



Fig. 1: Project location (location will be added by GIZ ecosan team)

## 1 General data

### Type of project:

Sanitation coverage in peri-urban area – pilot project progressively transformed into a sanitation coverage project.

### Project period:

Start of construction: January 2008

End of construction: March 2012

Start of operation: January 2009 (construction and use of toilets)

Monitoring: Ongoing, done in connection with the collection and management of sub-products (urine and faecal matter).

Project end: Administrative closure July-August 2012, final evaluation January 2013.

### Project scale:

Total of 897 units for an equal number of households, developed in four phases; around 4,485 persons benefited; sanitation facilities consist of urine diversion dehydration toilets (UDDT), showers, hand washing basins, and on-site greywater treatment. Management of sub-products at collective level.

Total investment (in EUR): 1,332,762

### Address of project location:

District 7, El Alto city, La Paz, central-western Bolivia.

### Planning and executing institution:

Fundación Sumaj Huasi, La Paz, Bolivia.

### Supporting agency:

Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), Stockholm, Sweden.

Political support from Ministry of Environment and Water of Bolivia, Vice Ministry of Potable Water and Basic Sanitation, Federation of Neighbourhood Association of El Alto city (Fejuve), and local sub municipalities.

## 2 Objective and motivation of the project

The general objective is to improve the health and living conditions of the families settled in peri-urban areas of El Alto city by providing ecological toilets that are sustainable and also enhance agricultural productivity.

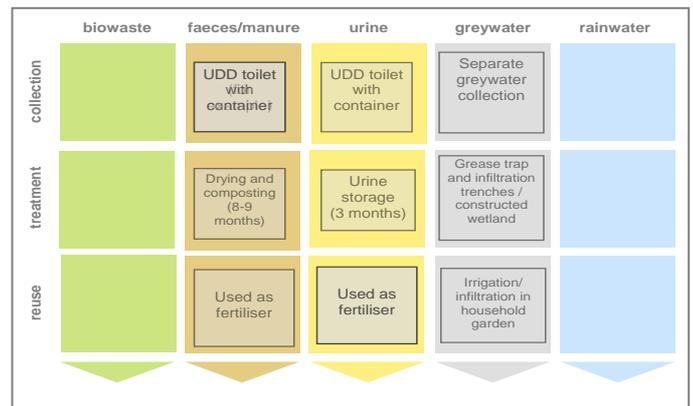


Fig. 2: Applied sanitation components in this project

The cities of El Alto and La Paz – Bolivia’s capital – depend on groundwater and meltwater from glaciers and snowy mountains for their water supplies. In recent years, scientists have documented accelerated melting and retreat of the glaciers, raising deep concerns about future water availability. Meanwhile, demand for water has risen rapidly, exceeding the supply and leading to shortages and to rationing on weekends. This makes water conservation, as promoted by this project, an important adaptation measure in the face of rising temperatures and other climate change impacts.

## 3 Location and conditions

### El Alto

El Alto originates from the expansion process of La Paz in the 1940s and 1950s, people began settling an elevated area to the city’s southwest, which would become El Alto. In 1982, El Alto was incorporated as a separate city with its own government. Since then, its population growth has been driven by migration from rural areas (El Alto Government 2012a).



Fig. 3: Users of an implemented household UDDT (source: Andersson 2011)

El Alto is 5 km away from La Paz, on a plateau at 4,050 meters elevation. Its estimated population as of 2009 was

Ecological Sanitation in peri-urban area of  
El Alto city, Bolivia - draft

roughly 929,000<sup>1</sup>, growing at a rate of 5.10% per year. El Alto is divided into 13 districts, and more than 95% of the population lives in urban areas (INE 2001a, 2001b). This project was developed in District 7, a peri-urban area with an estimated population of roughly 27,000 in 2008 (El Alto Government 2012b).<sup>2</sup> In the period 2001-2010, temperatures ranged from -4°C and 21°C, with an annual average of 7°C, and annual precipitation averaged 600 mm (INE 2012).

The population of District 7 is composed mainly of Aymara indigenous people, farmers who migrated from villages close to the Titicaca Lake. Their religion combines Catholicism and indigenous beliefs; most parents' education is limited elementary school, with few high school graduates (Silveti 2012). The average family size is six or seven people; dwellings are one- or two-room adobe houses with yards, typically surrounded by a high adobe fence (Silveti 2012).

Livelihoods in El Alto tend to combine farm and non-farm activities. Incomes are derived mostly from commerce, construction, transportation and agriculture, often from informal and temporary activities. In this context, commerce refers to the selling of food, clothes and household goods at the local markets. Some people maintain parcels with crops in rural areas and travel constantly to take care of their crops. Additionally, people get jobs linked to the harvest seasons, commonly in the eastern part of the country. In addition, women are involved in housekeeping and bringing up the children. The typical household income is 200 to 300 *bolivianos* per week, about \$28-42 USD (Fundación Sumaj Huasi 2009, cited in Silveti 2012).

Many families plant household gardens, though this varies across El Alto. People in the outermost peri-urban areas have more space and therefore more possibilities to have household gardens. But as the city becomes more densely settled, the available space for household gardens is decreasing. Still, agriculture remains an important activity in the periphery of El Alto. The produce is consumed by the households and also sold at the local markets.

However, agriculture in the region is hindered by the low fertility of the soil, which has been found to contain low levels of organic matter and nutrients (Garnica n.d.). Plowing is done with oxen and animal manure, mostly from sheep, is used as fertiliser, though chemical fertilisers are used as well.

### Water and sanitation

#### Situation

As of 2010, 48% of the people living in rural areas in Bolivia lacked access to potable water, as did 12% in urban areas. In addition, 62% of the rural population lacked access to sanitation services, as did 45% of the urban population (VAPSB 2011). In urban settlements, the most common sanitation technology is flush toilets connected to centralised sewage systems with waste water treatment plants (however, the level of treatment efficiency is not known). In rural areas, one finds pit latrines, flush toilets connected to septic tanks, urine diversion dehydration toilets (UDDT), and open defecation.

In El Alto, 50.8% of the population lacks adequate water and sanitation services (INE 2001c). Part of the population is connected to a centralised sewage system, which is slated to be expanded to connect new areas of the city. However, this kind of project takes a long time to be implemented, since infrastructure is expensive and there are political issues related to the location of a new wastewater treatment plant within the communities of El Alto (Silveti 2012). Consequently, projects such as the one described here, with international support, local political support, and a local implementing organisation with knowledge of ecological sanitation (EcoSan) development, have provided a faster, economically advantageous and suitable alternate solution to the sanitation needs of the population.

#### Institutional framework

The Vice Ministry of Potable Water and Basic Sanitation – under the Bolivian Ministry of Environment and Water – defines the political and technical framework for water and sanitation provision of services in the country (MMAyA 2012). The Deputy Minister of Public Investment and External Financing (VIPFE<sup>3</sup>) manages the resources, donation and credits for public investment in the country (VIPFE 2012). The Authority of Social Control of Drinking Water and Sanitation (AAPS<sup>4</sup>), and the National Service for Sustainable Sanitation Services (Senasba<sup>5</sup>) are the organisations responsible for oversight and capacity-building of the operators in charge of the provision of water and sanitation services (AAPS 2012; Senasba 2012).

Finally, the implementation of water and sanitation programs and projects is led by the Executing Agency for Environment and Water (Emagua<sup>6</sup>) (Emagua 2012), and the National Productive Social Investment fund (FPS) (Torrico 2012 cited in Silveti 2012). In addition, international cooperation and civil society also contribute to the development of the water supply and sanitation in the country.

In Bolivia, the under-five child mortality rate as of 2010<sup>7</sup> was **54 children per 1,000**; this is down significantly from 1990, when the rate was 151 deaths per 1,000.

## 4 Project history

In 2005, a social organisation called Federation of Neighbourhoods of El Alto city (Fejuve<sup>8</sup>) demanded that the Superintendence of Water and Sanitation address the precarious water and sanitation situation in District 7. This happened at a time of political changes connected with the presidential election of 2005, and the creation of an independent Bolivian Ministry of Environment and Water,

<sup>3</sup> In Spanish: Viceministerio de Inversión Pública y Financiamiento Externo.

<sup>4</sup> Autoridad de Fiscalización y Control Social de Agua Potable y Saneamiento Básico.

<sup>5</sup> Servicio Nacional para la Sostenibilidad de Servicios en Saneamiento Básico.

<sup>6</sup> Entidad Ejecutora de Medio Ambiente y Agua.

<sup>7</sup> The under-five mortality rate is the probability (expressed as a rate per 1,000 live births) of a child born in a specified year dying before reaching the age of five if subject to current age-specific mortality rates (<http://www.childinfo.org/mortality.html> and <http://www.childmortality.org/>).

<sup>8</sup> In Spanish: Juntas Vecinales de la ciudad de El Alto.

<sup>1</sup> Population projection based on the 2001 census; no more recent information is available.

<sup>2</sup> The census counts the peri-urban population as urban.

taking on responsibilities that until then had been handled by the Ministry of Housing and Basic Services.

Also in 2005, the Superintendence of Water and Sanitation Services, working with the World Health Organisation (WHO), called for project proposals to improve water and sanitation conditions for the District 7 population. Drawing on more than 10 years' experience, the Fundación Sumaj Huasi, a non-governmental organisation, proposed the development of EcoSan solutions. At the end of 2007, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and Fundación Sumaj Huasi signed an agreement, and the project implementation started in 2008.

In 2006, there had been a study to evaluate EcoSan projects developed in Bolivia aiming to understand the drivers and constraints in their implementation and functioning, and consequently to come up with an improved implementation model. The study involved a survey of 228 households, 51 technical inspections of toilets and 38 microbiological samples of bio solids. Fundación Sumaj Huasi participated in this initiative and strengthened its proposal for the El Alto project with the findings of this study (Warpinski 2006), which included:

- Education and monitoring are crucial.
- UDDT single-vault toilets require more frequent maintenance than UDDT two-vault toilets, which encourages households to learn to maintain the units and practice what they have learned.
- The contributions of the households are more effective when they are planned to be accomplished within the project implementation, and not afterward. This process facilitates the complete functionality of the sanitary units.

In the beginning, the District 7 project was proposed as a pilot project in order to explore the viability of EcoSan technologies in the spectrum of sanitation solutions and support decision-making processes and investments in the region. After positive results in the initial implementation, the project was expanded; it completed its fourth phase in March 2012.

Two aspects of the project's methodological approach have been important and contributed to its success. The first one is the continuous identification of lessons learnt and the corresponding development of improvements, phase after phase. Second, special attention has been given to the educational component, aiming to engage the households and to offer them opportunities to participate. Also important in this project has been the promotion and strengthening of several EcoSan initiatives across the country (e.g. Copacabana harbour, Uyuni and Asocaya), and the political support and will related to water supply and sanitation at the national level.

## 5 Technologies applied

In the context of El Alto, the EcoSan approach offers significant and determinant advantages, which have been confirmed during this project. The EcoSan approach was chosen due to its basic principle of zero or minimal use of water, while closing loops of water and nutrients. EcoSan also has been shown to be effective and lower in cost than centralised sanitation technologies.

### Sanitary units at household level

Since the beginning of the project in 2008, the design of the EcoSan units at household level have been improved based on the experiences gained. The development of the project in phases has facilitated this process.

Figures 4 to 9 show the current improved model of EcoSan unit developed. The technology used is a UDD toilet with container, treatment of grey water at the household level, and collective management of the urine and faeces. The toilets are located close to the houses, and access is through built-in steps within the toilet unit, with a supporting wall that facilitates access for people with mobility limitations (Andersson 2011). Showers are incorporated and adapted according to the availability of water in each area. In phase 1, the shower consisted of a room with a tank to store water, since there was no water supply service. In recent project phases, the shower has been connected to the water supply system. The hand-washing basin is located outside of the unit, which makes it possible to use it for laundry as well. In previous phases, grey water from the shower and hand-washing basin were treated in situ with a grease trap and infiltration trenches. More recently, it has been used to provide water for small wetlands in the backyards of the houses, with ornamental and edible plants.

### Collective management of the urine and faeces

The system includes collection, transportation, treatment of the faecal matter and urine, and use of the EcoSan fertilisers. Also here, the learning gained during the process has contributed to improvements in the project. However, the techniques used for the treatment of the sub-products and their further use in agriculture and marketing in local markets have not changed.

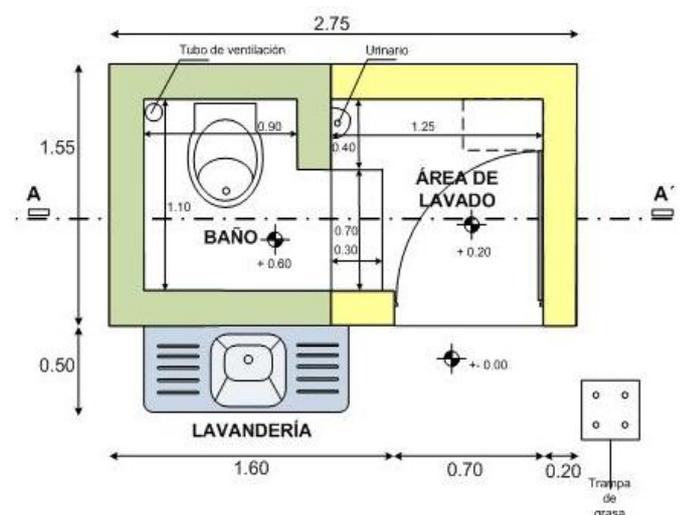


Fig. 4: Foundation of the unit; measures given in meters (source: Suntura 2012)

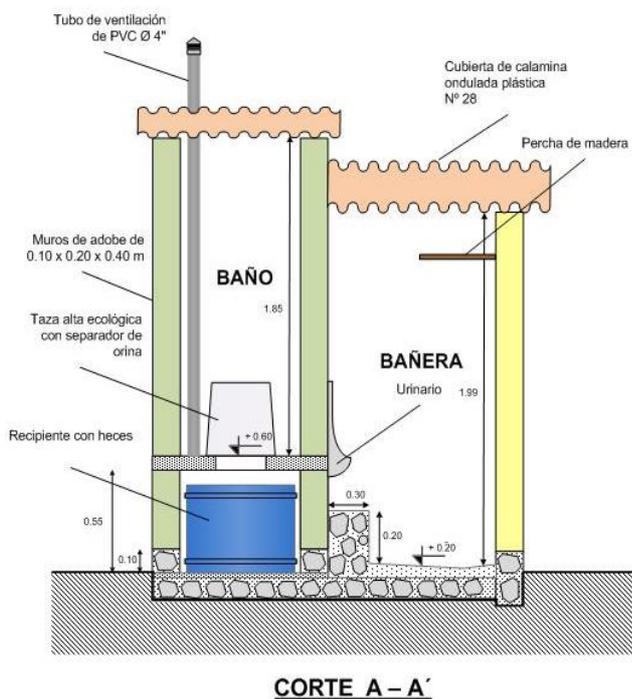


Fig. 5: Cross sectional view of the unit (source: Suntura 2012)

Due to the pilot nature and small scale of the project, initially each household managed the sub-products, basically burying the faecal matter and using or disposing of the urine in the ground. As the number of houses covered by the project has grown, a collective management system has been implemented by Fundación Sumaj Huasi. The collection and transportation of the sub-products is done by two teams. One of them is from a local company called Abona ("fertilise"), which was created and supported in the framework of the project. Recently, Fundación Sumaj Huasi developed an additional unit to strengthen these components.

Each collection team includes two people who also support users, monitor and provide maintenance for the toilets. Collections are done weekly, with vans that are equipped with a "Tarzan" horn to alert the households.

The location of the compost centre was chosen to be as close as possible to the households, to take advantage of the nutrients locally while reducing the cost of transportation. Recently a new composting site has been designed with the goal of developing an integrated centre that provides opportunities for learning and demonstration. The new, 1.6-hectare centre will be located in Villa Andrani village (District 9, rural area of El Alto), 10 minutes' drive away from District 7. The centre will integrate treatment and use of the sub-products, capacity-building, recreation and promotion of environmental improvements. The faeces and urine treatment will be the same as the current process. Community members from Villa Andrani have contributed the land for the project through a risk-sharing deal. In return, they will have access to the produce, capacity-building and the proceeds from the sale of the produce grown. The liquid fertiliser will be used to maintain the lawn of a new on-site soccer field. In addition, there are plans for new studies of crops production with these fertilisers and of the introduction of water-saving devices at the centre.



Fig. 6: Composting trenches for treatment of the faecal matter (source: Andersson 2011)



Fig. 7: Storage of urine at the composting centre (source: Andersson 2011)

## 6 Design information

### Sanitary unit

The first UDDT model had a single vault with solar heating; it was based on the results of the EcoSan projects evaluation in Bolivia, mentioned in Section 4. A validation process of this model conducted with households by Fundación Sumaj Huasi found a preference for UDDTs with containers.

The UDDT was designed for an average family of five members. The faeces are collected in a 100-liter container and the urine in 20-liter jerrycans. The faeces containers typically fill up in 1 or 2 months, and the urine one, in a week.

Each unit is built by a mason and household members. This process takes 10 days and involves three phases, each with some work done first by the mason, and some by the household. Households contribute their labour and materials such as sand, stone, water, sifted soil and bricks. In addition, households contribute materials and accessories that improve the quality of the sanitary unit, such as electric installations, a shower, tiles and decorations.

The walls of the units are made with bricks, or occasionally with adobe. Inside the unit, the walls are waterproofed with

cement plaster and fine plaster. Externally the walls are protected with a mixture of cement and sand, and finally they are painted with coloured lime. The UDDT and the urinal devices are made of fibreglass. The hand washing basin is built in reinforced concrete on brick walls (Fundación Sumaj Huasi 2012).



Fig. 8: Frontal elevation of the unit (source: Andersson 2011)



Fig. 9: View of the interior of the UDD toilet (source Andersson 2011)

Treatment of the sub-products

At the beginning of the project, composting took 12 to 14 months, in three phases: composting with humidity control (4 to 5 months), composting with red Californian worms (4 to 5 months), and composting and storage (4 months). Later, the red Californian worms were integrated into the whole composting cycle, which generated better results and reduced the composting time to 8 to 9 months.

At the composting centre, each trench is initially prepared with a bed of worms together with processed compost, and then layers of faecal matter are deposited on top. Humidity is constantly measured and adjusted as needed by adding water. The worms degrade the organic matter contained in the faecal matter from the bottom to the top, while producing humus and eliminating the pathogens. The compost is carefully mixed one or two times during the process. The result is a rich humus that is now being packed and distributed free of charge to local farmers as a part of the marketing of the EcoSan fertilisers.

7 Type and level of reuse

The project has pursued the total reuse of the nutrients and water in a manner that is safe for all involved. The goal is to protect the health of the people, to promote the use of fertiliser from human excreta while generating income, and to offer evidence-based learning and demonstration on the feasibility of the EcoSan approach in the El Alto context.

At the household level, grey water from showers and hand-washing is used to irrigate household gardens with ornamental and edible plants after pre-treatment in the grease trap. At the community level, the EcoSan fertilisers are used in crop cultivation in the composting centre and on agricultural land provided by collaborating farmers. However, at this stage of the project the agricultural demand is less than the production of EcoSan fertilisers, especially urine, which is produced at a volume of about 10-12 m<sup>3</sup> per week.

Fundación Sumaj Huasi has conducted several studies to evaluate the composition and quality of the EcoSan fertilisers to sell them in local markets. The results certify that the fertilisers from human excreta can be safely used for food crops (Fundación Sumaj Huasi 2012). In 2011 a comparison between the composition of nutrients in the EcoSan fertilisers and a range of organic fertilisers commonly used in the region by the farmers showed higher nutrient value for the EcoSan fertilisers (see Table 1).

Table 1. Comparative study of the nutrient component of different organic fertilisers

Nutrient	Fertiliser from animal manure (gr/kg)				Peat (gr/kg)	Fertilisers EcoSan	
	Cow	Sheep	Chicken	Pig		Vermi-compost (gr/kg)	Urine (gr/ltr)
Nitrogen	2,09	0,95	3,07	1,50	2,70	1,20	4,60
Phosphorus	0,59	0,35	0,45	1,26	-	9,80	3,03
Potassium	2,06	1,00	0,59	1,83	-	17,20	1,90
Calcium	1,47	-	1,30	1,07	1,00	35,10	0,03
Magnesium	0,53	-	0,37	0,48	0,50	12,60	0,03
Organic matter	60%	48%	37%	54%	-	74%	-

(Source: Fundación Sumaj Huasi 2012)

During 2011 and 2012, seven hectares of potato fields were fertilised with different combinations of EcoSan fertilisers and cow manure as a control. The plot was divided into four equal parts and in each one different kind of fertiliser was applied. When the potatoes were harvested in April 2012, the combination of vermicompost and urine was found to produce twice the crop yield, compared with cow manure (see Table 2).

Table 2. Potato production with different combinations of EcoSan fertilisers and cow manure

Fertiliser	Yield reached (kg/m <sup>2</sup> )
Vermicompost Ecosan + urine	46
Vermicompost Ecosan	34
Cow manure + urine	29
Cow manure (witness)	23

(Source: Fundación Sumaj Huasi 2012)

This project was coordinated with the Association of Agricultural Apa Inti and people from Villa Andrani village

(District 9 of El Alto), which provided the land and participated in the growing and harvesting process. The positive results have helped strength confidence in EcoSan and to spread knowledge about it in the region. There is now demand for EcoSan UDDT toilets in Villa Andrani, and residents are supporting the development of the new composting centre.

During 2011 a microbiological study was carried out in the composting centre to determine the impact of the treatment on the number of fertile and non-fertile eggs of ascaris lumbricoides. The results, shown in figure 10, indicate a presence of parasites below the minimum admissible value established by the World Health Organisation.

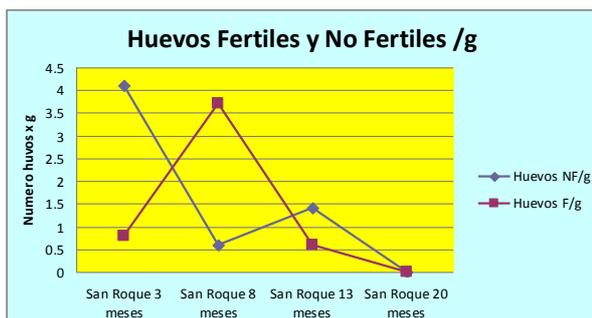


Fig. 10: Presence of ascaris eggs at different times of the composting process (source: Fundación Sumaj Huasi 2012)



Fig. 11: Trials of EcoSan fertilisers with vegetables at the composting centre (source: Andersson 2011)



Fig. 12: Commercialisation of Ecosan fertilisers (source: Andersson 2011)

## 8 Further project components

The following aspects have been essential for the positive impact and scaling-up of EcoSan in the El Alto project, and for its contribution to the national framework on sustainable sanitation.

Development of political and technical national framework: At the beginning of the project a Project Committee was established with representation from the municipal authority, the sub-prefecture, grassroots organisations, households, Fundación Sumaj Huasi, the Decentralized Sustainable Sanitation Node, the Bolivian Ministry of Environment and Water, Vice Ministry of Potable Water and Basic Sanitation, and Sida (NCSSD 2010; Suntura 2012). The Committee has followed up the development of the project and has also contributed with national lessons to support the El Alto experience. As a result, Bolivian national guidelines on water and sanitation have been developed, including on gender in sanitation projects, and technical specifications for the design of ecological dry toilets (see Section 13 for more information). Moreover, in 2012 the Ministry of Environment and Water formulated a National Programme of Ecological Sanitation toilets that aims to increase the number of ecological toilets in the country and lays out a plan for unified norms, regulations, financing and promotion of the EcoSan method (Silveti, 2012).

The Decentralised Sustainable Sanitation Node in Bolivia (NSSD<sup>9</sup>): This is part of a global initiative by Sida implemented by the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), aiming to support recognised organisations for networking and capacity development on sustainable sanitation issues at regional level. One knowledge node was established in Bolivia within the Association of Sectoral Spaces on Basic Sanitation and Housing (ADESBVI<sup>10</sup>). The Bolivian Node has contributed to the development of National Technical Guidelines for Ecological Sanitation and National guidelines for implementation of Gender in Sanitation projects. It is also providing capacity and knowledge development, and fostering communication between the actors involved or connected with sustainable sanitation. All of this in connection with several demonstrative and learning projects identified around the country (EcoSanRes 2011) such as El Alto experience.

Collective management of the products: In a context of peri-urban population, this component has been essential for the acceptance of the system by the households. These centres also support the protection of the public health through the proper sanitisation and use of the products in a controlled manner. The collection service has so far been free of charge for the households due to the pilot nature of the project, and also because of the lack of a normative framework to allow a non-governmental organisation to supply a public service. Therefore, the implementing organisation is now working to develop strategies to make the collection service economically sustainable and to influence the political stakeholders with competence in this area. For instance, in a group of 70 households where UDDT will be developed, a system tariff is being designed to be implemented as a learning and demonstration project.

<sup>9</sup> In Spanish: Nodo de Conocimiento en Saneamiento Sostenible Descentralizado de Bolivia.

<sup>10</sup> In Spanish: Asociación de Espacios Sectoriales de Saneamiento Básico y Vivienda.

**Social marketing:** This refers to providing clear and experience-based evidence about the use of fertiliser from sanitised human excreta in agriculture. This has been done considering studies on stakeholder participation, costs of production and marketing, agricultural production and microbiological quality of the EcoSan fertilisers. The dissemination of results and advances of the project has been done on local radio and television and through information fairs and educational campaigns (Fundación Sumaj Huasi 2012).

**Capacity development of stakeholders:** Household members have been strengthened in knowledge related to the EcoSan approach, the holistic conception of hygiene-sanitation-health, and operation and maintenance of the facilities. The education has been a central component during the introduction of the project, construction of the toilets and in the initial use of the sanitary unit. The applied techniques include workshops, learning-by-doing in the construction phase and household visits. The weekly collection of products facilitates communication between households and the implementing organisation.

The social control was strengthened during the construction phase where there is an active participation of Fejuve, local government, and representatives of the households, among others. The purpose was to ensure the transparent development of the investments.

The interaction with the local government has been positive, involving political support, follow-up and local information. The project has promoted institutional strengthening by increasing the capacity of local governments to implement similar programmes and projects. The programme has also produced guides for the training of the officials and technicians in related topics (NCSSD 2010).

## 9 Costs and economics

### Initial investment:

In total 1,332,762 EUR, contributed by:

- 88% from Sida
- 11% from households
- 1% from Fundación Sumaj Huasi

The distribution of this investment by project components is:

- 17% for technical and social supervision
- 8% community development
- 48% construction of EcoSan units
- 3% installation of other technologies
- 1% workshops and technical assistance
- 4% capacity development of local micro enterprises
- 7% research and social marketing
- 4% development of a knowledge transfer centre
- 4% evaluation and audit
- 4% administrative costs

The construction cost per UDDT was 713 EUR, including 556 EUR covered by Sida and Fundación Sumaj Huasi, and roughly 22% as labour and in-kind contributions from households. Additional investments made by users, for upgrades to the toilet units, are not included in this figure.

### Management of the products

Currently the collection service and treatment of the sub-products is handled by Fundación Sumaj Huasi with financial support from Sida. A pilot monthly fee scheme is being planned in which each household would pay around 10-20 Bolivianos (1.17-2.33 EUR) per month. This fee would cover collection and transport costs. Based on the demand for EcoSan fertilisers, explored during this phase of marketing, it was estimated that the sales of fertilisers will cover the costs associated with the treatment.

## 10 Operation and maintenance

### At household level:

The households are responsible for the appropriate use and cleaning of the unit, and the delivery of the containers with faeces and urine on the established collection days. Sawdust is applied to cover the faeces after each defecation and a small quantity of water after urinating. Sawdust is easy to find in the area and costs about 5 Bolivianos (0.58 EUR) for a 20-kilo bag, which may last one month. At the beginning of the project, however, sawdust was easier to get and free. The cleaning of the UDDT and urinal is done with a moist cloth and little detergent, to minimize spillage of water and chemicals into the containers.

### At the community level:

Fundación Sumaj Huasi handles the collection and treatment of the products. Two teams with defined routes do the collection; once a week for urine containers and every 1.5 months for faeces. However, Sumaj Huasi is considering increase the frequency of faeces collections to every month, because some households fill their containers in one month and some containers get very heavy after 1.5 months. Even though the containers for the faecal matter have a total capacity of 100 litres, they try to collect them when they are filled up to 50-60 litres.

At the compost centre there are two technical agronomists who manage the treatment of the sub-products and trials of the EcoSan fertilisers in crops. Finally, there is a supervisor responsible for supporting and coordinating the activities of collection and treatment.

## 11 Practical experience and lessons learnt

### **Scaling-up of EcoSan approach in El Alto:**

In this process the following drivers have been considered important:

- High focus in the hygienisation of EcoSan fertiliser products to generate confidence among the stakeholders; this work draws on research, social marketing and normative influence.
- Communication and diffusion of the EcoSan approach, pursuing an open dialogue about sanitation as a source for safe fertilisers to locally produce food, to save water and to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Finally, demand for EcoSan solutions has emerged.

- Participation of the Bolivian Ministry of Environment and Water and the Vice Ministry of Potable Water and Basic Sanitation, converging the project objectives with the national aims of improving the quality of life and food security of the people.
- Transfer of technology and process to governmental and social organisations sharing the learning gained by the project.

**Acceptance of the EcoSan approach by the households:**

Based on the number of households that are delivering to the collection service and participating in the monitoring activities carried out by Fundación Sumaj Huasi, about 70% of the total households are using the UDDT. Lessons related to this situation are:

- Households located in the more populated areas have shown more acceptance and necessity for the sanitary unit.
- The sustainability of the project is highly associated to the contributions in the initial investment to construct the sanitary unit made by each household. The higher the contribution, the likelier the household is to keep using and maintaining the UDDT.
- There is a need to define criteria and agreements to frame the participation of the households in the project and thus reduce the occurrence of situations that force the abandonment of the UDDT. In the case of El Alto, to have the ownership of the house with permanent residence has been identified as fundamental criterion for the participation of a household.

**Learning from the technical aspects of the sanitary unit:**

- The proximity of houses within peri-urban settlements limits the operation of single-vault UDDTs with solar heating. Instead, UDDT with containers have shown better results, since they require less space and less initial investment.
- Installation of urine containers in a more visible and accessible place of the sanitary unit showed better results among the households. The location of the urine containers was moved from a metal covered box underneath the unit, to the site below the hand washing basin. This facilitates the every-day checking of urine level for the households.
- Integration of the shower and toilet in the same room to avoid sub-utilisation of the shower room, as a storage space, for instance. This change also reduced the cost of construction (NCSSD 2010).
- Consideration to climate conditions and their impacts in building material is important to be included during the project planning and technical design. At the beginning of the project ferro-cement tanks were built to store water. However, the ferro-cement cracked due to extreme temperature changes. Instead of that, plastic tanks were introduced.

**Feasibility of EcoSan approach in the context of El Alto (Fundación Sumaj Huasi 2012):**

- EcoSan UDDT with container is a viable option to increase the sanitation coverage in peri-urban areas of El Alto city.
- Composting of faecal matter from UDDT with red Californian worms produces organic fertiliser that meets World Health Organisation guidelines for a safe fertiliser for food agricultural production.
- Laboratory analysis of food produced with EcoSan fertiliser show that it is safe for human consumption.
- The EcoSan project in El Alto has succeeded in closing the loop of nutrients and water.

**12 Sustainability assessment and long-term impacts**

A basic assessment (Table 1) was carried out to indicate in which of the five sustainability criteria for sanitation (according to the SuSanA Vision Document 1) this project met and which aspects were not sufficiently emphasised.

**Table 1:** Qualitative indication of sustainability of system. A cross in the respective column shows assessment of the relative sustainability of project (+ means: strong point of project; o means: average strength for this aspect and – means: no emphasis on this aspect for this project).

	collection and transport			treatment			transport and reuse		
	+	o	-	+	o	-	+	o	-
Sustainability criteria:									
• health and hygiene	X			X			X		
• environmental and natural resources	X			X			X		
• technology and operation	X			X			X		
• finance and economics	X			X			X		
• socio-cultural and institutional	X			X			X		

**Sustainability criteria for sanitation:**

**Health and hygiene** include the risk of exposure to pathogens and hazardous substances and improvement of livelihood achieved by the application of a certain sanitation system.

**Environment and natural resources** involve the resources needed in the project as well as the degree of recycling and reuse practiced and the effects of these.

**Technology and operation** relate to the functionality and ease of constructing, operating and monitoring the entire system as well as its robustness and adaptability to existing systems.

**Financial and economic issues** include the capacity of households and communities to cover the costs for sanitation as well as the benefit, such as from fertiliser and the external impact on the economy.

**Socio-cultural and institutional aspects** refer to the socio-cultural acceptance and appropriateness of the system, perceptions, gender issues and compliance with legal and institutional frameworks.

For details on these criteria, please see [www.susana.org](http://www.susana.org): the SuSanA Vision document "Towards more sustainable solutions" ([www.susana.org](http://www.susana.org)).

With regard to medium-term impacts of the project, the main accomplished impact is that 4,485 people have improved their

quality of life by gaining access to safe sanitation facilities. In addition, the model of implementation is closing the loop on nutrients and water, generating multiple local benefits, and the project has contributed to the framework for sustainable sanitation development in the country.

In the long term it is expected that the institutional collaboration and lessons learned will support the development and generate positive impact of the National Program of Ecological Sanitation toilets formulated by the Bolivian Ministry of Environment and Water.

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### Case study of SuSanA projects

#### *Ecological Sanitation in peri-urban area of El Alto city, Bolivia*

#### SuSanA 2012

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