



Use and get paid public toilet in Tamil Nadu, India, one of the efforts to improve ecological sanitation in the country.

Government includes ecological sanitation as new component in national sanitation campaign.

Over half the world's open defecators are found in India. Waterborne diseases are common and diarrhoea kills hundreds of thousands of children every year.

Ecological sanitation part of Total Sanitation Campaign

One of the key efforts by the Indian government to curb this alarming situation is the Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC), a comprehensive programme to ensure proper sanitation facilities in rural areas and ultimately eradicate the practice of open defecation.

In May 2010 the Ministry of Rural Development amended the TSC Guidelines and incorporated ecological sanitation (ecosan) as a component of the implementation plan.

In collaboration with UNICEF-India, the Indian Government and additional key actors, SEI facilitated the inclusion of the ecosan component into the TSC plan, paving the way for a nationwide implementation of more sustainable sanitation services.

Benefits for humans and households

Ecological sanitation is one of the cornerstones of SEI's research which aims to develop and promote sustainable sanitation solutions for poor people in rural and urban areas.

Years of hard work finally paid off when ecological sanitation was added to the Total Sanitation Campaign, making India the biggest country in the world with an explicit reference to ecological sanitation within its national sanitation policy.

It will also give India the chance to showcase this improvement during the Fourth South Asia Conference on Sanitation (SACOSAN IV) in Sri Lanka 2011.

- The implementation of sanitation services has picked up speed over the last years and with the implementation of ecological sanitation, households will be able to implement sanitation systems that not only protect human health and the environment, but also provide them with safe fertilisers for agricultural production or biomass, says Cecilia Ruben, Research Fellow and Communications and Networking Manager at SEI's [EcoSanRes Programme](#) .

A nationwide improvement

The implementation will have a considerable bearing on the possibility of creating “open defecation free” communities all over India, especially in areas with difficult hydro-physical conditions such as high water tables and rocky ground.

- A comprehensive ecosan manual with detailed design instructions and safety measures should now be developed through a consultative process, Ruben says.

[The TSC Guidelines and its amendment can be downloaded here.](#)

For further information, please contact

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

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