

32nd WEDC International Conference, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 2006

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF WATER RESOURCES, WATER SUPPLY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION

Environmental sanitation-development of an enabling policy and legislative environment.

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The lack of a proper policy for Sanitation for Srilanka, has led to a n easy 'Out of sight is out of mind' approach, resulting in non compliant septic tanks and conventional ageing sewerage systems becoming more difficult to maintain on ever decreasing 'shoe string' budgets. The BELLAGIO statement on sanitation which emerged from the 2nd World Water Forum in the Hague lays the basis for a sound sanitation Policy for the future:-

Wastes should be considered a resource, and its management should be holistic, and form part of integrated water resources, nutrient flows and waste management processes.

- Inputs should be reduced so as to promote efficiency and water and environmental security.
- Export of waste should be minimised to promote efficiency and reduce the spread of pollution.
- Wastewater should be recycled and added to the water Budget.

The domain in which Environmental sanitation problems are resolved, should be kept to the minimum practicable size (household, community, town district, catchment and city) and wastes diluted as little as possible.

- Waste should be managed as close as possible to its source.
- Water should be minimally used to transport waste.
- Additional technologies for waste sanitation and reuse should be developed.

In the light of above one can see that the popular water borne sewerage concept runs in direct contradiction to the above principles. To manage an average of 50 litres of faeces and 500 litres of urine per capita per year, 15000 litres of treated water is used!!!

Faeces and Urine which man discharges with two exit points (made so by Providence with good reason), gets automatically mixed in the Toilet bowl (designed by the Europeans) and much effort and energy is used to again separate it out into 'compressed sludge' and 'treated effluent' at mega treatment works! This type of sewerage which in reality exports pollution, has been defined as obsolete by enlightened minds.

Sri Lanka needs sanitation methods where soil fertility is maintained by the return of nutrients rich in Nitrogen and Phosphate .It also needs systems where the Pathogens are destroyed and ground water is protected from pollution.

This is where the methods of ecosanitation comes into the forefront. Ecological sanitation as a closed cycle of nutrients in the ecosystem could help over come many of of water pollution and pathogen spread problems.

Hence farsighted policies based on principles similar to the Bellagio statement is considered essential for sustainable sanitation systems in our country.

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