



## East Africa Practitioners Workshop on Pro Poor Urban Sanitation and Hygiene LAICO Umubano Hotel, Kigali, Rwanda, March 29th-31st 2011

### Case study

**1. Title:**

Key factors to improve area-wide urban sanitation – case study of Gitega (Burundi)

*Norbert Geyer, Marco Forster and Andreas Ludwig (Fichtner Water & Transportation)  
Valentin Nahimana (mayor of Gitega) and Astère Ndayisaba (in charge of Gitega municipal  
sanitation services).*

#### *Summary*

The paper focuses on Gitega, the second largest town in Burundi in which, with the support of the German government, a demand-oriented sanitation project has been launched in 2010 following on a study carried out in 2007-2009. The project was initiated by Burundi's SETEMU as a pilot project for area-wide sanitation improvements in secondary towns. Funded at a level of about 1 million euros, the program is being implemented by the Municipality of Gitega, specifically the city's new sanitation services with support of a consultant (Fichtner Water & Transportation) and GIZ.

**2. Location:**

Town of Gitega, Burundi

**3. Initiators:**

SETEMU, Bujumbura; Municipality of Gitega; KfW; Fichtner Water & Transportation.

**4. Background of the initiative**

In terms of sanitation, sanitation, Burundi differs from several other countries by the fact that a large majority of households have already built their mostly modest dry sanitation facilities, while the conditions of public sanitation remain precarious. During the 1993 – 2005 civil war periods in Burundi, the administration had little means to tackle sanitation improvements and public institutions like schools, markets, slaughterhouses or prisons tried at best to maintain their existing facilities.

Since then, the country has undertaken major development efforts in the area of habitat and health improvements supported by a variety of donors. However, one can observe a strong focus on water supply projects and programs with sanitation remaining a wallflower. This situation is reflected in the institutional arrangement of the responsible entities: two water related organizations have national competences, REGIDESO (Régie de Production et Distribution d'Eau et d'Electricité) for urban and DGHER (Direction Générale de l'Hydraulique et de l'Electrification Rurale) for rural water supply, while the roles of the Ministry of Health and the SETEMU as national entities for urban sanitation are not yet clearly defined in regulatory and operational terms.

SETEMU (Services Techniques Municipaux) are the municipal service providers for Bujumbura, Burundi's capital and until recently, the only town with a sanitation service. SETEMU operates Bujumbura's sewerage (covering less than 20% of the urban area) and wastewater treatment plant, a sludge emptying service, the garbage collection, the bus station and a road/drainage maintenance service and is thus the only Burundian administrative entity with true sanitation focus.

Until now, Burundi's secondary towns have not had any sanitation services. Municipalities may provide sporadic solid waste collection. In the absence of regulation and public sanitation services and facilities, institutions as well as private households are responsible for investing and operating their own on-site sanitary solutions. As a result, the private and public sanitary situation remains rather precarious: outside Bujumbura, septic tanks of waterborne sanitation facilities are seldom emptied and when they are, the process is manual without any regulated sludge disposal. In addition to this, institutions and households with waterborne sanitation facilities bear the unpleasant consequences of frequent water cuts. Dry sanitary facilities are mainly traditional pit latrines at the low end of the sanitation ladder, which do not provide safe hygienic conditions to families and neighborhoods.

## 5. Description of the initiative

Within this context, the SETEMU supported by German cooperation, which leads through GIZ the donors' activities in the water sector under the name of PROSECEAU (Programme Sectoriel Eau), initiated in 2006/07 a project to improve sanitation services and coverage in Burundi's secondary towns. The project, financed by KfW, focuses on Gitega, Burundi's largest secondary town, as a pilot project. Gitega has a rapidly increasing population of about 80,000 inhabitants and national reputation as an educational center. This approach is in line with Burundi's policy to strengthen decentralization as, from 2005, the municipalities have been endowed as legal entities with financial and organizational autonomy. With regard to sanitation, municipal administrations have the following competences (and responsibilities and costs): liquid and solid waste disposal, construction and maintenance of streets and drainage. Municipal urban management receives additional support through direct regional branches from Ministries such as the Ministry of Health for public health and hygiene and Urban Planning for land registry.

The strategic criteria of the pilot project to trigger and sustain Gitega's area wide urban hygienic and sanitary improvements encompass:

- *A demand oriented approach* to sanitation, "propose rather than impose", taking into consideration the dignity, responsibility and installed capacity of the citizens (rather than "beneficiaries");
- *An innovative pilot institutional arrangement*, allocating the functions of regulation and supervision to a "national" entity (SETEMU) and the operational tasks to the local

- authorities; (as opposed to Gitega’s urban water supply operated by the national utility REGIDESO);
- A *sustainable financial concept* that remains after the end of the project intervention based on affordable public services and technical solutions for households;
  - The *integration of all local stakeholders* within their natural roles, i.e. what they do best or bring together the most appropriate and qualified for each task. This criterion includes the promotion of the private sector as a key element for area wide coverage (>10’000 households), efficiency (costs) and poverty reduction (jobs).
  - The promotion of local technical *innovations* for affordable sanitary improvements;
  - *Management development* of the responsible municipal sanitation service.

The feasibility and project study was carried out in 2007 – 2009 and proposed the following three key project components that have been implemented since 2010:

- The development of the municipal management capacity to foster urban sanitation starting with the creation of a steering committee composed of political and community leaders and of the municipal sanitation service SETAG (Service Technique d’Assainissement de Gitega) in early 2010. SETAG benefits now from an additional consultancy support through GIZ.
- The rehabilitation of sensitive public sanitation infrastructure targeting deteriorated facilities in institutions such as markets, slaughterhouse, prison, bus station and sixteen schools, with about 35’000 daily users. The selection of a large number of schools was motivated by both the poor physical conditions as well as the expectation that the pupils will assist in the dissemination of improved sanitation practices in their families and local communities. In some boarding schools up to 200 pupils have to share one toilet and in most cases the sub-projects also include the construction of additional sanitation facilities.

Particular emphasis is given to the management of such public and collective toilets<sup>1</sup> and the physical rehabilitation program is coupled with both hygiene education and management training for operation & maintenance. All institutions have signed a commitment and created or revitalized their hygiene clubs or committees. A local NGO (AVEDEC) in cooperation with the Ministry of Health informs and trains the committees for the improvement of their behavior on sanitation, cleaning and waste disposal, and for boarding schools also on food storage and preparation. At the schools the hygiene education is intended to eventually encompass all teachers and children.<sup>2</sup>

This project component includes a service for pit emptying, the construction of a sludge treatment plant outside the city and the rehab of a small sewerage network, with the SETAG being responsible for operation & maintenance.

- The development of the sanitation market for individual domestic sanitation with four activities under the motto “*Promote demand and offer feasible technical and financial options for the entire population of Gitega*”:  
*Sensitization and advocacy* campaigns to enhance demand for improved sanitation and hygiene in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, neighborhood committees and

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<sup>1</sup> Public toilets are open to everybody (e.g. at market places) while collective toilets restrict access for their institutional population (e.g. schools).

<sup>2</sup> During discussions with pupils, members of the Hygiene Committee of a High school in Gitega, the Consultant mentioned that he has to tell his own children every day to wash their hand. They replied that they now do the same - but with their parents, siblings and colleagues.

community leaders.

*Promotion of the sanitation* on offer through a sanitation park, functioning also as the public toilets of the town hall with several hundred daily visitors. The showroom presents a broad range of technologies with different price levels for rich and poor including lowest cost techniques to upgrade existing pit latrines. “Ecological” toilets are included in the options proposing the valorization of sludge as manure to provide additional resource for agriculture and improved farm revenues.



Ancillary *training of 50 professional masons* in improved sanitary techniques including a contest for the best innovative approach to improve existing pit latrines, for which the project expects major demand in popular and peri-urban neighborhoods (engineers are not eligible).

Implementation of a *revolving micro-credit scheme* for construction materials and work by non-family professionals, managed by a branch of a well-established national micro credit institution targeting the needy, employment generating small businesses and associations.

The underlying basic approach is that “sanitation” should become a regular and sustainable habitat improvement activity that develops by itself once the project has triggered demand and capacity. Each economic actor involved should be present from the very beginning on the program and should focus on their core competency (only) in order for the approach to succeed. The public sector shall promote, regulate, support, inform, advise, train, coordinate and eventually operate public facilities and services; the professional private sector shall provide substantiated information on options, transportation, materials, construction works and credit management; community and other leaders shall assume promotional leadership and households or communities shall decide, build, finance (as an expression of their commitment) and operate their sanitation facilities while improving family hygiene.

## 6. Major drivers of the process and success

There is no doubt that the major drivers of the project have been the interest and commitment of SETEMU and the Municipality of Gitega to implement an area wide sanitation approach and to successfully convince additional private and public stakeholders to join the pilot project.

At the present moment (March 2011) the following activities have started:

- Institutional strengthening of the municipal management capacity including the hiring of a qualified team leader, the elaboration of the activity plan and the business strategy for the sludge emptying service (truck operation), the development of the accounting system, the training for M&O of the municipal sanitation infrastructure;
- extensive rehabilitation works of the public sanitation infrastructure with 20 construction sites including market, slaughterhouse, prison, bus station and sixteen schools as well as the construction of the sludge treatment plant (conclusion in June 2011), all interventions coupled with education and training;
- Sensitization and advocacy campaigns within the urban communities as well as professional training of masons, activities related to sanitation marketing are underway;
- The showroom is under construction and the establishment of the micro credit facility is being fine-tuned.

Besides the Municipality and SETEMU, other stakeholders already involved include school managements, teachers and pupils, health clubs, prisoners, neighborhood committees, political and other leaders, religious organizations, the NGO providing sensitization, market and other associations related to the management of shared public latrines, and the local branch of the Ministry of Health.

In addition to commitments, the combination of hard and soft components of the project is definitely an advantage in promoting sanitation improvements as people can link what they hear with what they see or do or might wish to do but never dared.

## 7. Resources

As a general rule, investment costs (for public infrastructure) are supported mainly by the KfW financed project, while operating and maintenance costs shall be paid by the users. The Municipality and the State are assumed to carry the costs for (future) public sanitation development, training and promotion services.

The improvement of domestic sanitation shall be borne by the households in line with the economic purchase power of Gitega's inhabitants. The project favors the financial sustainability of the improvement process as a precondition for scaling up. It thus accepts that household latrine improvements may be gradual and not fully comply with the MDG definition of "improved latrines" at the beginning of the process.

The project has been conceived as a strategy to ignite an area-wide urban sanitation improvement process. It understands *development* as a process to be carried out by people where projects can be a trigger for or a consequence of *development*. Ownership (implying obviously affordability) is a first step and a requirement for sustainability, which is a precondition to scaling up<sup>3</sup>. Tactically the project does not target the poorest in particular

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<sup>3</sup> A different look at "affordability": The price for a traditional 12m pit latrine at market prices in Gitega is about USD 100 – 150. Second hand safe concrete latrine slabs from previous rural sanitation projects are traded for about USD

during the first stage but intends to raise the low level concern about sanitation by triggering a series of key factors and/or interventions strengthening demand and foster supply (market) for over 10'000 households and trades. In a later stage, the Municipality intends to promote the already existing practice for habitat improvements for the poorest based on mutual help within the neighborhoods ("gira ubuntu"). (Additionally, the available project funding did not allocate a specific pro-poor financial incentive).

Roughly 85% of the overall project funding of about one million Euros is being spent on rehabilitation of public infrastructure and equipment (e.g. vacuum truck) and about 15% on training, promotion, capacity building and marketing.

SETAG is a public service and sanitation usually generates limited revenues. However, in its first 8 months since the start-up of operation in May 2010, SETAG was able to generate revenues with the sludge emptying service covering 80% of its total expenses. In 2011, based on an improved business strategy, revenue from sales of manure produced at the sludge disposal plant and on additional fees from a rehabilitated small sewerage system for about 100 households, SETAG should improve its financial performance. In the long run, SETAG should be able to cover its costs for operating the municipal facilities/services while the Municipality has allocated resources to bear the costs of the promotional service component of the small team as well as later on for the extension of the activities into solid waste management. (A GIZ supported salary is not considered as part of SETAG's running costs).

Operation & maintenance of rehabilitated public infrastructure will be financed by the institutions themselves, e.g. by the beneficiary schools. The use of public latrines e.g. at the market or the central bus station is a paid service. Revenues cover operating and maintenance expenses of the managing associations as well as the rental fee for the Municipality who remains owner of the toilet facilities and is responsible for larger maintenance or extension works.

## 8. Successes and Lessons learned

The project is still at a very early stage. However, Gitega has initiated an impressive process and sanitation is on its way to becoming a public matter. 20 construction sites and 1,000 latrines being rehabilitated or built throughout the town do not go unnoticed.

Sustainable changes start to appear in the evolving institutional relationship between SETEMU and the Municipality, the local sanitation management capacity, the accountability of the SETAG activities and the improved hygiene behaviors in institutions covered by the rehabilitation program. In addition to that, the Municipality experiences an increasing demand from institutions left out and wishing to be included in the rehab program.

Today, the single most difficult element remains the concern about the long term effect of once triggered improved hygiene behavior in public institutions, in particular schools. (Legal) enforcement abilities remain limited and the motivation of school managements with innumerable other problems to cope with cannot be taken as granted<sup>4</sup>.

The first stage of the project has provided the opportunity to establish and consolidate the institutional and behavioral foundations as well as initiating the extensive institutional rehab program. Based upon these achievements the key protagonists, SETEMU and the Municipality expect to be able to successfully tackle the next challenges: the roll out of domestic sanitation

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15 – 20, a new one may cost USD 30. According to GIZ (Sept. 2010), Burundian households spend up to one third of their income with alcoholic beverage. During discussion with high school kids in Gitega, who are remarkably mature and sensitive to affordability and marketing arguments, the idea came up to create the slogan "Two beers for a safe latrine" to promote credit supported sanitation improvements among Gitega's married male population (i.e. two beers per month, the price for a beer being about one USD, half a dollar for banana beer).

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Due to the high variance in the hygiene level of shared, public and collective toilets, the JPM program (WHO/UNICEF) does not consider these facilities as improved sanitation facilities in their statistics.

marketing in the coming months, and at a later stage, solid waste management and the regulation and improvement of sanitary conditions of non-residential activities such as hospitality industry, workshops and garages, brewery and small industries.

**9. More Information**

Gordien Ngendakumana, SETEMU, [gordien2009@yahoo.fr](mailto:gordien2009@yahoo.fr)

Valentin Nahimana, mayor of Gitega, [valnahi@yahoo.fr](mailto:valnahi@yahoo.fr)

Abel Bizimana, SETAG, [bizimabel@yahoo.fr](mailto:bizimabel@yahoo.fr)

Norbert Geyer, Marco Forster, Andreas Ludwig, Fichtner Water & Transportation,  
[norbert.geyer@fwt.fichtner.de](mailto:norbert.geyer@fwt.fichtner.de), [andreas.ludwig@fwt.fichtner.de](mailto:andreas.ludwig@fwt.fichtner.de), [mf@ecopsis.com](mailto:mf@ecopsis.com)