

BREAKTHROUGH POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

GOVERNMENT STRENGTHENS SANITATION IMPLEMENTATION IN A SUSTAINABLE DIRECTION

India Amends Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) Guidelines to include Ecosan

In May 2010 the Government of India, Ministry of Rural Development, Nodal Department for Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC), has amended the TSC Guidelines and incorporated **ecological sanitation (ecosan)** as a component of the implementation plan. TSC Guidelines and its amendment can be downloaded at www.ddws.nic.in/tsc_index.htm. India is now the biggest country in the world making explicit reference to ecological sanitation (ecosan) and its promotion within its national sanitation policy.

Consorted Efforts of Champions

Many persons and institutions in India, in addition to those at the Ministry of Rural Development, can now see their efforts during several years bear fruit in the form of an amendment to the TSC Guidelines. The key actors are found all over the country and at different levels in the form of NGOs, government staff, academic institutions, small companies, professionals and independent individuals, all champions that have persevered in their efforts. Additionally, international institutions have provided support by sharing knowledge and information regarding implementation of sustainable sanitation systems from around the world. In this regard, the Stockholm Environment Institute-UNICEF-Government of India Collaboration, under the EcoSanRes Programme for the promotion and development of sustainable sanitation in India, has facilitated and coordinated the more recent developments. Indeed, **now** all committed actors must ensure that the new opportunities are implemented for improved livelihoods in India. Important in laying the ground for the implementation will be the WHO Guidelines on Safe Reuse of Human Excreta published already in 2006 http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/wastewater/en/ and the knowledge management capacity provide by the Sustainable Sanitation Alliance www.susana.org.

Ecosan Sanitation Systems Allow for Safe Recycling of Humanure

The news that ecosan - or productive sanitation – that allows for the safe reuse of humanure is especially appreciated in the Indian context, since the rate of implementation of sanitation services in the rural areas has picked up speed in the last year. The current Guideline amendment will now enable households in areas of particular geo-physical conditions to implement sanitation systems to protect human health, while providing the households with fertilisers for agricultural production or biomass. Thus, the amendment will have a considerable bearing on the possibility to create “open defecation free” (ODF) communities all over India, incl. areas of difficult hydro-geological conditions (eg high water tables and rocky ground), and to strive for attaining the MDG Sanitation Target.

Way Forward for Improved Sanitation Installations

The current amendment is the first step towards incorporating ecosan into the TSC in India. The most important follow-up measure is to prepare a comprehensive ecosan manual with detailed designs appropriate to different terrains, safety measures, incl. the

safe reuse of products, software packages for support to those choosing to install ecosan installations, etc. Thus, it is necessary to formulate an implementation framework for integrating ecosan within the TSC. Work in this direction is underway and a process of considerable consultations is required.

India to Show-case Advancement at SACOSAN IV

By having amended the TSC Guidelines, India will certainly be able to proudly show-case advancement at the Fourth South Asia Conference on Sanitation (SACOSAN) to take place in Sri Lanka in early 2011, which hopefully will encourage other South Asian countries to follow suit. To achieve such progress, national support has to be rallied in each of the countries. Additionally, international development agents, incl. multilaterals such as UNICEF, WHO, WSP, IFAD, FAO, UN-HABITAT, UNDP, UNEP, World Bank, etc., and bilaterals, incl. those from Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, UK, Netherlands, France, Austria, Switzerland, Germany, etc., should be encouraged to take on a co-ordinating role in further promoting sustainable sanitation systems with a focus on safe reuse of nutrients and soil-enhancing capacity of urine and faeces for better human hygiene/health and natural resource management as well as enhanced food production, food security and poverty alleviation.

For further information:

Mr Prakash Kumar, Stockholm Environment Institute-UNICEF-India, Delhi, India,
prakumar@unicef.org

Ms Cecilia Ruben, Stockholm Environment Institute, EcoSanRes, Stockholm, Sweden,
cecilia.ruben@sei.se