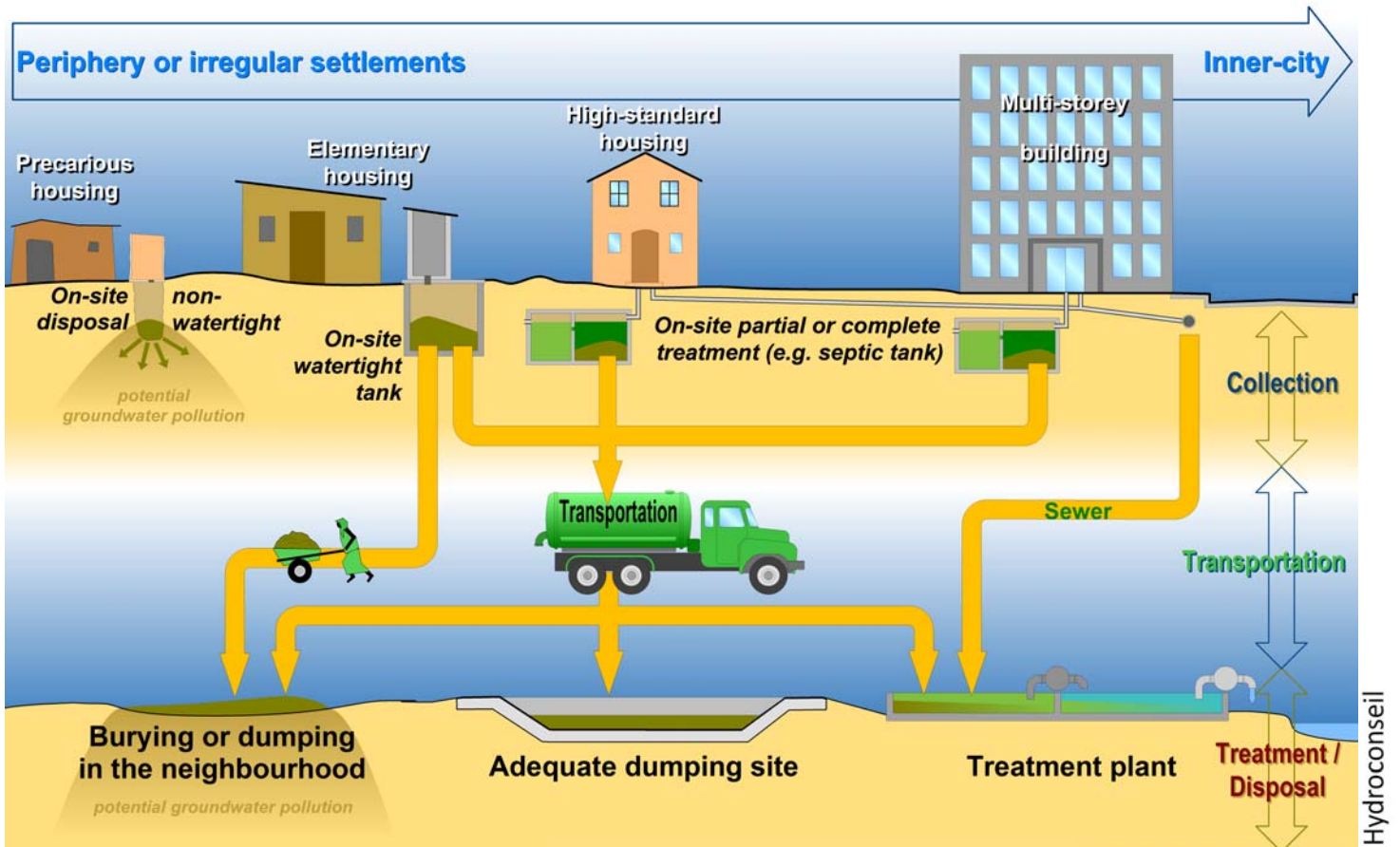


Today's Snapshot



Understanding the complexity of the sanitation chain helps to meet the challenge, the effects of which go well beyond the health and environmental issues traditionally attributed to it.

Sanitation in the Spotlight

By chance, several official sessions and a double side-event at the French Pavilion were held on Thursday 19 March. Three months after the end of the International Year of Sanitation, pS-Eau and its partners were closely involved in these sessions, which all covered sanitation and, in particular, the progress made in sub-Saharan Africa, which is the region in which progress in terms of sanitation and hygiene has been slowest.

Session 2.1.4a, organised by the Seine Normandy Water Agency (www.eau-seine-normandie.fr), ISKI (Turkish operator of

water and sanitation services, www.iski.gov.tr) and the Paris sanitation authority, *Syndicat Interdépartemental pour l'Assainissement de l'Agglomération Parisienne* (SIAAP, www.siaap.fr) highlighted the importance of consolidating exchanges, know-how and cooperation among the large cities of the world, both in the North and South. Sanitation, which needs to part of an integrated approach involving all stakeholders, was presented during these sessions as a pertinent indicator of a country's level of development. This session was illustrated by the experience of Ouagadougou which has managed in 15 years to increase the

rate of coverage from 5 to 50%. The final message of this first part of the session was "let us give sanitation the respect it deserves".

The second part of the session (2.1.4b) asked the question: how can we continue the lobbying momentum created during the International Year of Sanitation? The solutions discussed highlighted the importance of the visibility (and clarity) of sanitation policies and the key role that local authorities have to play. Nonetheless, the successes of 2008 must not obscure the fact that the lobbying approach still needs to be improved, using not only techniques of persuasion borrowed from lawyers, but also those that have been used in other sectors, particularly the fight against AIDS.

Session 5.2.3, organised by pS-Eau in collaboration with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OCDE, www.oecd.org) looked at sanitation financing and pricing. The theme was debated in all its aspects, as it covered both developed and developing countries, on-site sanitation and collective sanitation. Financial, social and environmental sustainability was discussed with the audience, to draw the conclusion that the financing and pricing of sanitation services must be taken into account right from the outset, in local strategies and urban planning to promote local (and sustainable) financing of services. The second key message that came out of the debates is the importance of national government but, in particular, local government involvement. Finally, the last recommendation concerned the targeting of public funding, which, generally limited, must take into account the sector as a whole and contribute to a minimum level of solidarity among users

connected to sewer systems and those who use on-site sanitation.

The participants also insisted on the importance of linking the financing of sanitation to the water bill, while underlining the fact that there is a pricing threshold that cannot be exceeded to ensure water and sanitation services remain affordable. Finally, the panel and the participants agreed that lightening the financial burden placed on users must first and foremost target the poorest.

The debate continued with a double side-event entitled "meeting the sanitation challenge", organised on the French pavilion by the French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (www.diplomatie.gouv.fr) the French Development Agency (www.afd.fr), and Hydroconseil (www.hydroconseil.com). The first part of this event was introduced by the Secretary of State for Ecology, Chantal Jouanno, and the second by the French Ambassador for the Environment, Laurent Stefanini.

The first part covered the use of economic analysis to demonstrate that sanitation gives a good return on investment and that both direct and indirect benefits are easy to measure. Three studies were presented: oyster farming and swimming water quality in France, Hann Bay in Senegal and Sebou basin in Morocco.

In all these cases, the clear benefits of investments in sanitation help to raise awareness among elected officials and to convince decision-makers of the need to invest.

The second part was a sincere and relaxed debate on implementation of sanitation in sub-Saharan Africa among different stakeholders including the President of the urban community of

Tahoua, Niger. The exemplary case of Ouagadougou for the financing mechanism set up by the National Water and Sanitation Office was highlighted several times and participants agreed on the need for local and sustainable financing. Such an approach can guarantee a minimum and continuous rate of investment, making it possible at the same time to leverage external funding.

Day of Local and Regional Authorities in Istanbul: elected officials make commitments

As it did for the African continent, the World Water Forum dedicated a whole day to local and regional authorities; Wednesday afternoon and Thursday morning. Three round tables dedicated to governance, climate change risks and sanitation challenges in rapidly growing urban contexts showed the major role local authorities must play to address these issues, even if their intervention capacities are often limited by financial constraints. On Thursday, reflection on these issues came to a close with the Istanbul Consensus. This policy document consists of two parts: on the one hand a call for action and on the other a list of the commitments made by the signatories. One of the assets of this document is the Appendix entitled: "guidelines for a local and regional action plan" which gives it a clear operational dimension.

The Istanbul consensus can be downloaded at: www.worldwaterforum5.org/index.php?id=2136

How can local authorities improve water services?

The Citizen's House for Water hosted a session entitled "financing and

decentralised services, from words to action" which, echoing the Day of local and regional authorities, confirmed the importance of awarding responsibility for water services to local level, while taking into consideration the fact that local authorities often have to mobilise external expertise. Donors also support the local level. They are now developing financial tools for local authorities such as the European Commission Water Facility or the African Development Bank.

Nonetheless, support of local authorities has some prerequisites: firstly, finances can only be transferred to the local level if a critical mass is reached. Furthermore, a minimum scale is required to have efficient services: if the district scale is too small, inter-district arrangements can be envisaged. Finally, while technical support and transfer of funding are both indispensable, they must be implemented at the same time.

Union for the Mediterranean: dialogue among water stakeholders

Despite recent conflict in the Gaza strip and the halt that has been called to the political process of the Union for the Mediterranean, the session dedicated to this geographical area brought together a large number of stakeholders representing the majority of the countries around the Mediterranean: France, Jordan, the Palestinian authority etc. Debates focused entirely on how to establish solidarity for water in the Mediterranean area. Mr Constantianos, Executive Secretary of the Global Water Partnership Mediterranean (www.gwpm.org) called for the improvement of the economic viability of the water sector with a view to facilitating financing. Strengthening cooperation

among various Mediterranean stakeholders was also presented as key to developing the sector. Participants expressed the desire to see these recommendations feature in the future Mediterranean water strategy which is to be adopted by the ministers in charge of water of the Union for the Mediterranean member states in the first half of 2010.

Improving the effectiveness of water supply services financed by decentralised cooperation

Still too many installations are built before ensuring that all the conditions required to ensure service effectiveness and sustainability are in place. In the short term, this risks the abandonment of the installations due to a lack of local maintenance and follow-up, and in the end, the investment is wasted, which is frustrating and demotivating for all involved. These are the observations made by local authorities in the North and South during the side event dedicated to water service management in the context of decentralised cooperation partnerships. This event was organised by the Seine Normandie Water Agency and the Paris region water authority, the *Syndicat des Eaux d'Ile de France* (SEDIF, www.sedif.com) with the support of pS-Eau.

What local means are needed for sustainable and effective operation of water and sanitation infrastructure? What mechanisms are most suited for long-term monitoring of water services? These are

the two questions that were debated at length:

Local managers presented successful experiences in monitoring and evaluating water supply services such as Laos, Chad, Mali and Senegal. To report on services and their appropriation by local stakeholders, mechanisms need to be built from the outset and must accompany implementation to enable long-term service monitoring to be established. While this intangible investment has a cost, it participates in ensuring that all stakeholders are better informed and makes it possible to make the necessary adjustments to ensure proper functioning of the service.

The SEDIF and the NGO Eau Vive (www.eau-vive.org) have developed tools to ensure effective and sustainable services. The NGO *Groupe de Recherche et d'Echanges Technologiques* (www.gret.org) has successfully used performance indicators in Laos and Senegal (BISAPE, *Base d'Information et de Suivi et d'Action des Programmes d'Eau potable*, www.bisape.over-blog.com) based on experience from the programme on mini water supply systems (MIREP) in Cambodia.

Finally, participants agreed on the fact that the end objective, in addition to service sustainability, is the optimisation of their operation in order to ensure operation costs that are affordable for all users.

Erratum: please note that an error was made in our 2nd Newsletter of 17 March, the email address of UCLG Africa is www.uclga.org.