

Six Pilot Sites Ready for HCES Testing

Following our call for collaboration to test the Household-Centred Environmental Sanitation (HCES) approach, 20 partners responded and submitted their proposals. Six sites were selected in the following countries: Two sites were identified in Costa Rica (Central America), one site in Burkina Faso (West Africa), two sites in Kenya and Tanzania (East Africa), and finally one site in Laos (South-East Asia). Christoph Lüthi, Roland Schertenleib, Antoine Morel

In the selection of pilot sites, we joined forces with locally anchored institutions, i.e. the Latin American Faculties of Social Sciences (FLACSO) in Costa Rica, the research institution CREPA in West Africa and "Maji na Ufanisi" (Water and Development), a growing NGO in Kenya. In the last few months, Memoranda of Understanding were signed with most partners and the ten-step HCES process launched.

Initiating the HCES process

So far, HCES launching workshops (step 2 of the actual planning process) were held in Costa Rica, Kenya and Burkina Faso, and their results in terms of stakeholder participation and content surpassed our expectations. Participation, reflected by the lively debate and concrete results of the community at large and key stakeholders at national and municipal level, was achieved in all workshops. The following factors largely contributed to the success of the launching workshops:

- A good mix of stakeholders.
- A gender balance in community representation.
- Allowing space for the community to speak out and voice its concerns.
- Careful preparation and detailed organisation of the launching event.

So far, experience suggests that best results are obtained if the launching event is divided in two parts: (i) a community planning workshop, where the community feels uninhibited in communicating and speaking freely without dominant external stakeholders; (ii) a formal launching event, where authorities and decision-makers are appointed by the community and where the framework of the HCES planning process can be negotiated. The outcome of the workshops has laid the foundation for future planning processes, i.e. creation of a multi-stakeholder task force or working committee and an action plan detailing further steps of the household-centred approach.

The main challenge of step 3 in the HCES process is the assessment of the current status of environmental sanitation services at local, municipal and city level despite data scarcity. Is collection of reliable planning data possible from an informal and unmapped settlement in Nairobi, which is practically devoid of municipal services and totally devoid of public schools or health clinics etc (Photo 1)? A mix of quantitative surveys, collection of qualitative information and interviews with key resource persons certainly forms part of the solution to this problem. A further challenge is the integrated, cross-sectoral nature of the information required, covering sanitation, solid waste, water supply, and drainage issues.

Steps ahead

Key steps in the future planning process comprise open discussions on the outcome of the assessment of the current status, user priorities and different environmental sanitation options, including organisational, financial and technological options (steps 4 and 5). In Costa Rica's Curridabat neighbourhood, an information workshop on the outcome of the assessment of the current status (i.e. neighbourhood diagnosis) was already held with those concerned (Photo 2). The community is now ready to find options and solutions for its neighbourhood. The "options

workshops", to be organised for each individual block, will group about 25 households and will be held in the living room of a community member to ensure the highest possible community participation.

The future planning steps 6–8 will comprise the evaluation of feasible service combinations as well as the drafting and finalisation of the consolidated strategic sanitation plan. These plans are likely to take several months to complete prior to initiating the actual implementation step. In many cases, especially if new and innovative solutions are suggested, implementation will start on a limited scale (carefully monitored and evaluated in step 9) before large-scale implementation can take place in step 10.

To support the HCES planning process, especially steps 5 and 6, SANDEC is currently compiling a Compendium/Sourcebook to facilitate identification of the favoured system from a list of possible options. Its main objective is to present a wider range of conventional and innovative options, including on-site technologies. The material is intended for sector experts and decision-makers, but can also be used for presentations during community consultations such as the ones mentioned.

For further information on the household-centred approach, visit our website or download the HCES Guidelines now also available in French and Spanish.

Photo 1: HCES seeks to provide solutions to environmental sanitation problems encountered, for example in a Nairobi informal settlement.



Photo 2: The HCES approach begins by launching a workshop for key stakeholders. The photo shows the Curridabat workshop in 2006.

