

Draft Session Report  
**“Sustainable Urban Sanitation:  
 Findings from a research/actions programme”**

Urban population is growing very rapidly in Africa. To meet the demand of the population, it is not enough to scale up current approaches (especially sewerage system, which revealed unmanageable in most cities). Thus, to reach this objective, it is necessary to innovate and seek alternative approaches, regarding technical issues (enlarging the range of technical options, from on-site to collective options), financial, social and institutional issues.

Since 2000, in the framework of a programme conducted by pS-Eau (Water Solidarity Network) and MDP (Municipal Development Partnership), and funded by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, twelve North-South multidisciplinary and plurisectorial teams have been investigating the question of managing urban sanitation, mainly in African cities. During the session held on the 16<sup>th</sup> of March, main findings from 21 pilot and research actions have been discussed and the outcome is presented below.

### **1. On-site sanitation: a relevant option, meeting a very strong demand**

In African cities, access to sewerage system is very limited (0-15%), therefore most families rely on on-site sanitation in its various forms, which happens to be a relevant and viable option, meeting a very strong demand.

The Private sector (small scale local operators) showed its capacity to create, to develop and to fully organise the market of the mechanical emptying of pit sludge. But the main bottleneck of the supply chain is the lack of appropriate dumping sites and the treatment of sludge. An answer could be brought by rustic and appropriate technologies.

### **2. Pre-conceived ideas: how can we change the way we are dealing with sanitation?**

Professionals and decision-makers play a key role in the choices done for sanitation, but often refer to pre-conceived ideas about suitable options for sanitation and appropriate behaviours regarding hygiene. They need to change their own point of view about what is feasible:

- Focussing on the effective practices and the real concerns of users.
- Solving the bottlenecks of the existing systems rather than reinventing new techniques.

The real innovation is there!!

### **3. The role of public authorities: to organise a multi-stakeholders sector and to regulate service providers**

The role of public authorities must be reinforced and re-oriented, in order for them to be on the driving seat for organising a multi-stakeholders sector and regulating service providers.

To improve the supply chain of on-site sanitation (and especially mechanical sludge emptying), public authorities, at local level, could carry out three types of initiatives:

- Upstream, providing technical support at household level in order to improve their installations, and offering financial solutions (subsidising partially or totally);
- Regulating providers in order to improve the quality of the services provided to users;
- Downstream, investing or encouraging investors to build adequate disposal sites and treatment facilities, and monitoring the environmental impact.