



In India, most rural households do not contain toilet facilities with over 700 million people defecating in open fields. Even when toilet facilities are available, the field is the preferred place for defecation. “Open fields” often include along roadsides, in drains, in farmland, and in municipal parks. This poses two major public health problems: 1. Where the run-off is going, and 2. How one’s hands are washed after defecation.

Questions:

1. What potential health problems (direct and indirect) could arise from this situation?
2. As a public health official in the area, what are the first steps you would take to improve this situation?
3. What are the potential obstacles you could be faced with within rural communities and villages?
4. Present a creative solution that would take into account the traditional beliefs and long-established practices of those in the villages as well as address the public health problem that defecating in open fields presents?
5. Who would need to be involved? How would you ensure compliance and cooperation among these individuals?
6. At the government level, how might these problems creatively be approached?
7. At the grass roots levels, how might these problems creatively be approached?
8. What kind of management support would be needed for your suggested intervention (i.e monitoring and accountability)?