



## HARNESING LAKE VICTORIA RESOURCES THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION



### Introduction

The United Nations world water development report of 2006 established that over 3,800 children die every day from diseases associated with lack of access to safe drinking water, poor sanitation and hygiene.

42 percent of the world's population has inadequate or non-existent access to proper sanitation.

In Uganda, the Health Sector Strategic Plan (HSSP) pointed to convincing evidence that over 75 percent of Uganda's heavy disease burden is considered preventable as it is primarily caused by poor personal and domestic hygiene and inadequate sanitation

facilities and practices.

Despite the existence of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and in particular goal 7 which aims at ensuring environmental sustainability and Target 11 of the same proposes that by 2015 a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million rural people worldwide would be achieved. This seems to be far from the reality as rural communities continue to experience inadequate water and sanitation related diseases like malaria, typhoid, worm infections, diarrhoea, cholera epidemics and other negative effects of climate change. Therefore, this calls for further interventions with rural communities



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to achieve safe drinking water and hygienic sanitation facilities which is a precondition for good health and for success in the fight against poverty, hunger, infant mortality and gender inequality.

The National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE) with financial support from OSIENALA - a regional NGO based in Kenya is involved in improving water and sanitation conditions of the communities living around L. Victoria, particularly in Kiziru, Naminya and Njeru in Mukono district.

NAPE is a national ,non government organization whose objective is to lobby and advocate for sustainable use and management of natural resources.

A project on water and sanitation started in 2006 and is still going on. To date NAPE has facilitated these communities to implement a project on water and sanitation.

The aim of the project is to improve water and sanitation conditions and promote the involvement of communities in the decision making processes in the area of environmental conservation and community livelihood.

### Objectives of the project

- To improve and promote water and sanitation standards of the selected communities.
- To promote community awareness on environmental conservation and protection of the Lake Victoria water resources.
- To advocate for involvement of Village Environmental Committees (VECs) in the National environmental management structures

### Achievements to date

- a) Mapping of the project area and interventions was done in the selected areas with the assistance of key community and local leaders
- b) Community meetings were conducted with Local leaders and laid down strategies for program interventions on water and sanitation.
- c) 6 village environmental committees ( VECs) have been formed in the three communities of Kiziru ,Naminya and Njeru. They have also been trained on their roles and responsibilities regarding environmental conservation, water and sanitation.
- d) Awareness trainings have been conducted in the three communities. The trainings were tailored towards addressing water and sanitation conditions in the area and how the local communities can work towards improving their livelihoods.
- e) Community based masons were trained on skill in

Ecosan construction and maintenance. These masons have consequently passed on these skills to VECs who are now able to participate in the construction of these Ecosan toilets.

- f) 21 ecosan toilets have been constructed and effectively used at communal and house hold levels in the project areas. It is planned that by the end of 2009 a total of 14 Ecosans will have been constructed in the communities of Kinyala and Bugungu in Njeru.
- g) The communities have set up demonstration gardens where the manure from ecosan toilets is applied
- h) There is evidently high percentage of community participation including women in ecosan construction, maintenance and use of the by-products
- i) 3 water tanks were installed in Naminya and 1 in Kiziru for rain water harvesting
- j) There has been land rehabilitation through planting of trees emphasizing indigenous species
- k) Communities of Naminya and Kiziru have had exchange visits to share and reflect experiences on water and sanitation. The lessons learnt have been replicated in the project areas.



*One of the Ecosan toilets constructed at Kiziru fish landing site - Mukono*

## The role of Village Environmental committees (VECs)

- Conduct community meetings to create awareness on environmental conservation, HIV/AIDs, water and sanitation
- Assist local leaders in enforcing by-laws on environmental conservation, water and sanitation practices
- Ensure that water and sanitation facilities provided in the communities are properly maintained.
- Enhance information flow and sharing between key stake holders and communities.
- Keep and maintain records of the water and sanitation activities
- Monitor and report on water and sanitation activities in the communities

## Ecological Sanitation (ECOSAN)

Ecosan is an improved technology that allows people to re-use fecal materials that are traditionally thought of as waste. This approach to sanitation and water management is based on the systematic closure of fecal material flow-cycles. It introduces the concept of sustainability to sanitation by keeping human waste from seeping into the ground water level. It also protects the main water source from contamination and recycles nutrients from human excreta to agriculture use.

Many traditional latrines like the one below in rural and urban slum areas are often emptied into the bushes and drainage channels. In some areas, people use polythene bags to ease themselves and there after discard in banana plantations, road sides and bushes. Ecosan toilets are preferred to avert such dangerous waste disposal.



*Undesirable human waste disposal scenario. A case of Kiziru fish landing site before NAPE's intervention*

## Advantages of using an Ecosan toilet

- Human excreta usually spreads diseases. The composting action of the ecosan toilet prevents the spread of diseases, sterilizes this waste and kills all the pathogens.
- The Ecosan principle of separate and keep it dry, is very key in volume of human excreta and prevention of sanitation related diseases
- They recover the nitrogen-rich human waste by-products. The waste can be used to help food crops grow rather than just going to waste.
- No foul smell because the application of ash which helps to dry the solid waste easily due to the chemical component in it
- Easy to maintain particularly at household level because of the use of ash and less water.
- It is adaptable to different environment in terms location, space and materials used.
- Can generate household income through selling its by-products like urine and manure

## Gender perspective in water and sanitation:

Women and men usually have very different roles in water and sanitation activities. These differences are particularly pronounced in traditional communities.

Women are most often the users and managers of water in households and are the guardians of household hygiene. If a water system breaks down, women are more vulnerable than men. This reduces their productivity considering time taken to fetch the water.

Experience has shown that women are keen at maintaining water and sanitation facilities because of the impact of fetching water from long distances. This is evidenced by the pronounced role of women in Village Environmental Committees (VECs), many of which are headed by women. Women also play a leading role in mobilizing other community members for awareness raising meetings on water and sanitation.

Given their long-established active role, women are usually very knowledgeable about current water sources, quality, reliability, accessibility and utilisation.

They are also key players in implementing improved hygiene behaviors that scale out to a wide range of community members. Men are usually more concerned with water for production while women are often more direct users of water, especially for the household. Traditionally men may have a greater role than women in public decision-making. But women most times have a large bearing on the decision made.

Because of these different roles and incentives, it



is important to fully involve both women and men in demand-driven water and sanitation programs.

#### **Water and Sanitation related issues to consider under gender:**

- Are both men and women involved in community decision-making process on water and sanitation services?
- Who is voicing community preferences related to the selection of water and sanitation technologies and siting of facilities?
- Are both men and women discussing hygiene problems and possible solutions?
- Are VECs composed of men and women? what is their level of participation?
- Are both women and men trained as caretakers of community facilities?
- How do water and sanitation conditions impact on household incomes and livelihood?

#### **Challenges to water and sanitation interventions in Mukono**

- Communities are reluctant to change their traditional practices and attitudes regarding the use of Ecosan toilet
- The VECs are not well supported and facilitated by other government structures on the management of natural resources
- Communities at the landing sites are not permanent. This creates a gap in continuous sensitization and awareness creation on water and sanitation.
- There are no clear mechanisms for feed back and information flow from top to bottom and vice versa
- The water and Sanitation services do not scale down to the local communities because of inadequate funding.



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