From:        Marcus Erridge <marcuserridge@hotmail.co.uk>
To:        <srwatsan@ohchr.org>,
Date:        27/01/2012 15:55
Subject:        Submission for public consultation on stigmatisation in the realisation of the rights to water and sanitation

Dear Sir / Madam,

I am writing as an unaffiliated member of the British public with an interest in the human right to sanitation. I would like to submit the following written submission for consideration at the UN public consultation on stigmatisation in the realisation of the rights to water and sanitation on February 1st.

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Little or no access to basic sanitation in a community can highlight wider social issues of discrimination, marginalisation and social exclusion. If human rights claims for affordable sanitation can be understood as a denial of basic human dignity, then human rights law has the potential to enshrine such concepts of dignity in legal protection and offer routes of recompense. A distinct human right to sanitation adds clarity and applicability to notions of dignity, which in turn can help challenge stigmatisation. Concepts of human dignity go to the heart of access to sanitation as a right and can also helps focus campaign messages on issues of equity and inclusion.

The recently affirmed human right to sanitation offers a historic opportunity to rethink how we engage with and present this issue. The stigmatisation which hinders open discussion of toilets and toilet habits stretches from the community to the way in which sanitation is discussed internationally. Stigmatisation even taints the way in which access to sanitation is campaigned on. A favoured focus on water and sanitation often presents dirty water as the problem and clean water as the solution.

How can we address stigmatisation in the realisation of the right sanitation without first putting toilets and toilet habits in the forefront of public discussion and campaigns?

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The above comments summarise some of the conclusions of a dissertation I wrote for a Human Rights MA at the University of London last year. I have attached the full dissertation if of interest. It examines the way in which access to sanitation messaging is presented in campaigns and what reframing opportunities the newly affirmed human right to sanitation may offer.

I hope the consultation provides some fruitful discussion and some positive outcomes.

Best wishes,

Marcus Erridge