



Urban Sanitation and Hygiene for Health and Development (USHHD)

SNV's Urban Sanitation and Hygiene for Health and Development (USHHD) approach builds capacities for city-wide sustainable sanitation services for all. It is being applied across 20 cities in five countries; each with a population of 20,000 to 1.2 million. In applying USHHD, we work with city authorities, utilities, private sector, civil society and rights holder groups to realise financially viable and safely managed sanitation services that leave no-one behind: in households, schools, health care facilities and public places.

The challenge

Urban sanitation is among the biggest challenges of the SDGs. With more than half of the world's population living in urban areas, sanitation coverage can barely keep up with population increase. A minor part of sanitation is being safely managed.

Only 20% of globally produced wastewater receives proper treatment. In middle and low-income countries, adequate wastewater treatment is 28% and 8% respectively. Pathogens from untreated wastewater flow into open drains, marginal lands and waterways, polluting the living environment and disproportionately affecting people living in

poverty. Severe pathogen pollution is already affecting a third of all river stretches in Latin America, Africa and Asia. A global environmental and health crisis is staring us in the face.

There is growing recognition that capital-intensive sewer investments alone are not the way forward.

City-wide sanitation services will need to involve a mix of options, including non-sewered options. Yet there is limited experience in how to develop, integrate and operationalise mixed options in cities, in particular in countries with decentralised governance arrangements.



Photo: Emptiers at work at the SNV-supported faecal sludge treatment plant in Jhenaidah Bangladesh (SNV).

Highlights (2014-2020)



Completed construction/ rehabilitation of four faecal sludge treatment plants



Developed OHS guidelines and action plans for four countries



Contributed to the MSc curriculum for non-sewered sanitation at IHE



Co-developed urban sanitation institutional and regulatory frameworks in Bangladesh and Zambia

Our approach

The USHHD approach contributes to achieving inclusive and sustainable city-wide sanitation services for all. Working with city authorities and utilities, we aim to professionalise the way human waste is being managed in the city, focusing on households, schools, health centres and public places.

Based on USHHD, a city-wide sanitation service is achieved when all parts of the sanitation service delivery chain are handled safely, and when all neighbourhoods and all people living in the city benefit from this service.

Our approach seeks to balance short-term strategies with medium-term ones, while increasing climate adaptation and resilience. Existing legal and regulatory frameworks are the basis for strengthening capacities of city authorities, utilities and responsible agencies in performing and executing their sanitation-related roles and responsibilities. Where needed, we support local and national governments in developing institutional arrangements for urban sanitation.

Different geographical areas need tailored service delivery models. Therefore, we guide stakeholders through a process of informed choice regarding technologies, financing strategies, regulation and service delivery.

We facilitate evidence-based dialogue on the trade-offs between different investment choices. We strengthen the voice and capacity of low-income groups and slum residents to table their needs and perspectives during investment decisions. Through our team's expert technical input, on-the-job coaching, and an emphasis on monitoring, we support in the operationalisation of investment decisions to realise intended goals and ambitions.

Whilst city-wide sanitation services include both off-site and on-site sanitation solutions, the most significant gains will be realised in improving the safety and management of on-site facilities, and in defining tailored solutions for low-income neighbourhoods and institutional settings.

To this end, we engage private sector, local authorities and communities to develop business models that offer sustainable and affordable

services. We then engage with service providers (public or private) to improve their performance, capacity for cost recovery and ability to ensure and safeguard the occupational health and safety (OHS) of sanitation workers. With local authorities, we help strengthen the areas of regulation, planning, enforcement of standards and strategic use of public investments. Where relevant, we conduct faecal sludge re-use action research to help determine the potential for productive re-use, e.g., briquette production and co-composting.

Finally, our USHHD approach includes a comprehensive behavioural change communication (BCC) component. In the areas where we work, we conduct formative research to inform the design of our BCC activities. In turn, these activities prompt key sanitation behaviours in personal hygiene (hand washing, menstrual hygiene) and behaviours instrumental for safely managed sanitation such as, the willingness to connect to a sewer or non-disposal of solid waste in latrine pits.

Our experience

City-Wide Inclusive Sanitation in Southern Bangladesh (CWISE) | 2017-2020 | € 4M | Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

The second phase of an SNV city-wide urban sanitation project in Khulna, Kushtia and Jhenaidah, CWISE professionalises the sanitation services initiated during the first phase of SNV-BMGF collaboration in Bangladesh. Across the three cities, we are strengthening the operations of three treatment plants, regulation and oversight of emptying services, adoption of OHS protocols for sanitation workers and scale-up of BCC activities and spatial planning tools.

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WASH SDG programme | Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal, Tanzania & Zambia | 2017-2022 | € 59M | DGIS

Within the WASH SDG consortium, SNV works with city authorities and utilities to develop city-wide inclusive and sustainable sanitation services in 17 cities. This involves a range of activities from infrastructure support, development of climate-resilient approaches, regulation, to BCC engagement to embed the practice of sanitation and (menstrual) hygiene management and use of management information systems. We also run a cross-disciplinary/sectoral series of learning and knowledge development activities on urban sanitation and hygiene.

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Supporting AIAS in water and sanitation service delivery to small towns in Mozambique | 2017-2020 | € 8.6M | Netherlands embassy in Mozambique

In support of the government's national programme to improve water and sanitation services across 35 small towns, we contribute to this project through our set-up of sanitation groups, development of sanitation plans, mobilisation of school sanitation clubs, and support for demand creation and the construction of public toilet blocks. We help develop sanitation supply chain by training local artisans, introducing technologies and coaching sanitation entrepreneurs. Over the years, our team has facilitated the construction of female- and disability-friendly public toilet blocks and the scale up of innovative management models.

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Our experience

Nakuru county sanitation programme | Kenya | 2012-2018 | € 2M | EU

Within the multi-stakeholder Nakuru County Sanitation Programme (NCSP), we contributed to the development, streamlining and testing of faecal sludge-based briquette production. We supported the set-up of the subsidiary company, NAWASSCOAL and their work in sales, marketing, awareness raising, and management of a large-scale production facility. Today, NAWASSCOAL is producing six tonnes of briquettes per month.

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SNV is a not-for-profit international development organisation that makes a lasting difference in the lives of people living in poverty by helping them raise incomes and access basic services. We focus on three sectors and have a long-term, local presence in over 25 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Our team of more than 1,300 staff is the backbone of SNV.

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