

EcoSan toilets use & waste management



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List of Abbreviations

DESECE	Development Education Services For Community Empowerment
CBO	Community based Organization
NGO	Non-governmental organization
KIDEP	Kimilili Integrated Development Education Programme
ERI	Enabling Rural Innovation
EcoSan	Ecological Sanitation

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management”

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1. General Information

The Development Education Services For Community Empowerment (DESECE) works since 1993 in Western Kenya in the areas of peace building, human rights, civic education, gender, health, organic agriculture and environment and ecology.

The organization started as a Community based Organization (CBO) known as Kimilili Integrated Development Education Programme (KIDEP) in 1993. In 2006 the organization transformed itself into a registered Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) named DESECE, because there was a need to cover an expanded needy population of 2,406,528 people with a population density of about 318 persons per square kilometre in the region. The organization was based in Misikhu in a rented premise till 2012. Then, the organization managed to purchase a piece of land in Mukuyuni and later constructed new offices with the support of international partners to serve the needs of the beneficiaries, stakeholders and the organization (DESECE, n.d.).

DESECE now carries out development programs in Bungoma, parts of Kakamega and Trans-Nzoia Counties, with a focus on awareness creation using “Training for Transformation” as a methodology, peace and reconciliation, civic education including human rights, leadership trainings, gender, HIV and Aids, sustainable organic agriculture, ERI (Enabling Rural Innovation) and environmental management. The programs aim at motivating and empowering the target population to take active responsibilities of transforming their own life situations and facilitate their own development processes by setting their own goals and organizing for action to address their development needs (DESECE, n.d.).

This document presents the “negative” experience of the “*EcoSan toilets use and waste management*” that took place in the Londo village, Bungoma North Sub-county, Kenya, in 2012.



Figure 1 Location of the experience



2. Context of the Experience

Ecological sanitation, also known as EcoSan, is a term used to describe a form of sanitation that usually involves urine diversion and the recycling of water and nutrients contained within human wastes back into the local environment. An ecological sanitation (EcoSan) sees human waste and wastewater as an opportunity. When properly designed and operated, EcoSan systems provide a hygienically safe, economical, and closed-loop system that converts human wastes into nutrients to be returned to the soil, and water to be returned to the land.

The first reason for starting using EcoSan toilets by our organization was because we are located in rural areas where connection to a sanitary sewer system is not possible and water supplies are very limited. Our main objectives of ecological sanitation were: to reduce the health risks related to sanitation, contaminated water and waste; to prevent the pollution of surface and ground water since we use borehole water; and to reuse nutrients or energy contained within wastes for agricultural production.



3. Main Characteristics of the Experience

First, we purchased and installed the EcoSan toilets. Then, we had an initial training of staff and people/guests on the use of

the toilets. We also took pictures of the whole system, printed them on special papers and explained how the latrines had to be used. We showed on the pictures with arrows how the flow of the waste is. These instructions were pinned at all the toilets, although not all people know how to read.

We also identified staff for working on waste management and decided to use the urine on our model farm as top-dressing manure. Moreover, two staff members attended a capacity building training on waste management at Kitgum private hospital in Uganda.

In the beginning we thought the EcoSan toilets were good, easy and people could use them properly. We assumed that due to water scarcity in the area this type of toilets could be accepted and the community could benefit from them. But the perception was different due to the local culture. We also assumed the management of the toilets' waste would be simple but, it is a process that needs experienced and willing personnel.



4. Stakeholders and Partners – Roles and Responsibilities

The main parties involved in the project were the DESECE team, politicians and institutions (schools, churches and collages) that wanted to learn from the system and educate others. Individuals and community members to emulate the system and have it practically done in their own homes as an aspect of environmental conservation.



5. Reason and Impact of the Negative Experience/Failure

The first reason for the failure of this experience is the fact that DESECE was the first one to install this type of toilets in the area. The closest EcoSan project is in Kitgum, a Private hospital in Uganda which is far from us and hard to reach. Thus, we needed a prior training of staff and, as inviting an engineer to give a training was expensive, we could only do it twice which was not enough. Moreover, the community members and institutions needed to have a training to help them understand and own the

system, but this did not work again due to the lack of resources to facilitate the trainings.

Another challenge found was the importance of the community clinic in this rural area. Culture is very important for the community who believe that the use of ash on faeces means that someone is bewitching you. So, most of the people of the village do not accept the fact that you have to sprinkle ash on your faeces after using the toilet. They also do not want to hear that everything in the toilets is being collected in containers and will later be used as manure in farms. This seems to be a problem, especially for elderly people. Besides, it is also a challenge to get the ashes for the toilets because we must pay for them, yet we have no budget for it. Moreover, it is a taboo to touch people's faeces because they believe it is bad luck when you then go back home to serve your family. Another myth they believe in, is that if you put ash on faeces, that person's anus gets red.

Besides all the myths and cultural aspects, many villagers do not use the latrines properly, even after instruction. They mix faeces with urine in one hole which causes a blockage.

Overall, the failure happened because of lack of intensive training and the lack of awareness-rising to people. Furthermore, the rural community is not even interested by the use of conventional toilets (there are still people who defecate in the bushes). As a consequence, most of the people avoided using the toilet when they are visiting us and we have also experience a partial reduction in the number of people visiting us.



6. Lessons Learned and Recommendations

The Ecosan toilets with urine separation may well not grow as fast as other types of latrines because of the high level of preparation needed, the acceptance of the population required and its initial investment cost which is still relatively high for low income families. It thus needs to be well suited to local conditions before being introduced.

The whole process of project planning is very important. The system should first be tested on a small scale before its full implementation. Once the system has been implemented, the

staff managing the EcoSan toilet should have a hands-on training. Besides, the staff should also be trained in waste management in order to improve the system.

We have learned that it is important not to ignore the culture of the local people for the success of any project. Before starting the

project, it would be helpful to have a pilot project on how the system works, the advantages and disadvantages of the system and to put in place the resources needed to manage the system. Furthermore, there should be continuous awareness-rising on the importance of the EcoSan toilet.



7. Bibliography

DESECE. (n.d.). Retrieved January 22, 2018, from <https://www.desece.org/>