

Sanitation in peri-urban areas in Africa

The sanitation situation in the poor peri-urban areas in Africa is extremely bad, many publications on the subject underline this observation. The inhabitants of these areas suffer from inconvenient, dangerous and unhygienic sanitation. The relevant utilities in these cities focus on sewerage systems in the better-off areas, and have no or very little involvement in the poor peri-urban areas where the houses are not connected to sewerage systems. The absence of safe and private toilet facilities in walking distance has a significant negative impact on the dignity, health and well being of the inhabitants.

WASTE, SNS Reaal Water Fund and Plan Nederland are collaborating to respond to the situation and, based on contacts with their partners in 5 African countries, have formulated the following project (2008 – 2012) :

The project aims to improve the sanitation situation in peri-urban areas of 5 cities in different countries in Africa (Mali, Ethiopia, Kenya, Zambia and Malawi) through a result oriented and innovative approach. Objective is to provide good toilet facilities at the household level or in public places in the peri-urban areas, together with a service to empty, collect, transport and dispose the excreta. The project strives to use the excreta for agriculture to recycle the nutrients and possibly for biogas. In the African context fertilizers are hardly used because of high prices, and human excreta can make a difference.

In each city the relevant utility has to take up responsibility for dealing with the sanitation problem in the peri-urban areas. The organisational set-up will be filled in by the utilities that engage the small scale private sanitation sector (SSPSS) for the toilet construction and the service delivery (from emptying up to disposal). The project also satisfies the principle of public-private partnership, as it creates at the local level a consortium of utility (maybe utilities), SSPSS, local banks, the users, the agriculture sector, and the relevant national sector agencies although at a distance. The utilities and the SSPSS will deliver information and training to the population on hygiene behaviour, on payment for services, on use and cleaning of the toilets, etc. The combination of different partners in the project is innovative as it includes active financial partners, private sector and public services

Each utility will make a business plan with clear tasks and responsibilities for all stakeholders, and include a sound financial scheme which includes the payment by the users. Only after approval of the business plan, funds for investments are granted. Sustainability of the services is important, requiring a functional and accepted sanitation system by all stakeholders in the 5 countries. The involvement of the three Dutch partners in the project is therefore focused to the correct set-up of the system, with a functional private sector in the sanitation services.

The financial flow will be important and therefore the involvement of local banks is needed. The project will give assistance and training to these local banks, also with the aim of banks seeing a potential to invest with proper funds in the sanitation sector.

The project aims to provide in the 5 cities a sanitation system (toilets plus services) to 62 500 households (312 500 persons) in 2012, and a total 103 700 households (518 500 persons) at the horizon of 2018 through reinvestments of the collected payments.

The existing national policies facilitate the proposed activities in sanitation and private sector involvement (e.g. MDG : sanitation, and PRSP: basic services and private sector), which allows for scaling up of the successful results to other peri-urban areas in the country or in Africa.

DGIS (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands) has approved the project and contributes half of the estimated € 7M budget. SNS Reaal Water Fund is committed to give loans, under the pre-condition that the investment proposal of the concrete project is approved by their internal Investment Committee, valuing the other half to bankable projects in the cities.