

ECOSAN IN OUAGADOUGOU – BUILDING CAPACITIES TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE SYSTEM

Patrick Bracken¹, Anselme Vodounhessi²

1) c/o EIRENE, B.P. 549, Niamey, République du Niger

2) CREPA, Coordinator Projet Ecosan_UE, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

ABSTRACT

Co-financed by the European Union ACP Water Facility, the project “ecological sanitation in peripheral neighbourhoods of Ouagadougou” brings together the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the West African centre for low cost water supply and sanitation (CREPA), and the national office for water supply and sanitation in Burkina Faso (ONEA) to implement ecosan systems in Ouagadougou. The project aims to facilitate the access of households in peripheral neighbourhoods to sustainable, safe and affordable sanitation systems. Project partners have adopted a three strand approach to implementation: systems are being developed with the users; the authorities are being lobbied to create an enabling environment; and the local private sector is being strongly implicated in activities.

This paper presents the various approaches adopted to reach the main actors in the project and to identify their needs with regard to capacity building. It will also describe the activities currently being undertaken to address these needs and the expected outcome.

Keywords: Community based organisations, local private sector, municipalities, capacity building, empowerment

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades sanitation has remained a low development priority for the landlocked West African nation of Burkina Faso. Countrywide, of the population of more than 13 900 000 (Recensement Général de la Population et de l’Habitation, 2006), 89% have no access to basic sanitation services. In rural areas this applies to 90% of the population, and in urban areas to 85% (AMCOW, 2006).

In the capital, Ouagadougou, around 1 130 000 of the population of 1 390 000, have no access to basic sanitation - a coverage estimated at around 19% (PN-AEPA, 2006). Several innovative initiatives were launched to address this problem, however with a population growth rate of around 5% per year these initiatives have had great difficulty in simply maintaining pace with growth – particularly in peripheral areas of the city. In order to achieve a coverage of 59%, the Millennium Development Goal for sanitation in Ouagadougou, a further 1 050 000 people need to gain access to basic sanitation. This would require over 300 households a week investing in sanitation for the next seven years, and would still leave 900 000 people without access. In addition to this, the city would be producing around 2 200 m³ of faecal sludge a day (an assumed accumulation rate of 1l/cap/day for faecal sludge), currently with no clear concept as to how this should be managed. Calculations have shown that even at today’s prices the nutrients in the city’s excreta, if collected and reused, would have an annual value of over 16.5 million euro.

It was in response to the serious sanitation challenges in Burkina Faso that the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the west African centre for low cost water supply and sanitation (CREPA), and the national office for water supply and sanitation (ONEA) developed the project “ecological sanitation in peripheral neighbourhoods of Ouagadougou”. The aim of the project is to facilitate the access of households in peripheral neighbourhoods to sustainable, safe and affordable sanitation systems that protect human health, contribute to food security, and enhance the protection of natural resource and the promotion of small and medium sized businesses. The project is co-financed within the framework of the European Union ACP Water Facility, and unites the experience of the GTZ, and CREPA in the design and development of ecological sanitation systems, with that of ONEA in the area of large scale, demand oriented sanitation provision in Ouagadougou.

The sanitation systems envisaged for these areas aim to close the nutrient loop and thus contribute to resolving the serious problems of managing faecal sludge in the urban environment and the need for agricultural inputs in urban agriculture and market gardening. In order to ensure that sanitation system complies with the needs and expectations of all actors, the project has adopted a participatory and multidisciplinary approach, based on the Household Centred Environmental Sanitation (HCES) approach, and the premise that the users themselves are the key stakeholders in system design and operation, and that they must be supported in this process by an appropriate legislative and regulatory framework.

To achieve the project objective, the partners have three major fields of activity. Firstly, ecological sanitation systems are being developed with the users of these systems, responding to their needs and the local context. Secondly, lobby work is being carried out at municipal and governmental level in order to create an enabling environment for ecological sanitation and to ensure its inclusion in legislation and future strategic plans for sanitation, with particular attention being paid to the multi-disciplinary approach required for ecosan. This second strand is also serving to create the conditions for the third strand, which is to support and promote the involvement of the local private sector in furnishing the infrastructure and if necessary the logistic services required by the system.

The project began in July 2006 and will run for a period until 2009. Through a broad range of activities over this three year period the project aims to reach up to 300 000 people in Ouagadougou, informing them of the existence and the possibilities ecosan has to offer, and providing them with safe, appropriate, affordable closed-loop sanitation.

2. LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER

The main project activities have to date included the identification of the pilot neighbourhoods, analysing the project stakeholders and establishing contact to them, engaging in dialogue with and informing different interest groups and authorities, establishing the base line situation in the selected pilot neighbourhoods and beginning the process of establishing agreed strategic plans with all the actors. In the coming months these plans will be finalised by the actors and work will begin to install the system and ensure the institutionalisation of ecological sanitation. All these processes have involved and will continue to involve a very close cooperation between all the stakeholders.

The nature of closed loop sanitation systems requires a broad range of actors to be consulted and integrated into system design. The process adopted by the project therefore comprised not only traditional water supply and sanitation issues, but also other disciplines such as agriculture, town planning, public health, environmental protection, resources management, economics, and marketing. The initial stakeholder analysis revealed that the most relevant actors for the project included the households, urban farmers and market gardeners (represented by community based organisations), craftsmen and small and medium sized businesses, local municipalities, the national water and sanitation supplier ONEA, and the relevant government ministries. Each of these actors was recognised as being an expert in their particular field. Only households, for example, could express their needs, their ability to pay, their preferences and expectations for a sanitation system. Only the urban farmers themselves could express their real demand for agricultural inputs and their readiness to use inputs produced from excreta. The different stakeholders were therefore approached and integrated into the project work and dialogue between the project and each stakeholder group, and between the different groups themselves, was encouraged and supported.



Figure 1: Listening to the experts – project staff seek the opinion of market gardeners

Calling on the expertise of each of these groups the project carried out a base line assessment of the situation in the pilot neighbourhoods, looking at all issues that would impact upon the collection, treatment, transport, and reuse of excreta, from user level up to the national legislative and regulatory framework. The results of each of the four studies were then presented in the neighbourhoods by the project team to an assembled group of stakeholders for verification before being finalised. The results therefore represented the collected knowledge and opinions of the stakeholders and could reasonably be taken as an agreed basis for the development of the system. In order reach this point it was therefore essential that the different stakeholder groups (including the project team) were willing to listen to, and learn from, the others.

This consultative working procedure is now being used in the development of strategic ecological sanitation plans for the four neighbourhoods. With each of the stakeholder groups now involved in the process, there is a good knowledge of how ecological sanitation systems can work, and of the role each of the stakeholders could play in the system.

Whilst this working procedure has resulted in a very positive engagement by all those concerned, it has also highlighted the limited capacities of some of the stakeholders. There is therefore a clear need to support different groups in increasing their capacities in different respects to engage effectively with the project. Capacity building activities are therefore being planned and carried out to improve each stakeholder's capacities with regard to:

- Participation in the process and knowledge of ecosan
- Transparent and participatory decision making procedures
- The construction and logistics needed for ecosan systems
- System planning for individual sanitation installations and the operation and maintenance of the entire ecosan system when in place

3. DEVELOPING CAPACITIES TO EMPOWER THE ACTORS

From the project perspective the interest in developing the capacities of particular actors was initially to guarantee an efficient implementation of project activities and ensure their continuation when the project itself finishes. For the project team it is easier and more productive to communicate with actors who are able to contribute to qualified discussions and provide their opinion. And for the different stakeholders, they can only realise their role in the system in the long term if their capacities are strengthened from as early as possible. However for the different actors there are additional interests in developing capacities through cooperating with the project. From a very broad perspective it creates the conditions for a more open dialogue between all actors (from households to municipal authorities) on other issues facing the community and supports the ongoing process of decentralisation where planning and decision making responsibilities have been transferred to local municipalities.

The three municipalities working with the project are therefore responsible to assess their own sanitation needs and plan solutions for sanitation. However the capacities at municipal level to identify these needs and plan accordingly are extremely limited. Project staff have therefore been working intensively with municipal staff, supporting them at different stages throughout the project and ensuring their full participation in decision making, and planning processes. This in turn supports the municipal authority as a whole by helping to develop methodologies for needs evaluation and planning in a more general sense.

The local private sector is another major actor in the project. They are currently the main providers of sanitation installations, and are also responsible for the emptying of latrine pits and the “removal” of faecal sludge. In ecosan systems there is a huge potential for the local private sector to get involved, for example in the construction of toilets, the production of equipment or the provision of services. However they are only marginally aware of the business opportunities presented by closed loop sanitation and an intensive programme of awareness raising and a series of trainings is planned. This work aims to support the private sector in identifying business opportunities and to intervene in the ecosan system, providing quality services in an appropriate manner. In assisting different private sector actors to provide the necessary services for the system, the demand for services can be satisfied by local actors ensuring continuity when the project closes.



Figure 2: Raising awareness among school children and visiting a reuse demonstration plot

Households, market gardeners and community based organisations have also been involved in capacity building actions of the project. They are currently involved in awareness raising activities in their neighbourhoods. Representatives of these groups receive regular training to enable them to work with individuals and groups and provide information on ecological sanitation, and are accompanied in

this activity by a team of extension workers from the project. When the project itself ends in 2009 this knowledge will therefore still be available at neighbourhood level and may serve in the continuation of activities.

4. RESULTS SO FAR AND TO COME

During the first year the project has been able to achieve some important results. The establishment of the process itself and the participation of all the actors has enabled this and is in itself an extremely important achievement, laying a solid foundation for the installation and operation of the system. It has also led to a comprehensive base-line study and the development of the first series of ecosan plans for the project areas that have been discussed by the actors. These discussions will start a refining process of the plans with the considerations of different groups being taken into account. It is hoped that this process will lead to the installation of the system in coming months.

For this further capacity building activities will be carried out, for example with market gardeners to improve their ability to use the system products.

Work will also be carried out on a political level with increased lobbying, with the aim of creating a real enabling environment for broader ecosan use in other areas at on a larger scale than within the project framework.

5. LESSONS LEARNED AND CONCLUSIONS

One major lesson that can be drawn from the project experience in creating a network of enabled actors is that a real collaboration can be achieved if enough time is taken to nurture the process. In the project however, time is a precious commodity. With financing secured for three years within by the EU Water Facility, there is considerable pressure to produce concrete results with regularity, with little regard for the particularities of implementation. There is therefore a tension between taken the time needed to bring all actors with the project and the demands of the main financiers.

A second lesson has been the value that has been added to the project by respecting the existing knowledge of each of the stakeholders. The project partners (CREPA, ONEA and the GTZ) have profited immensely from the experience of the others, but all have also profited from the input of the other stakeholders. Respecting this knowledge and granting them an active role in the project has improved the quality of the work.

The third major lesson that can be drawn is that capacity development has proven key to all project activities and that these have proven most effective when built on existing capacities and knowledge (such as including the community based organisations in awareness raising activities).

The project is now entering its second year of implementation in which ecosan systems will be installed and enter operation. The capacities of the stakeholders will be built upon in the coming months to ensure they are able to operate and maintain the chosen system. At the same time project attention will turn also to improving the legislative environment for ecosan in Burkina Faso, lobbying across all administrative levels, with the full support of the municipalities working with the project, to have ecosan included as part of strategic sanitation plans across the country.

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