

The Sanitation Challenge

The "standard" argument based on United Nations data on sanitation coverage is that there are at least 2.5 billion people in the world without adequate sanitation, and more than 4000 children die every day as a consequence. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) include a target of reducing by half the proportion of people without improved sanitation by 2015. This will require extending the provision of basic sanitation to at least 1.75 billion people.

The challenge, however, goes well beyond this since much of the world's sanitation coverage is inadequate and persists to threaten the lives and livelihoods of both rural and urban communities across much of the globe. The other major challenge is to move the sanitation sector into the era of sustainable development whereby solutions are affordable, appropriate and resilient in areas of the world that both lack water and suffer from poor drainage and flooding.

Sustainable Sanitation Systems

More recently, sustainable sanitation systems have been defined so as to protect and promote human health and achieve an optimum outcome by balancing: a) prevention of environment degradation, b) protection of the resource base, c) technical and institutional viability, d) social acceptability including individual and community preferences and e) long term economical viability.

The EcoSanRes Programme

The Sida-financed EcoSanRes Programme was initiated in 2001 through the Stockholm Environment Institute as a continuation of the pioneer SanRes Programme (1993-2001). The first phase (2001-2006) focused on communications and networking, capacity building, research and development, and implementation through pilot projects in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The second phase of EcoSanRes (2006-2010) builds on the accomplishments of the first phase and in an effort to address the general lack of expertise in the area of sustainable sanitation, has shifted its emphasis towards capacity development. Other foci of the EcoSanRes Programme are knowledge development, communications, networking and international coordination with other major actors to promote policy development.

EcoSanRes is designed to support the MDGs and builds on research along with practical experiences from pilot projects in rural, peri-urban and urban areas. The most notable pilot project is the multi-story new town development in Dongsheng, Inner Mongolia, China. This private/public partnership (PPP) project is built on the ecosan principles where urine, faeces, greywater and household organics are collected separately and treated and reused locally for which EcoSanRes expertise provides R&D.

Capacity Development and Regional Nodes

Capacity is being built through the development of ten regional nodes throughout the developing world focussing on training, policy development and implementation. It is through regionally based, hands-on projects that capacity is enhanced, taking into consideration sustainable aspects of sanitation in a development perspective regarding:

- planning processes
- social acceptance
- gender priorities
- implementation of sustainable sanitation services
- health and hygiene
- management of sanitation systems
- reuse of nutrients, humus and water for agriculture and biomass production

Knowledge Development

EcoSanRes emphasises knowledge development through the process of carrying out sanitation projects. Pilot

projects are designed to be full-scale development projects in order to learn how these systems function, how household users and authorities adapt to them, and how the systems can be further improved. Through the Sustainable Sanitation Alliance (SuSanA), thematic working groups have been formed to cover various areas including capacity, operations and maintenance, health, urban settings, environment, food security, sanitation as a business, emergency and reconstruction and public awareness. For further details, please refer to www.susana.org

Key areas of knowledge development:

- Social, health and environmental impacts
- Systems analysis/material flow research
- Handling and treatment of excreta and greywater, incl. safe reuse
- Social acceptance assessments
- Institutional viability and political support
- Gender aspects
- Livelihoods and health vulnerability research
- Economics of sanitation
- School sanitation

Communications, Networking and Coordination

Communications and networking relate to all planned programme initiatives in addition to laying a foundation for new initiatives. Current resources include publications, consisting of books, reports, posters and factsheets, a global map of ecosan initiatives, an online discussion group: tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/ecosanres, the ecosan library service, which acts as a hub for published literature, international conferences, and the promotion of sustainable sanitation through the media. EcoSanRes factsheets cover a wide range of sustainable sanitation information and knowledge, from specific topics such as phosphorus to summaries of EcoSanRes publications. All of the factsheets are downloadable from: www.ecosanres.org

CLOSING THE LOOP ON SANITATION

