



## POLICY BRIEF

# City-wide sanitation: the role of planning

In 2016 the World Water Week (WWW) brought together leading experts from around the world to discuss and share the latest experiences on planning urban sanitation in two sessions convened by WaterAid, UNDP-SIWI Water Governance Facility, GIZ, SuSanA, and the World Bank. This policy brief synthesises the key lessons and recommendations that grew out of that encounter, calling for more flexible and context-sensitive planning and for increased collaboration among involved stakeholders.

**Background** | Providing equitable and reliable access to drinking water and sanitation (the combination of facilities, technologies and services that enable safe disposal of human faeces) to the world's growing urban population is a pressing concern. By 2050, two-thirds of the world's population will live in towns, cities and megacities. In World Water Week in 2016 gathered leading experts to discuss planning for urban sanitation in the context of the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Target 2 under SDG 6 aims to achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all. The target highlights the aim of reaching safely managed sanitation services, eliminating open defecation. Target 3 is focusing on improved water quality and halving the proportion of untreated wastewater from households and other users such as agriculture and industry. Sanitation is also recognised as a human right by the UN General Assembly in Resolution 64/292, highlighting the need for sanitation services to be affordable, acceptable, accessible and of sufficient quality.

The discussions held during World Water Week focused on the monumental challenge of achieving access to adequate and equitable sanitation for the world's urban population. Experts recognise that "business as usual" is not enough to achieve the SDG targets.

**Implementation the biggest challenge** | Sanitation planning is often a long, costly, technical and multidimensional process. The plans are usually delivered at the municipal level, where human and financial resources tend to be insufficient to properly deliver and follow up on the plans. Experience shows that if plans are not suited to the particular technical and financial capacities, implementation is unlikely. These planning processes generally serve to generate a shared vision about sanitation in the city,

which could also be achieved with less costly and time-consuming planning exercises, if the time is not ripe for the city to undergo the typically comprehensive planning process.

Another common challenge identified is that sanitation planning is often carried out in isolation from wider urban planning and municipal budgeting.

**Lessons from successful urban sanitation planning** | The Urban Sanitation sessions showcased progress made on the improvement and provision of citywide services. These included, among others, the experiences of Vitória, Espírito Santo, Brazil (See Case 1) and San Fernando, La Union, Philippines (See Case 2). These **cases** reveal typical obstacles in the planning and implementation process, as well as common drivers that have contributed to the achievement of citywide sanitation. Though obstacles vary from one city to the other (topography, land tenure, poor coordination, lack of funding, poor leadership, etc.), the main common success factors can be synthesized as follows:

### *Planning according to the context*

Planning was done according to the financial and human capacity, geographical condition and detailed analysis of the initial state of the sanitation service chain.

### *Civil society and local government (municipal) champions*

Committed citizens, local government representatives or municipal officers demanded, prioritised and championed the progress and continuation of sanitation interventions.

### *A supportive legal framework*

Legal frameworks laid the foundation to drive citizens and local governments to adopt new technologies, pay taxes, and follow regulations, among other things.

### ***Financial support from local or international agencies***

In most success stories, external financial support played an important role in providing the initial capital to pilot and innovate, to plan adequately or to move from planning to implementation.

### ***Provisions to sustain the system after implementation***

Business models based on a combination of sources (transfers, tariffs and taxes) secured the long-term sustainability of the sanitation services.

### ***Political continuity despite turnovers***

The priority level given to sanitation by citizens and local champions drove politicians to prioritize sanitation, allowing it to survive transfers and political turnovers.

### ***Using opportunities and tapping on incentives to increase the priority of the sanitation agenda***

Triggers such as disease outbreaks, pollution of rivers and beaches, benchmarking between cities, studies on economic impacts, among others can be embraced as opportunities to lift sanitation to the top of the agenda.

### ***Working with existing approaches and tools before developing new ones***

**Planning approaches and tools** developed by different organizations can help guide and facilitate the process of urban sanitation planning. However, participants recognised the overwhelming number of existing tools and urged organizations to shift the focus from developing tools to supporting city planners in understanding how and when to use existing tools and approaches.

The numerous cases presented show that progress towards citywide sanitation is possible. The above success factors can inspire other cities and increase their chances of success. Nevertheless, there are no silver bullets and each case requires individual analysis and must be adapted to the country and city realities.





### Case 1. Case: Vitória, Espírito Santo, Brazil

Vitória is the capital city of the Espírito Santo State in Brazil, with a population of 1.9 million people in five municipalities. One utility company, CESAN, is in charge of providing water and sanitation for all.

Sewerage network coverage in the city of Vitória was only 9 per cent in 1994. With the support of the World Bank (WB) the network achieved coverage of 60 per cent.

However, network coverage did not equal wastewater collection, because 114,000 potential sewerage connections to this existing network have yet to be connected. To reverse this situation CESAN launched a pro connection campaign in 2012 called “Se Liga na Rede”. The campaign was subsidised by the State Government of Espírito Santo, exempting CESAN of paying taxes (USD 14 million) on their energy bill for two years.

The campaign was able to provide sewer connections for middle- and low-income households, including in-house connections for the poorest families. The program made 90,000 new connections between 2012–2014. By 2015, although the subsidy from the state government was no longer available, CESAN continued its campaign efforts and was able to make an additional 40,500 connections. Since 2015, the WB has also been supporting CESAN, through a USD 225 million investment operation, with the construction of decentralised new wastewater treatment plants and operational efficiency improvements of existing plants.

**Drivers:** A motivated state government, concern regarding pollution, financial support from the WB and a planned approach.

(The World Bank Group, 2016)



### Case 2. San Fernando, La Union, The Philippines

With a population of 115,000, San Fernando had a high level of sanitation coverage prior to 2000, with only a few challenging areas without access to sanitation facilities. However, there were gaps in the sanitation service chain, with almost non-existing services for removal, transportation, treatment and disposal of faeces.

Since 2000, experimentation and learning processes were underway in the city, with specific projects helping to pilot ways to deliver sanitation services along the sanitation chain, and projects adapted to suit different areas of the city.

Key developments in this period include: A centralised faecal sludge treatment plant, a sanitation tax that entitles households to get their septic tank emptied once every five years, changes in local legislation, the building of ecological toilets for over 100 households in challenging areas, the development of two small-scale, small-bore sewer networks for two coastal areas and the decentralised wastewater treatment plants. Drivers: Political leadership, municipal champion, project-based and opportunistic; environmental protection as a chief driver, public health concerns, a vision, a development agenda integrated to the city master plan agenda and competitive city.

(WaterAid, 2016)

## Recommendations

The following key recommendations emerged from the discussions:

**Seize the opportunity!** Be prepared to adapt to changes and to crises, and be politically smart by using triggers and drivers that act as levers and lead to urban sanitation becoming a priority in the political agenda.

**Communicate with and raise awareness among civil society and citizens.**

Speak in simple terms and translate messages, making civil society aware of the situation and challenges. This will help generate demand, promote accountability and strengthen the case for urban sanitation, as well as helping to create momentum beyond political cycles.

**Integrate city-wide sanitation planning**

Integrate city-wide sanitation planning with the city's broader urban planning, rather than only seeing and undertaking it as a stand-alone sanitation planning exercise.

**Tailor sanitation planning exercises to the context.** Define the extent, the scope and the direction that the planning will take depending on the current level of services, the capacity within the responsible city/municipal department/entity and the political opportunities for change. Linking solutions to the

financial and human capacity of the counterpart city is crucial. Combine planning exercises with the pilot and demonstrative projects, in order to showcase that progress can happen. This will help secure progress at early stages and allow innovation explore how to cover the whole sanitation service chain and sustain momentum.

**Research, document, share, and act!** The gap is enormous and the time available is short. Multiple ambitious initiatives and actions are emerging around the world to respond to the challenge. There is a need for cross-fertilization by investing in research to understand what is working well and why (in planning and implementation) and in sharing and communicating relevant lessons widely.

**Collaboration!** A culture of collaboration among development partners needs to be nurtured, so as to ensure information is shared and organisations are open to building upon each other's findings in order to create continuously evolving knowledge. This includes sharing lessons both from success and failures.

## References

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