-partner implementing organizations who might not commit to reading a lengthy technical report, particularly if it is not written in their native language.

The final report will likely require several iterations. This should be anticipated in the Terms of Reference. Comments from reviewers should be gauged for relevance and consistency and then forwarded to the consultant firm to address in a revised draft of the report.

**FIGURE 4: SAMPLE DUMMY TABLE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Sanitation</th>
<th>None (OD)</th>
<th>Sharer</th>
<th>Owner of Unimproved</th>
<th>Owner of Improved</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>determinants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability determinants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>determinants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of</td>
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<td>satisfaction</td>
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<td>with current facility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media habits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preferred radio stations</td>
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<td>Preferred TV station</td>
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<td>Preferred newspaper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trusted source of information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic class (quintile)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of people in household</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children under five</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

22The formatting of this table is taken from Population Services International (PSI). See www.psi.org.
Below is a sample of available resources. Additional resources will be added on an ongoing basis.

| Questionnaire to Research Household Sanitation Demand in Indonesia (WSP) |
| Quantitative Report on Sanitation Demand and Supply in Indonesia (WSP) |
| Qualitative Report on Sanitation Demand and Supply in Indonesia (WSP) |
| Sanitation Demand and Supply Assessment in Indonesia (WSP) |
| Questionnaire to Research Household Sanitation Demand in Tanzania (WSP) |
| Instrument to Research Sanitation Supply in Tanzania (WSP) |
| Sanitation Demand and Supply Assessment in Tanzania (WSP) |
| Sanitation Market Assessment in Tanzania (WSP) |
| Sanitation Supply Chain Assessment in Rural and Peri-Urban Cambodia (WSP) |
| Sanitation Demand Assessment in Rural and Urban Cambodia (WSP) |
| Sanitation Market Assessment in India (WSP) |

**Additional Reading**

By Jacqueline Devine and Craig Kullmann

Today, 2.6 billion people live without access to improved sanitation. Of these, 75 percent live in rural communities. To address this challenge, WSP is working with governments and local private sectors to build capacity and strengthen performance monitoring, policy, financing, and other components needed to develop and institutionalize large-scale, sustainable rural sanitation programs. With a focus on building a rigorous evidence base to support replication, WSP combines Community-Led Total Sanitation, behavior change communication, and sanitation marketing to generate sanitation demand and strengthen the supply of sanitation products and services, leading to improved health for people in rural areas. For more information, please visit http://www.wsp.org/scalingupsanitation.

This Toolkit is one in a series of knowledge products designed to showcase findings, assessments, and lessons learned through WSP’s Scaling Up Rural Sanitation program. It is conceived as a work in progress to encourage the exchange of ideas about development issues. For more information please email Jacqueline Devine at wsp@worldbank.org or visit www.wsp.org.

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