

## FACT SHEET

### Sustainable Sanitation Knowledge Nodes in Africa

#### **Sustainable Sanitation**

Sustainable sanitation systems protect and promote human health, minimise environmental degradation and depletion of the resource base, are technically and institutionally appropriate, socially acceptable and economically viable in the long term.

#### **Ecological Sanitation (ecosan)**

Ecological sanitation systems safely recycle excreta and other organic waste to crop production, in such a way that the use of non-renewable resources is minimised.

#### **Knowledge nodes on Sustainable Sanitation**

SEI aims to promote and develop pro-poor sustainable sanitation in the developing world through capacity development and knowledge management. SEI is working in partnership with highly reputable organisations world-wide, who are acting as hosts for knowledge nodes on sustainable sanitation through this programme. The nodes serve as capacity development, information and networking platforms/hubs for governments, non-governmental organisations, civil society and the private sector relating to different sustainability issues of sanitation.

Three knowledge nodes on sustainable sanitation have been established in Africa.

#### **Developing local-level capacity in Burkina Faso**

In Burkina Faso, a knowledge node on sustainable sanitation is hosted by the Centre Régional pour l'Eau Potable et l'Assainissement à faible coût, RN-CREPA BF. Since its launch in April 2009, the node has been supporting nine municipalities in Comoé province. Builders and technicians from all nine municipalities have been trained in the construction of urine-diverting dry toilets (UDDT). A study tour to an urban and a rural municipality has been held, as well as a workshop on urban and rural sanitation. Representatives of women's organizations from all the municipalities have been trained in sustainable management of household waste and the importance of hygiene and sanitation in the community.



UDDT guided visit for members of the Provincial Apprenticeship Alliance, Banfora, Burkina Faso

A direct outcome of these training programmes has been the leveraging of external funds for sanitation interventions for two municipalities, as well as the inclusion of a budget line for sanitation in one municipality. The node maintains contact with key persons in each municipality to ensure that sustainable sanitation is mainstreamed in local municipal development planning. Through these contacts, the node has supported the formulation of sanitation by-laws in one municipality. The node is also developing a toolbox on conducting local-level capacity development, as well as training programme for mayors so as to influence political leaders to support sustainable sanitation.

### **Raising awareness in Uganda**

The Uganda node is hosted by the Network for Water and Sanitation, NETWAS Uganda. The successes of the node include training of masons in construction of UDDTs, and the building of UDDT demonstration units in homes and at the Appropriate Technology Centre of the Ministry of Water and Environment. The node has established a membership databank, a newsletter, a blog and a Facebook page. The node has also co-hosted a scoping event on fossa alterna, attended by scholars, students, farmers, NGOs, and Ministry officials. Additionally, a show on ecosan has been broadcast on national television. A baseline survey on ecosan coverage and sustainability in Uganda has been conducted, the results of which have been disseminated to the Ministry and the National Sanitation Working Group. The node has also held a well-attended national workshop to vitalise the work with the ‘Ten Year National Strategy on Ecological Sanitation 2008 – 2018’.



Training of masons in UDDT construction, Mukono, Uganda

Despite the Ugandan government’s efforts to promote ecosan, evidenced by the development of the strategy mentioned above, knowledge about ecological sanitation in Uganda remains poor, and attitudes towards excreta use in agriculture are ambivalent. The baseline survey, conducted by the node, revealed that only 7% of households in the surveyed districts had ecosan toilets, 37% of the respondents had heard of ecosan but knew little about it, and 80% would not eat food fertilised with sanitized excreta. The Ugandan node is raising awareness of the benefits of ecological and sustainable

sanitation, so as to contribute towards increased uptake. The overall goal is to promote the use of sanitised excreta in agriculture to boost food production.

### **Sharing knowledge in Southern Africa**

The Southern African Knowledge Node on Sustainable Sanitation is managed by the Water Information Network – South Africa (WIN-SA). It operates as a regional node, drawing participation from several Southern African countries.

At the outset, the node developed a database of sustainable sanitation experts, available to governments, municipalities and communities. A magazine entitled ‘Sanitation Matters’ was launched in November 2009, serving as a knowledge-sharing tool on sustainable sanitation. Site visits to sustainable sanitation projects in the South Africa and Namibia have been held. The node is supporting the Namibian government in implementing its National Sanitation Strategy, by sharing experiences and lessons from other Southern African countries. The node is also part of the South African task team for the UNICEF hand-washing campaign and has facilitated a seminar on it.

A highlight of the node’s activities was the hosting of the Ugandan node on a learning journey to South Africa, to study WIN-SA’s knowledge development and dissemination methodologies. This learning journey also brought together civil society stakeholders and development practitioners from several other countries in East and Southern Africa.



Regional civil society stakeholders visiting a farm that applies nutrient reuse, Cullinan, South Africa

Future plans of the node include workshops on (i) pit emptying and (ii) sanitation issues in coastal areas, learning journeys for Namibian stakeholders, documenting and disseminating case studies on sustainable sanitation initiatives in the region, and establishing a web portal to enhance members’ communication.

### **Towards sustainable sanitation in Africa**

Africa provides ample opportunities for sustainable development, as several African countries are still refining their national policies on environmental issues such as sanitation. Thus, the nodes are potential catalysts for implementation of sustainable sanitation in their respective countries and regions.



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Southern Africa knowledge  
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