AIVF programme

INCLUSIVE SANITATION IN FRANCOPHONE CITIES

Lessons learned document

ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE DES MAIRES FRANCOPHONES

AIMF

ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE DES MAIRES FRANCOPHONES
AIMF

WITH THE SUPPORT OF
GATES FONDATION

Introduction

Najib Bateganya,
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Sanitation is one of the most powerful tools for eliminating infectious diseases, saving lives, and expanding economic opportunity—yet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6.2 remains far off track, with billions still unserved. Incremental progress cannot close this gap. The world needs transformative solutions that can reach people faster, more affordably, and more sustainably.

Achieving SDG 6.2 demands treating sanitation as an essential public service and redesigning systems to serve everyone. Citywide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS) provides this framework—combining long term planning, strong governance, sustainable financing, and inclusive service models to protect public health and strengthen climate resilience.

Sanitation is also a major economic opportunity. Modern service models create jobs across construction, operations, and waste to value enterprises, while reducing healthcare costs and improving productivity. When cities embrace innovation and partner with the private sector, sanitation becomes a driver of growth and resilience—not just a safety net.

Innovation is the accelerator. Breakthrough technologies—water efficient systems, non sewered and off grid solutions, digital monitoring tools, and resource recovery models—can dramatically reduce pathogen exposure, cut costs, and help cities overcome infrastructure and water scarcity constraints. These technologies allow cities to reach underserved communities now, not decades from now.

Francophone cities, through the Gates Foundation's partnership with AIMF, have already shown that strong leadership can translate SDG 6.2 commitments into real systems change.

The message is simple: with political will and city led action coupled with innovative financing, technical solutions and service models, universal and safe sanitation is achievable. The world must accelerate now to deliver SDG 6.2—protecting health, unlocking opportunity, and building more resilient cities for generations to come.

Editorial

Fatimetou Abdel Malick,
President of the Regional Council of Nouakchott, Vice-President of the International Association of Francophone Mayors and partner of the AIVF programme

Sanitation is one of the major challenges of contemporary urban development. It lies at the intersection of social equity, public health, and human dignity. In many Francophone cities, it remains a sector where needs are immense and inequalities particularly pronounced. Long regarded as a technical field reserved for large-scale infrastructure projects, it is now emerging as a domain of local action in which local authorities can innovate and take concrete measures.

For more than 10 years, the International Association of Francophone Mayors has supported its members in implementing projects and local sanitation policies, promoting a citywide inclusive sanitation approach in line with the Citywide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS) principles. It has received significant support, particularly from the Gates Foundation, to whom I extend my sincere thanks for their trust.

The purpose of this publication is to share the lessons learned from the Inclusive Sanitation in Francophone Cities Program (AIVF), of which my local authority has been both a beneficiary and a partner. It aims to document and showcase the local experiences carried out under the program, facilitate peer-to-peer learning, and encourage the replication of tested approaches through concrete examples.

This knowledge-sharing effort marks an important milestone in the collective journey we continue with the International Association of Francophone Mayors. It reflects the strong commitment of Francophone cities to pursue an integrated and inclusive approach to sanitation, and to ensure that every resident of our cities has access to this essential service—an assurance of dignity and sustainable development.

Summary

Chapter 1

SUPPORTING THE SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATION OF SANITATION SYSTEMS

Sanitation and hygiene are fundamental issues for public health, the environment and human dignity. They are an essential pillar of sustainable development and directly address several targets of Sustainable Development Goal 6. However, in many Francophone cities, access to safe, accessible and equitable sanitation services remains inadequate.

Given this urgent situation, the AIMF has been working alongside its members for several years to develop sustainable, innovative and inclusive sanitation policies. Particular attention is paid to the faecal sludge management sector, which is a pragmatic and much more accessible alternative to the connection to the sewer network model, which is often ill-suited to the economic and urban realities of cities in the South. Structuring this sector not only limits the health and environmental risks associated with informal faecal sludge management practices, but also develops sustainable local services and meets the needs of the most disadvantaged, with a view to equity and inclusion.

Following a successful first phase between 2017 and 2021 with the Initiative for Health and Hygiene in Cities (ISSV), a new ambitious programme was launched by the AIMF, in partnership with the Gates Foundation: *Inclusive Sanitation in Francophone Cities*.

KEY FIGURES

2017–2025

16 METROPOLITAN AREAS SUPPORTED ACROSS **9 COUNTRIES IN AFRICA AND ASIA**, REPRESENTING AROUND **25 MILLION INHABITANTS**

6 PARTNER NETWORKS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE BRINGING TOGETHER **70 ELECTED OFFICIALS AND TECHNICAL STAFF**

MORE THAN **€18 MILLION MOBILIZED, 75% OF WHICH COMES FROM LOCAL GOVERNMENTS** OF THE GLOBAL NORTH AND GLOBAL SOUTH

AIMF SUPPORT FOR INCLUSIVE SANITATION OVER THE YEARS

2010s

Direct support for the first faecal sludge management projects led by member local authorities (Vientiane, Laos; Mahajanga, Madagascar)

2017

"Initiative for Health and Hygiene in Cities", eight pilot projects and participating cities in the sanitation component of the programme

2021-2022

Inauguration of treatment plants in Yaoundé, Phnom Penh and Siem Reap

2023

Launch of the Inclusive Sanitation in Francophone Cities programme

2025

Final international conference and experience sharing, organised in Cambodia

| Siem Reap station, Cambodia, July 2025.

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A MAJOR PROGRAMME FOR INCLUSIVE SANITATION

The Inclusive Sanitation in Francophone Cities programme supports local authorities in a transformation process aimed at fostering innovative urban sanitation public policies, **focused on faecal sludge management**.

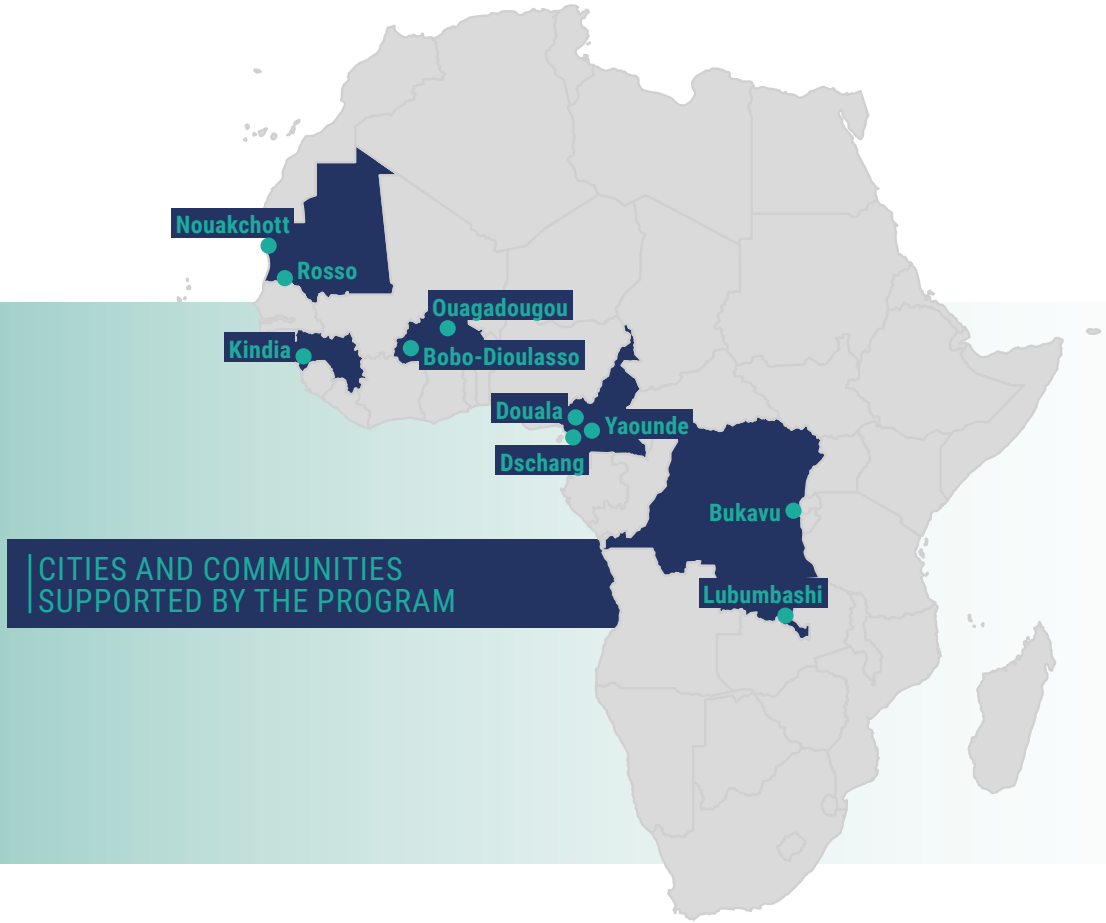
The programme has been rolled out in 10 pilot cities in the AIMF network – Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso (Burkina Faso), Nouakchott and Rosso (Mauritania), Bukavu and Lubumbashi (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Yaoundé, Douala, Dschang and the Menoua department (Cameroon), and Kindia (Guinea). It also relies on the active involvement of five national associations of local authorities, which are key partners in structuring multi-level dialogue and advocating for robust public sanitation policies that are tailored to local realities.

10
CITIES
in 6 partner countries

10
MILLION
residents impacted

€4.2
MILLIONS
raised

2022
2025
IMPLEMENTATION
period



CITIES AND COMMUNITIES SUPPORTED BY THE PROGRAM

It is based on the **CWIS** (Citywide Inclusive Sanitation) approach, which sees sanitation as a universal public service. This method combines strategic planning, structuring of local networks and implementation of various technical solutions (on-site sanitation, networks, sludge management and treatment). It promotes multi-stakeholder governance involving residents, public authorities and the private sector, particularly small local businesses, while fully incorporating climate, social and gender dimensions.

The aim is to build the capacity of municipalities and provide them with concrete tools to design, implement and fund inclusive and sustainable sanitation systems that promote **local equality and environmental resilience.**

Operational objectives

1. **Developing municipal strategies for inclusive sanitation**

Support for adapting the CWIS model to each region, developing strategic plans, regulatory frameworks, and securing funding.

2. **Organising a multi-level dialogue on sanitation**

Joint mobilisation of local authorities and governments, coordinated by national associations of local authorities, to promote a shared vision of inclusive sanitation and strengthen regional advocacy.

3. **Strengthening the skills and networks of local authorities**

Disseminating tools and methodologies, providing training, leading a working group and integrating cities into regional and international platforms.

4. **Integrating the gender and sanitation approach**

Support for the development of gender-sensitive strategies, team capacity-buildings and inclusion of gender equality issues in operational projects.

THE CWIS APPROACH - A PARADIGM SHIFT

Over the past twenty years, urban sanitation policies have undergone profound changes. Long structured around an infrastructure-based approach focused on the construction of networks, plants and toilets, they have gradually adopted an approach based on the service provided to the public. This shift has led public authorities to move beyond the sole issue of infrastructure and focus on the entire sanitation chain, from access to on-site solutions to the collection, transport and treatment of faecal sludge. Supported by major international institutions and development agencies, this approach recognises sanitation as an essential public service, closely linked to issues of health, the environment, social cohesion, local governance and local economic development.

Against this backdrop, the sewer network model, long considered to be the benchmark, has gradually been called into question. While it remains relevant in cities where a significant proportion of the population already has access to it, in many urban contexts in the South it appears to be difficult to sustain, particularly in precarious and rapidly expanding neighbourhoods. Its high cost and technical and organisational complexity severely limit its ability to meet the objective of universal access. In light of these findings, new strategies have emerged, favouring hybrid and decentralised systems built on existing solutions, which are often incomplete but adapted to local realities. The challenge is no longer to promote a single solution, but to plan consistent sanitation systems at the city level, capable of combining different technical and organisational options. This vision, now widely shared in the development aid sector, is based on deliberate public policies in favour of disadvantaged communities, in order to ensure safe, sustainable sanitation services that are accessible to all.

This approach embraces a public service model, where every citizen, regardless of their neighbourhood or status, has the right to safe and dignified sanitation.

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At the same time, the focus has shifted to governance issues. While the challenges of improving urban sanitation are partly to do with technological choices and the search for innovative and realistic solutions, they are just as much to do with institutional frameworks, coordination between players and political dynamics. The effectiveness of a sanitation system depends largely on the ability of public authorities to play a regulatory, guiding and arbitrating role between the multiple operators, whether public, private or informal. This realisation has also highlighted the importance of stakeholder interactions, power relations and motivations that influence decision-making.

These conceptual advances have resulted in the development of dedicated tools and methodological frameworks: urban diagnostics, municipal sanitation plans, collaborative approaches, and inclusive planning models. These instruments aim to strengthen cities' capacity to plan and manage sanitation services tailored to their local circumstances. At the same time, a lobbying effort is taking shape to put sanitation back at the heart of urban policies and sustainable development.

THE SANITATION CHAIN

These instruments aim to strengthen cities' capacity to plan and manage sanitation services tailored to their local circumstances.

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It is against this backdrop that the CWIS method was developed, extending and systematising these lessons by offering an integrated, inclusive approach tailored to the entire city. Based on this approach, the AIVF programme offers a profound transformation in the way cities in the AIMF network plan, finance and implement their sanitation services. It is based on the principle that every inhabitant, regardless of their socio-economic status or place of residence, should have access to safe, equitable, sustainable and inclusive sanitation.

Learn about the CWIS method using resources available on the AIMF platform

Unlike traditional models focused on centralised networks, the CWIS approach integrates the diversity of technical solutions used in urban areas: sewer network, decentralised systems and sanitation networks. It requires clear governance, integrated planning, enhanced accountability and multi-sector collaboration, placing users at the heart of the system. In short, the CWIS approach is not limited to building infrastructure at a particular link in the value chain; it aims to ensure universal public sanitation services that are tailored to contemporary urban challenges and the imperatives of social and environmental justice.

The CWIS approach is based on six fundamental principles that resonate with the AIMF's commitments to local governance and sustainable development:

CWIS principle	Issues
Equity	Inclusion of vulnerable communities
Safety	Protection of public health
Sustainability	Resilience to climate challenges
Responsibility	Clear mandates for local authorities
Accountability	Transparent performance monitoring and reporting
Resource planning	Long-term vision, integrated into the city's overall planning

I Siem Reap, Cambodia, July 2025

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Chapter 2

THE CWIS APPROACH ADAPTED TO THE FRANCOPHONE CONTEXT

The application of the CWIS approach in Francophone countries requires careful adaptation to take local realities into account. This chapter explores the main drivers and challenges faced by the AIMF network, while illustrating how CWIS principles have been translated into concrete practices within the programme. The lessons learned and recommendations presented in this chapter stem from exchanges throughout the programme and from the work carried out during the international knowledge-sharing seminar.

DISPOSAL, TREATMENT, AND RECYCLING OF FAECAL SLUDGE

The disposal, treatment, and recycling of faecal sludge represent a set of technical, institutional, and economic challenges that are part of a process of gradual development of services at each link in the sanitation chain.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The experience sharing carried out as part of the AIVF programme highlights several major challenges and key lessons for the development of effective and sustainable sludge management services. Firstly, **political commitment appears to be a decisive factor**, forming the basis of any consistent public policy in this area. Without strong institutional support, it becomes difficult to ensure continuity of action, consistency of direction and the gradual consolidation of the service. This commitment must also be maintained over time, including during the implementation of transitional solutions, which are often considered temporary and therefore relegated to the background. However, these intermediate stages play a key role: they enable proof of concept to be built, stakeholders to be mobilised and the skills of the institutions to be gradually strengthened, preparing the way for the system to be scaled up.

Without strong institutional support, it becomes difficult to ensure continuity of action, consistency of direction and the gradual consolidation of the service.

This feedback also highlights the **importance of rigorous planning** in order to anticipate critical points throughout the sludge management chain, from transport and disposal to treatment and final recycling. Such planning requires not only careful consideration of the technical and logistical constraints at each stage, but also the existence of a clear governance framework and effective monitoring and control mechanisms. In many cases, the main difficulties encountered stem from a lack of coordination between the various players involved, an underestimation of operating costs, or the absence of a regulatory framework that is sufficiently appropriate to secure and structure the service over the long term.

Another key lesson learned is the **need to balance an immediate response to the needs of the population with a long-term vision.** In many cases, setting up a comprehensive sludge treatment system cannot be achieved in a single step: it usually involves a phased approach, ranging from simple controlled disposal systems to more sophisticated infrastructure capable of ensuring treatment that complies with environmental and health requirements. The challenge is therefore to develop a realistic roadmap that will enable a functional service to be provided quickly while laying the foundations for a sustainable, scalable and expandable system across the region.

From this point of view, the choice of treatment technologies appears to be a strategic decision that is key to success. The **solutions chosen must be tailored** to local circumstances, taking into account factors such as the availability of resources and land, the skills that can be harnessed, maintenance costs, environmental constraints and social acceptability. A sustainable service requires robust, modular technologies that can be managed by local stakeholders. All too often, overly complex or unsuitable infrastructure fails due to a lack of sufficient capacity to operate and maintain it over the long term.

Lastly, **the recycling of products derived from sludge treatment opens up interesting prospects, both economic and environmental, provided that it is strictly regulated.** Possible uses must be considered in strict compliance with health and environmental safety requirements. The challenge is to define a clear regulatory framework, work towards social acceptance of these products, and build a viable economic model capable of covering treatment costs while generating profits or savings for local stakeholders.

Therefore, the experiences shared within the AIVF programme remind us that the sustainability of sludge management services depends on **a balanced combination of political will, planning, step-by-step progress, appropriate technological choices and the structuring of secure recycling outlets.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

Gaining a better understanding of the sector's situation and bringing in the right skills:

1. **Data collection and analysis.** From the project design stage onward, it is crucial to strengthen local authority departments' knowledge of the sanitation sector by collecting data and applying a collaborative approach. For faecal sludge management, dialogue with industry professionals is crucial from the collection phase onwards in order to understand practices, identify real needs and plan future investments effectively. Coordination with government departments and technical and institutional stakeholders and partners is also fundamental to a knowledge-sharing approach.

2. **Choice of external support.** Being aware of the importance of the faecal sludge management sector within the broader liquid sanitation sector and ensuring that teams include genuine specialists in the field. Drafting precise terms of reference regarding the skills sought when recruiting consultants, project managers and contractors.

3. **Raising awareness.** Informing the public about issues related to urban sanitation, the health and economic risks of inaction, and new treatment services, in order to gain their buy-in for local policies and encourage them to take ownership of the service.

4. **Regulations.** Anticipating the implementation of the regulatory framework, so that it is operational as soon as the treatment solutions are commissioned. The authorities must have legal tools at their disposal to compel sludge emptiers to dispose of waste at authorised sites and ensure service compliance.

Taking a medium- to long-term approach to projects from the outset:

5. **Land.** Considering land use issues by reserving land for the construction of future treatment facilities during the project design phase and as part of urban planning exercises. These sites must also be chosen in complete transparency with residents, in an effort to explain the issues surrounding the facilities, the nuisances they cause and the means of limiting them. Sites should be secured and protected against illegal occupation, and sludge emptiers must also be involved in the selection process, in particular to discuss access constraints (distance and condition of existing roads).

6. **Access to treatment facilities.** Ensuring that access roads are passable in all seasons is a key prerequisite before any treatment site can be commissioned. This commitment by the project owner must be formalised in an agreement or contractual document in order to ensure the long-term viability of the facilities and the operations.

7. **Phasing.** Phasing investment to avoid oversizing treatment sites. This gradual approach makes it possible to optimise available resources, verify sizing assumptions (e.g. sludge volume), and adjust treatment capacity as the services are developed.

I Kampala, Uganda, June 2025 - Source Xavier Gras.

8. **Intermediate disposal solutions.** While awaiting effective treatment solutions that meet identified needs, the local authority can control waste disposal by designating authorised sites, rather than allowing sludge emptiers to operate freely, which poses a risk to the environment and public health.

9. **Infiltration trenches.** Installing infiltration trenches at disposal sites to improve environmental control and raw sludge management is a simple and quick solution to implement. It offers a number of advantages and can be upgraded to a treatment facility at a later date if the context warrants it (i.e. proven need for treatment) and funding allows. They are cost-effective to set up, although the local authority must plan ahead in terms of operating costs.

Providing a sustainable public service:

10. **Prioritising the technical simplicity of treatment facilities in situations where skills and human resources are still limited.** Promoting simple, robust and proven technical solutions that are easy to build, operate and maintain. This approach reduces the risk of breakdowns, enhances the durability of facilities and avoids the introduction of technologies that are costly or unsuited to local capabilities.

11. **Considering "compact" technical solutions** in urban settings to get around land availability issues.

12. **Promoting local recycling of stabilised sludge.** This approach helps to reduce the volumes disposed of, create new resources for urban and peri-urban agriculture, and strengthen the buy-in of local stakeholders.

13. **Ensuring regular health monitoring of recycled sludge** and supporting the emergence of user industries. The development of reliable and secure markets is vital to ensure the long-term viability of the recycling.

STRUCTURING THE SECTOR

Structuring the faecal sludge management sector is a key issue in the sustainable development of sanitation services. There is a need to reconcile social inclusion, professionalism and gradual regulation, based on a shared vision between operators, local authorities and public authorities.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

At the heart of the AIVF programme, **the recognition and integration of existing operators** emerged as a prerequisite for any effective policy. These players, often from the informal sector, whether they work manually or mechanically, have made a decisive contribution to meeting the daily needs of communities, often in precarious circumstances and without institutional support. Marginalising them would further weaken the sanitation chain. The challenge is therefore to leverage their experience and knowledge of the field, while integrating them into public systems in a gradual, fair manner that is tailored to their economic and social realities.

Such integration requires **structured support towards greater professionalism**. Improving the quality, hygiene and safety of faecal sludge management services requires the development of training programmes, technical and financial support, and appropriate management tools. Professionalisation should not be seen as a constraint, but as an opportunity to consolidate the industry, enabling operators to gain official recognition, access to funding and safer working conditions.

At the same time, **regulation of the sector must be developed in a gradual and incentive-based manner.** It is not a question of suddenly imposing standards that could exclude the most vulnerable, but rather of establishing evolving regulatory frameworks that encourage best practices and support operators in achieving compliance. Successful regulation relies on clear rules, transparent procedures and support mechanisms to help stakeholders comply.

The development of appropriate business models is another fundamental pillar. Ensuring the financial viability of the faecal sludge management service requires striking a delicate balance between fair compensation for operators and users' ability to pay. This involves exploring different forms of contracting, targeted subsidies or cost sharing, while ensuring the quality of the service provided.

Lastly, **the sector cannot be structured without ongoing dialogue between local authorities, operators and users.** Mutual trust, consultation and coordination are essential conditions for an efficient and equitable service. Permanent consultation frameworks must enable tensions to be resolved, responsibilities to be shared and solutions tailored to local realities to be developed jointly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

14. **Improving consultation between local authorities (LAs) and the State**. In many countries, local authorities are making faster progress than central government in the practical delivery of sanitation services. Strong advocacy is therefore needed to shift national policies, which are still too often focused on centralised solutions such as wastewater networks, towards an integrated, pragmatic and decentralised approach to the sector. This shift requires the recognition of faecal sludge management operators as key players in the development and professionalisation of sanitation services.

15. **Institutionalising dialogue with sludge emptiers.** Local authorities have a key role to play in structuring faecal sludge management operators, whether in the form of professional associations or recognised groups. It is vital to promote their role and involve them in all stages: planning, construction and operation of infrastructure. These operators can become a driving force for service improvement, a supervisory force for the management of sewage disposal, and ultimately the direct managers of treatment plants.

16. **Raising awareness about best practices among households.** Working with private operators must go hand in hand with raising public awareness among the population about public health and environmental protection issues through the adoption of best practices, in order to strengthen buy-in and increase demand for faecal sludge management services.

17. **Manual faecal sludge management should be regulated rather than prohibited.** Manual faecal sludge management will continue to be used in certain circumstances. The aim is not to ban it, but to make practices safer in order to protect workers' health and limit pollution.

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ACCESS TO SERVICES

Equity in access to sanitation services plays a key role in building inclusive and sustainable systems. Studies on this subject have highlighted the persistent inequalities that prevent the most vulnerable households (particularly women and low-income groups) from having access to quality sanitation facilities and a regular faecal sludge management service. The aim is to examine ways in which this service can be made truly universal by addressing the economic, social and institutional dimensions of exclusion.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

One of the first steps is to understand the barriers that limit this access. In many urban and peri-urban settings, **high construction costs, unaffordable faecal sludge management fees, and land tenure insecurity prevent vulnerable households from installing and properly maintaining their facilities.** These obstacles are not only financial: they also reflect inequalities in status, gender and institutional recognition, which keep certain groups on the margins of public sanitation services.

In light of these findings, **promoting appropriate infrastructure** appears to be a key factor. The aim is to design and deploy technical solutions that are safe, hygienic, easy to maintain and affordable. The quality of the infrastructure has a direct impact on public health and the dignity of users; it must therefore be designed with equity in mind, taking into account the specific needs of women, children and people with disabilities.

The financial aspect is also a key consideration. To ensure access for all, there is a need to **introduce equitable financing mechanisms that can reduce the cost of facilities and emptying without compromising the viability of the service.** This can be achieved through targeted subsidies, construction grants, microcredit schemes or solidarity-based pricing policies. These tools must be designed in a transparent manner and tailored to local conditions in order to avoid exclusion or dependency.

However, equity cannot be limited to one-off initiatives: it must be integrated into the very core of local sanitation policies. Municipalities and local authorities have a decisive role to play in planning, implementing and monitoring inclusive policies. **Incorporating equity objectives into sanitation plans, defining specific indicators to monitor coverage of vulnerable communities, and allocating dedicated resources to these actions** are essential steps in translating principles into concrete results.

Lastly, the **role of community stakeholders and the private sector** is crucial. Local associations, women's organisations, neighbourhood committees and private operators are often closest to the realities on the ground. Their involvement helps to raise awareness, mobilise local resources and create innovative, appropriate solutions. By strengthening their capacity for action, it becomes possible to build a fairer sanitation system based on participation, solidarity and shared responsibility.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Identifying and removing barriers to access.** Vulnerable households, particularly women and low-income groups, face economic, social and institutional barriers. It is crucial to review pricing and tax policies to make services more affordable, raise awareness and social acceptance by taking into account local traditions and mindsets, and tailor infrastructure and technologies to local realities while clarifying regulations and raising awareness of environmental and health impacts.

2. **Adopting a holistic approach.** Integrating sanitation sector planning into town planning and local policies to ensure consistency and effectiveness.

3. **Promoting accessible and suitable infrastructure.** Facilities must be safe, hygienic and affordable. This involves allocating sufficient financial, human and material resources, tailoring services to financial means and local circumstances, incorporating gender considerations and user safety into the design phase, and raising awareness among households of the economic rationale behind the service in order to strengthen their buy-in.

4. **Incorporating equity into local policies.** Local authorities must institutionalise inclusion in their sanitation plans: for example, by creating local task forces and committees, implementing measures to prevent and control non-compliant practices, training stakeholders on equity and gender issues and integrating these considerations into municipal budgets, as well as communicating with the public to raise awareness of equity.

5. **Involving community stakeholders and the private sector.** Their involvement is key to the long-term sustainability and ownership of the services. Local authorities' decisions must be widely communicated and explained, communities must be made aware of the importance of equitable and regular access to services, and joint responsibility between local authorities, the private sector and community organisations must be promoted in order to consolidate an inclusive and sustainable service.

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

1. A gradual approach is crucial: services must be developed in stages, with interim solutions tailored to local capabilities.

2. Technical and institutional simplicity ensures sustainability: robust, realistic and manageable solutions are preferable to complex or unsuitable technologies.

3. Dialogue between stakeholders, i.e. local authorities, central authorities, operators and users, is a prerequisite for success.

4. Data collection and analysis are prerequisites for any rational planning and infrastructure sizing.

5. Inclusion and equity must be a central focus of local policies: a sustainable service is a service that is accessible to all.

I Kampala, Uganda, June 2025 - Source Xavier Gras.

Chapter 3

FOCUS: GENDER IN SANITATION

Sanitation is often approached as a purely technical or infrastructural issue. However, it is also a deeply social and unequal sector, which affects women and men differently.

SANITATION, A REVEALING INDICATOR OF GENDER INEQUALITY

Access to safe and appropriate toilets is a prerequisite for the health and dignity of women and girls. They are more vulnerable to diseases linked to poor hygiene, but also to violence or harassment when they have to travel long distances or use unsafe spaces. In schools, the lack of adequate facilities for managing menstrual hygiene partly explains absenteeism and sometimes even dropout rates among adolescent girls, limiting their educational and professional prospects. On a daily basis, women also spend a considerable amount of time compensating for the lack of services, time that could have been invested in economic or social activities. Sanitation is therefore linked not only to public health, but also to women's education, safety and economic independence.

When sanitation projects fail to take this dimension into account, they perpetuate and exacerbate existing inequalities. The specific needs of women and girls remain invisible: lack of suitable toilets, lack of menstrual hygiene facilities, unlit or unsafe public spaces. In addition, local governance bodies are still too often dominated by men, which limits women's participation in planning and decision-making. Lastly, the lack of gender-disaggregated indicators makes it impossible to assess the real impact of public policies on reducing inequalities.

Download the AIMF guide on gender mainstreaming in development projects

Gender mainstreaming in the AIVF programme

It is precisely to avoid these pitfalls that the Inclusive Sanitation in Francophone Cities (AIVF) programme has chosen to integrate gender as a cross-cutting principle. In each pilot city, gender-sensitive assessments identified the different needs of different communities and documented inequalities. The programme also promoted women's participation in local steering committees and encouraged their role in sanitation services. The infrastructure funded by the programme has been designed to be safer, better lit and more suitable for managing menstrual hygiene. Lastly, a gender-based monitoring and assessment system was established, with indicators to measure differentiated access to services and women's participation in governance bodies.

By incorporating this approach, the AIVF programme did not limit itself to building infrastructure: it helped transform social relations around sanitation by recognising and promoting the role of women as agents of change.

TRAINING FOR ACTION: A MOOC PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY

As part of the programme, a MOOC was designed to support local authorities in gender mainstreaming their public policies. The challenge is clear: to give local stakeholders the means to understand how gender inequalities affect the daily lives of citizens, and to provide them with the tools they need to take local action to promote inclusive governance.

The training aims to build the capacity of regional leaders and their teams so that they can understand the impact of public policies on gender equality and implement appropriate strategies. Under the impetus and political leadership of elected officials, the aim is to develop local policies that promote equality, either across the board (systematic integration of gender into all policies) or through specific projects explicitly dedicated to reducing inequalities.

Key skills for taking action

The MOOC offers an introductory but essential approach. Participants learn about the main issues related to gender inequality in different regions, as well as practical methods and operational tools for addressing them. At the end of the training, they are able to identify the inequalities that hinder the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights, and to design responses tailored to their local environment.

12
MODULES

30
PARTICIPANTS
already trained

The training aims to build the capacity of regional leaders and their teams so that they can understand the impact of public policies on gender equality.

An educational approach rooted in practical experience

The programme is based on a flexible and accessible educational approach: 12 video modules, each organised around key concepts, practical tools and strategic questions. The content is enhanced by testimonials and feedback from the AIMF network, which help to anchor the discussion in the reality of Francophone cities. Each module is supplemented by a quiz and additional resources to facilitate knowledge acquisition and encourage practical application.

Sanitation as a field of application

Of the 12 modules, two are specifically dedicated to sanitation. They show how gender inequalities manifest themselves in this area and suggest ways to design truly inclusive services. These modules provide concrete examples of how gender mainstreaming can improve the relevance and effectiveness of local sanitation policies and projects.

FOLLOW THE MOOC

Find the complete MOOC

Chapitre 4

DECENTRALISATION OF SANITATION – A STRATEGIC DRIVER

The studies that formed the basis for this chapter were coordinated by umbrella associations of local authorities to support the decentralisation of sanitation in the countries participating in the programme. They aimed to analyse the role of local authorities in the project management of inclusive sanitation, with a particular focus on faecal sludge management and gender mainstreaming.

LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

In the countries participating in the AIVF programme (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mauritania, Niger and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)), liquid sanitation and faecal sludge management are part of institutional frameworks based on common principles, but marked by significant differences in the actual organisation of responsibilities. In all countries, the central government retains authority over the definition of national policies, health and environmental standards, regulatory frameworks and strategic guidelines, often with the support of technical and financial partners. Structural investments continue to be mainly carried out or financed at the national level, through projects supported by official development assistance.

However, the operational sharing of responsibilities between the State and local authorities varies greatly, particularly in terms of project management, liquid sanitation service management and the organisation of sludge management networks. These differences centre on the existence – or lack thereof – of national operational agencies dedicated to urban sanitation.

In Burkina Faso, the government has opted for a centralised model based on ONEA, a national agency with significant technical and financial resources that is responsible for urban sanitation, including faecal sludge treatment. Although municipalities have powers recognised in legislation, their operational role remains limited, leading to overlapping responsibilities that call for clear mechanisms for delegation and cooperation with ONEA. In Mauritania, a similar system exists with ONAS, but faecal sludge management remains underdeveloped and largely non-operational, while municipal powers, although provided for, are rarely exercised due to a lack of resources and legal clarification.

I Siem Reap, Cambodia, July 2025.

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Conversely, in Cameroon, Niger and the DRC, the lack of operational national agencies gives local authorities a central role in setting up and organising liquid sanitation services. In Cameroon, several urban communities have developed faecal sludge treatment plants, financed with support from the State and partners, but under municipal project management and operated by local operators, illustrating the capacity of cities to play a leading role when institutional conditions allow. In Niger, although municipal authority is recognised, its implementation remains limited and sewage sludge management is largely informal, even though some municipal initiatives demonstrate potential for gradual development. In the DRC, despite a theoretical division of responsibilities between levels of governance, the lack of clear operational structures means that municipalities mainly intervene in institutional, organisational and local regulatory matters, in the absence of structural infrastructure.

Despite these different configurations, a number of findings converge. **In all countries, local authorities have long-standing cross-cutting responsibilities in the areas of hygiene, sanitation and public health, which give them the legitimacy to take action in the field of urban sanitation.**

Their closeness to local residents, particularly in disadvantaged and informal neighbourhoods, enables them to better understand real needs, engage in dialogue with users and operators, and introduce pragmatic solutions where major national projects are slow to materialise. Even when the State retains control of infrastructure projects, local authorities play a **key role in local planning, regulation, stakeholder involvement and implementation of the "soft" aspects of the CWIS: consultation, sector organisation, social inclusion, service monitoring and health control.**

These findings highlight major cross-cutting issues: fragmentation of supervisory bodies, overlapping responsibilities, weak effective transfers of resources, and still insufficient involvement of local authorities and their umbrella organisations in the development of national policies. They underscore the need to advocate for effective decentralisation of urban sanitation, based on a clear division of roles, local capacity building, the right to experiment in situations where there are no sustainable solutions, and the adoption of evolving regulatory frameworks that ensure both local innovation and compliance with national public health and environmental protection requirements.

FUNDING AND RESOURCE MOBILISATION

Funding urban sanitation is a key factor in the effective implementation of decentralisation. In all of the countries studied, the resources mobilised at the municipal level remain insufficient to meet needs, particularly in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and most structural investments continue to be funded by the State and technical and financial partners. However, there are marked contrasts between different national situations. Cameroon has relatively diversified local funding sources (local taxation, taxes and parafiscal mechanisms), but they are still only marginally focused on liquid sanitation. Burkina Faso appears to be more advanced, with ONEA playing a central operational role, a history of significant investment in urban sanitation and recurring funding mechanisms, particularly in Ouagadougou, where a surcharge on water bills has helped to support independent sanitation. On the other hand, in Niger and Mauritania, funding is still largely dependent on the projects of technical and financial partners, which have historically focused on drinking water, and liquid sanitation and the management of faecal sludge are still underdeveloped. In the DRC, the creation of the Kinshasa Sanitation Fund (FONAK) reflects a desire to structure funding for the sector, but its impact remains limited by insufficient resources and implementation difficulties.

Beyond these differences, the effectiveness of financial transfers linked to decentralisation often remains low, fuelling a structural imbalance between

transferred powers and the resources actually available. In light of this, several countries are exploring additional ways to strengthen the financial sustainability of services using a CWIS approach: fees on faecal sludge management and disposal activities, gradual integration of costs into pricing models when conditions allow, establishment of public-private partnerships, and rai-

The implementation of decentralised urban sanitation policies relies on a variety of stakeholders with interdependent roles, and coordination between them is a key challenge.

sing funds dedicated to sanitation. Lastly, general or targeted subsidy schemes are emerging to secure access to services for the poorest households and prevent the cost of the service from excluding disadvantaged neighbourhoods, which is key to achieving the goal of universal access.

STAKEHOLDERS AND COORDINATION

The implementation of decentralised urban sanitation policies relies on a variety of stakeholders with interdependent roles, and coordination between them is a key challenge. Local authorities play a key role in bridging the gap between public policy and local realities, providing local planning, regulating services and, depending on the context, managing infrastructure projects. Central government retains a key role in defining strategic guidelines, regulatory frameworks and the monitoring of health and environmental standards. Technical and financial partners play a decisive role in terms of funding and institutional support, while NGOs and civil society contribute to the local anchoring of projects and the inclusion of vulnerable communities. The private sector, both formal and informal, is mainly involved as a service provider, particularly for faecal sludge management, transport and sometimes sludge treatment.

National developments continue to vary. In Niger and Mauritania, technical and financial partners and NGOs continue to play a key role, in a situation where the private sector involved in faecal sludge management remains largely informal and inadequately regulated. In Burkina Faso, the presence of a strong national operator, ONEA, enables centralised management of infrastructure, but raises issues of coordination with local authorities for the organisation of local sludge management networks. In Cameroon, despite a better-structured private sector and the involvement

of certain urban communities, institutional fragmentation and multiple supervisory bodies complicate the consistency of initiatives. Lastly, in the DRC, the absence of stable operational structures limits coordination between local authorities, public services and private operators.

In all of these countries, coordination between stakeholders appears to be a cross-cutting challenge, going beyond mere issues of funding or the formal distribution of responsibilities. The effectiveness of decentralisation depends on the ability of local authorities to play a leading role at the regional level, by organising operators, improving consultation with the State and partners, and monitoring and supervising sanitation services.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND ADVOCACY ASPECT

The combined experiences of Burkina Faso, Niger, Cameroon, Mauritania and the DRC point to a common set of recommendations put forward by local authority associations to strengthen the effectiveness of decentralised urban sanitation. While institutional approaches and national choices differ, these lessons converge towards the same requirement: to make sanitation a **genuine local public service**, capable of meeting the objective of universal access in urban environments marked by a diversity of circumstances and capacities.

1. Clarifying and implementing the institutional framework by moving beyond overly centralised approaches

In all countries, national legislative and strategic frameworks exist, but their operational implementation remains incomplete and is sometimes hampered by overly centralised governance models. The experiences analysed show that, while the central government legitimately retains a role in defining policies, standards and oversight, excessive centralisation of operational management can tend to limit the capacity of sanitation systems to meet the needs of cities, particularly in precarious neighbourhoods. Local authorities are calling for an explicit clarification of the respective responsibilities of the State, its agencies and local authorities, particularly with regard to the planning, regulation and organisation of liquid sanitation and sludge management services. Depending on the circumstances, this requires either an effective transfer of powers accompanied by adequate funding or, where the State retains responsibility for infrastructure, a formalised and contractual sharing of operational responsibilities. Adopting and applying implementing decrees, local regulations and delegation agreements are necessary prerequisites for avoiding overlapping responsibilities and ensuring the effective action of local authorities.

2. Ensuring effective and long-term financial transfers, aligned with local responsibilities

The arguments converge on the conclusion that there is a structural imbalance between the powers entrusted to local authorities and the funds that can actually be raised. The decentralisation of sanitation cannot be effective without financial transfers that are effective, predictable and proportionate to the responsibilities exercised. Local authorities are calling for the creation or increase of budget items dedicated to sanitation, both at national and local level, as well as improved traceability of financial flows related to decentralisation. In addition to funding from the State and technical and financial partners, the mobilisation of local resources such as existing taxation, earmarked parafiscal mechanisms, fees for faecal sludge management and disposal services, and contributions from private operators via approval systems, must be recognised and secured. More advanced experiences, particularly in Burkina Faso, show that recurring and pooled financing mechanisms can improve the sector's sustainability. Lastly, the institutionalisation of explicit, universal or targeted subsidy schemes appears crucial to prevent the cost of the service from permanently excluding the poorest households, which is a prerequisite for the CWIS approach and universal access.

3. **Recognising and formalising the role of local stakeholders, including informal operators**

The large number of stakeholders involved in sanitation is a challenge shared by all five countries, but it also presents an opportunity. The programme's experiences show that local authorities are well placed to play a leading role at regional level, provided they have the necessary capabilities. This requires the establishment of permanent consultation structures involving central government, local authorities, technical and financial

In summary, these recommendations aim to move beyond a formal approach to decentralisation and turn it into an effective tool for transforming urban sanitation services.

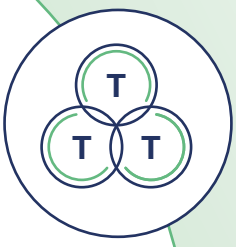
partners, civil society and the private sector. Particular attention must be paid to recognising the role of existing operators, who are often informal, particularly in faecal sludge management services. Far from being an anomaly, these stakeholders provide an essential part of the service at city level, particularly in working-class neighbourhoods. Their gradual integration, through professionalisation, accreditation and support mechanisms, appears to be more effective and inclusive than exclusively punitive approaches. Improving the capacity of local authorities to regulate, supervise and monitor service quality is a key challenge in this regard.

4. **Establishing a right to local experimentation within evolving regulatory frameworks**

Lastly, local authorities emphasise the need for regulatory frameworks that are flexible enough to accommodate diverse urban development approaches, without jeopardising national public health and environmental protection objectives. In many situations, the lack of permanent solutions requires the use of temporary and phased measures. Local authorities are calling for the recognition of a right to controlled experimentation, enabling them to test innovative approaches to CWIS, in close collaboration with government departments. When monitored, assessed and leveraged, this capacity for local innovation is an invaluable tool for developing national policies based on real-world circumstances.

In summary, these recommendations aim to move beyond a formal approach to decentralisation and turn it into an effective tool for transforming urban sanitation services. Implementing them jointly would improve the sustainability, efficiency and equity of services, while fully recognising the role of local authorities and local stakeholders in achieving the goal of universal access.

REVIEWING SANITATION FINANCING MECHANISMS



By adopting a 3T approach:
Tariffs-Taxes-Transfers.

By ensuring the effective transfer of funding from central government to local authorities: in order to support the transfer of powers. In this way, the level of tariffs and taxes will be set at the most appropriate administrative level.

By securing funding for operations from the design stage; by focusing on appropriate technical solutions that result in operating costs compatible with the sub-sector's own resources; through the implementation of a system of fees and taxes.

I Study Trip, Mauritania–Senegal, December 2024.

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Chapter 5

PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING: THE AIVF COMMUNITY

As part of the AIVF programme, several study trips and peer-to-peer exchanges were organised to enable partner cities to leverage existing experiences and find solutions tailored to their specific circumstances. These meetings provided unique opportunities for technical dialogue, sharing best practices and collective discussion on inclusive sanitation at the city level.

STUDY TRIP TO MAURITANIA AND SENEGAL

The first trip took a delegation of 25 participants across Mauritania and Senegal in December 2024. The main objective was to observe existing sanitation systems in practice and analyse how they are managed, with a particular focus on the collection, treatment and recycling of faecal sludge. The visit began in Rosso (Senegal), where the delegation visited the municipal faecal sludge treatment plant. The station was an example of a collaborative approach involving steering, monitoring and community awareness committees. Discussions with local officials provided a better understanding of the challenges of overloading, uncontrolled disposal and limited biogas recovery, while highlighting the importance of proactive municipal governance to ensure the sustainability of the infrastructure.

The station was an example of a collaborative approach involving steering, monitoring and community awareness committees.

In Richard Toll and Tivaouane, the delegation visited more complex plants, operated in a public-private partnership with ONAS and managed by the company DELVIC. These plants, which are integrated into wastewater treatment plants or equipped with advanced sludge recycling systems, demonstrated the variety of operational and financial models available, as well as the importance of planning and technical oversight. The visit to the sanitation facilities in Ndiaréme Limamoulaye also highlighted the importance of a community-based and inclusive approach that addresses issues of gender, accessibility and menstrual hygiene.

Lessons

Many lessons were learned from this trip: autonomous sanitation is often more flexible and economically viable than traditional collective systems, but its sustainability depends heavily on local governance and community involvement. Sludge recycling remains a major technical challenge, requiring technical support and rigorous planning. Lastly, the experience highlighted the value of city-to-city exchanges, which enable practices to be compared and concrete lessons to be learned for implementation in other settings.

STUDY TRIP TO KAMPALA (UGANDA)

The second study trip, organised in June 2025 in Kampala for 16 participants, aimed to explore advanced practices in faecal sludge management and inclusive sanitation through an Anglophone case study. The Ugandan capital was chosen for its pioneering experience in developing the sector, operating treatment plants and promoting gender equality and social inclusion.

The three-day programme combined visits to facilities, meetings and workshops. The first stop at the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) focused on clear governance, the separation of political and technical mandates, private sector involvement, and the use of innovative digital tools (call centre, tracking application, dashboard). Despite a limited budget (USD 250,000/year excluding personnel), the results have been remarkable: the fleet of septic trucks has grown from 4 in 1999 to 170 in 2025, and the proportion of human waste managed safely increased from 48% in 2016 to 71% in 2024.

The second day was devoted to the Lubigi station, built in 2014 with the support of KfW. Designed to treat 5,000 m^3/day of wastewater and 400 m^3/day of sludge, it recycles around 300 tonnes of biosolids per month, mainly for use in agriculture. However, excess treatment capacity, equipment wear and tear, and an annual deficit of €20,000 highlight the challenges of sustainability. In the Utunda district, the delegation observed the semi-mechanical faecal sludge management services, which are adapted to areas where access is difficult and to low-income households. These solutions are based on innovative technologies and the formalisation of manual sludge emptiers. They illustrate efforts towards inclusion, but also highlight the difficulty of making these services economically viable due to high costs per cubic metre.

The third day focused on social inclusion, with visits to a school for children with disabilities equipped with accessible toilets connected to a biogas digester, and to Kasubi Market, where free, well-maintained public toilets demonstrate the importance of local management. However, the dependence of these initiatives on KCCA funding remains a significant limitation.

Lessons

The Kampala experience offers several key lessons for Francophone cities: building a comprehensive sludge management system, integrating gender and inclusion into planning, and technical and institutional innovation are all ways to improve access to sanitation. Monitoring via digital indicators and tools, as well as support from financial and technical partners, appear to be key factors for success. However, the visits also highlighted certain

limitations and vulnerabilities: the financial viability of semi-mechanical services, dependence on municipal funding for public toilets, and difficulties in keeping digital innovations fully operational. Participants were thus able to gauge the need for a balance between technical ambition and economic viability, as well as the importance of strategic management and constant monitoring to ensure the long-term viability of the initiatives.

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Study trip to Kampala, June 2025.

"The KCCA is investing in the development of services targeting vulnerable populations, despite the challenge of profitability.

Gaël OBATE EBE, Head of the Climate Development Projects Unit, CVUC

"The strategy includes services for low-income households. Services and infrastructure are specifically designed for them.

Paul DONGUE, President of SYCOME

FINAL SEMINAR IN SIEM REAP AND PHNOM PENH (CAMBODIA)

The programme's third study tour took place in Cambodia in July 2025. It aimed to explore inclusive sanitation approaches at city level and to illustrate, through two concrete cases in Cambodia, the organisation of sludge management networks.

Participants first visited the Siem Reap sludge treatment plant, where the Province is implementing the PROFERTIL project, combining sanitation and agricultural recycling. On the second day, a visit to Phnom Penh station provided an opportunity to discover the experience of Cambodia's capital city, with a greater focus on municipal planning and the integration of the sewage sludge management sector into an urban sanitation strategy.

These two case studies, supported by the AIMF with technical and financial assistance from the SIAAP and the Seine-Normandy Water Agency, highlighted the similarities and differences between the solutions implemented: in terms of treatment technology, the reed bed solution was used in both cases, with variations to adapt to the constraints of the construction sites. The agricultural recycling of sludge in Siem Reap is one of the driving forces behind the province's commitment, in line with its economic development plan and active partnerships in the agricultural sector; institutional planning and capacity building are more prominent in the Phnom Penh experience. Lastly, the choice of a private company to operate the station in Siem Reap differs from the choice of a publicly managed project management organisation in Phnom Penh. The two cases illustrate the complementary nature of technical solutions and municipal governance.

The third day took the form of a seminar for city-to-city exchanges, organised around three panels:

- **Disposal, treatment and recycling:** identifying progressive solutions for disposal, technological choices and the use of by-products, while emphasising the importance of strong political commitment.
- **Development and organisation of the faecal sludge management service:** discussions on the integration and professionalisation of existing operators (manual and mechanised), phased regulation and the establishment of viable economic models.
- **Access for all:** discussion of ways to ensure the inclusion of vulnerable households (appropriate pricing, targeted aid, accessible facilities), with particular attention to gender issues.

| Final seminar in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, July 2025.

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FURTHER INFORMATION

Find the project
SIEM REAP – PROFERTIL *- Structuring of the FSM sector and development of the agricultural sector*

Find the project
PHNOM PENH – *Structuring the FSM sector for sanitation*

Find the film
The final study visit of the AIVF program in Cambodia.

| Siem Reap, Cambodia, july 2025.

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AN ACTIVE AND DYNAMIC COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

The AIVF programme has fostered the creation and growth of a dynamic community of practice focused on inclusive urban sanitation. Launched in 2023, the AIVF community hosted on the AIMF knowledge-sharing platform has brought together around 50 active members - elected officials, technicians, and experts - to share knowledge, experiences, and resources, and provide support for the implementation of local projects.

THEMATIC WEBINARS

Peer-to-peer learning was based on five thematic webinars. These exchanges enabled members to improve their skills, adopt new methods, and incorporate innovative practices into their local circumstances.

- **Presentation of the CWIS method:** The first webinar introduced the CWIS method, promoting inclusive, equitable, and sustainable urban sanitation. The six fundamental criteria - equity, safety, sustainability, responsibility, accountability, and resource planning - were detailed, illustrating the role of the AIVF programme in building local capacity.
- **Structuring the faecal sludge management sector:** Using Yaoundé as an example, the second webinar demonstrated how to organise the sector, formalise relationships between stakeholders, establish technological monitoring, and manage tariffs to maintain accessibility while ensuring the economic viability of sanitation systems.

- **Faecal sludge management:** Discussions focused on sludge treatment and recycling techniques tailored to local settings. Projects such as Profertil in Siem Reap and the experiences in Yaoundé and Rosso illustrated the importance of tailoring standards, technologies and monitoring mechanisms to ensure sustainability.
- **Inclusive public toilets:** This webinar highlighted the importance of installing accessible, safe sanitary facilities that are tailored to the needs of vulnerable communities. The examples of Yaoundé, Ouagadougou, Bukavu and Rosso showed how to combine smart design, local management and economic viability to ensure a sustainable service.
- **Gender mainstreaming in sanitation:** The latest webinar emphasised that inclusive sanitation must take into account social and economic inequalities, particularly the specific needs of women. Projects such as the one run by the OGDS in Saint Louis and local initiatives demonstrated how to involve women in governance, sanitation management and entrepreneurship, thereby enhancing the impact and sustainability of sanitation projects.

Over **70** **RESSOURCES** and tools shared

AIMF members: access all resources on the platform

THEMATIC WEBINARS

Presentation of the CWIS method

Structuring the faecal sludge management sector

Faecal sludge management

Inclusive public toilets

Gender mainstreaming in sanitation

A PLATFORM FOR EXCHANGE AND COLLECTIVE LEARNING

In addition to webinars, the AIVF community has promoted ongoing peer-to-peer exchanges through its online platform, enabling:

- access to an extensive online library of technical documents, case studies, policy reports and practical guides
- sharing feedback and best practices;
- the creation of synergies between Francophone cities, boosting innovation and the scalability of CWIS solutions.

By focusing on specific themes and sharing operational practices, the AIVF community has demonstrated that collective learning and experience sharing are powerful tools for promoting inclusive and sustainable urban sanitation.

A collective dynamic

An International Partnership to Strengthen Cities' Capacity for Action

Association des Maires du Burkina Faso

Ouagadougou Burkina Faso

Bobo-Dioulasso Burkina Faso

Communes et Villes Unies du Cameroun

Yaoundé Cameroun

Douala Cameroun

Dschang & SYCOME Cameroun

Kindia Guinée

Association des Maires de Mauritanie

Nouakchott Mauritanie

Rosso Mauritanie

Association des Maires du Niger

Plateforme des Autorités Locales des Pays des Grands Lacs

Bukavu RD Congo

Lubumbashi RD Congo

Technical and Financial Partners Supporting the AIMF and Francophone Cities in the Field of Sanitation

Our thanks go first and foremost to the mayors and heads of executive bodies of the cities and associations that participated in the AIVF, as well as to the teams of the Foundation.

Adrienne Zamdjo Epse Demenou; Augustin Tamba; Bamba Sidi Daramane; Dianko Cisse; Fatimetou Abdel Malick; Garanké Boubacar Soumana; Jacquis Gabriel Kemleu Tchabgou; Jimmy Hatungimana; Laurent Kontogom; Luc Messi Atangana; Major Aloys Ndayikengurukiye; Maurice Konaté; Patrick Kafwimbi Mumamba; Paul Dongue; Roger Victor Mbassa Ndine; S.E.M. Khuong Sreng; S.E.M. Sophoan Prak; S.E.M. Ing Kimleang; S.E.M. Vannak Seng; S.E.M. Yun Linne Sahabi Mousse; Zénon Karumba Chikuta; Danielle Pedi; Doulaye Kone; Mbaye Mbeguere; Melissa Burgess; Melody Allred; Najib Bateganya.

Because this program is the result of a collective effort, involving numerous partners, sector experts, and municipal teams, we would also like to thank them here:

Abdawa Mohamed; Abdoulaye Fall; Adama Sienou; Adolphe Amani; Ahmed Hamadi; Ahmed Ragel; Aichetou Brahim; Aida Sow; Albert Akoa Anicet; Alex Lina Aleke; Ali Dogo Moussa; Alice Mbappe; Amédé Ferré; Anamot Esselem Etame Roger; Angony Davy Bertrand; Antoine Longet; Ardiouma Sanou; Arnaud Nkonla; Assane Mbodj; Aymard Mateke; Bechir Diallo; Boreyrath Rom; Brigitte Kaunda; Carole Yemelong; Christian Bernard Momo; Dan Bourgami Magaouata; Daouda Oumar Warr; Djibu Kabulu; Dodo Garba; Dontsop Paul Vallery; Emma Palm; Emmanuel Ngnikam; Emmanuel Renou; Espoir Kibukila; Ewane Ralphe; Fatou Gueye; Fatouma Kanté; Fodé Sita Camara; Francesca Gambazzi; Gaël Ebe Obate; Georges Magambo Budundwa; Guy-Serge Tshilemb Mutombu Sampas; Hadiza Garba; Hamidou Baguian; Heukoua Mbuissi Willy; Jean Georges Ngob Bonog; Jean-Marie Ily; Joceline Traore / Sanon; Joseph Magloire Olinga; Josh Ndalamba Kazadi; Julie Père; Juliette Sanou / Bicaba; K. Alassane Konate; Kana Armand Ghislain; Kathleen Mayene; Kemchun Chek; Kerfala Sylla Sylla; Kingue Etame Else Olive Yvette Epse Lengue; Lansana Fadil Sylla; Lazare Naloussi Diesse; Léticia Nonguierma; Madou Lamizana; Mamadou Camara Ndiaye; Mamoudou Conde; Mamadou P. Koutou; Mame Ndiak Sy; Mame Tacko Diallo; Marie Solange Mbang épouse Efon; Meizang Martine; Michel Mpundu; Modeste Mekui; Monkam Edouard; Moussa Fah Traore; Moussa Kafando; Mugoli Menemene; N'fansou Sano; Ndery Gueye; Ndzana Arnauld; Ngono Metomo Denise; Ngoune Richaine; Ngueffack Rolind; Nicaise Ndedi Ebongue; Nicole Pare; Njocke Gabriel; Olivier Mazianda; Pascal Aimé Fomat Mbokouoko; Patrick Kafwimbi Mumamba; Picheth Seng; Rabi Abdoulaye; Rayane Zribi; Riziki Matayabo; Roland Buherhwa; Ronnie Nyanzi; Saleck Ould Moulaye Ahmed Cherif; Saïdou Nassouri; Sebastien Kima; Simon Edouard Ekotto Ndemba; Siméon Sawadogo; Stanislas Mvondo Ayissi; Tefeyo Ouamba Arnaud; Teufack Paul Séraphin; Thomas Dakin Pouya; Valentin Bayiri; Vanessa Godat; Vibol Chem; Wenddenda Eric Kiemde; Wilfried Some K; William Demefo; Xavier Gras; Yannick Atangana Mvondo; Yaro Yougnouan Issouf; Yaya Keita; Yvette Nganti Epse Anguissa; Zerbo Adama; Zida Hamado; Zoé Colin.

I Phnom Penh, Cambodia, July 2025.

Appendices

Project Briefs

BURKINA FASO

BOBO-DIOULASSO

POPULATION
1 MILLION

PROJECT DURATION
2024-2025

BUDGET
USD 80,000

LOCAL CONTEXT AND PRIORITY ISSUES

Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso's second-largest city, is experiencing sustained demographic growth, placing increasing pressure on urban services. Sanitation relies predominantly on on-site systems, while faecal sludge treatment is managed by the National Office for Water and Sanitation (ONEA) through the city's single Faecal Sludge Treatment Plant (FSTP). This configuration creates overlaps in responsibilities and a lack of strategic coordination.

The existing plant faces capacity and operational constraints, and the service chain remains weakly structured at the local level: limited organisation of desludging operators, insufficient municipal regulatory tools, and no formalized reuse framework. In peri-urban neighborhoods and public spaces, populations remain exposed to health risks linked to poor sanitation and the lack of safe and adequate facilities.

ACTIONS IMPLEMENTED

The project focused on institutional strengthening and strategic planning as prerequisites to infrastructure development.

A diagnostic of the faecal sludge management chain clarified responsibilities, identified critical bottlenecks, and analyzed social and gender issues related to service access. Based on this, an inclusive municipal sanitation strategy was developed around five pillars: governance, improvement of public services, professionalization of desludging, progressive strengthening of treatment capacity, and development of resource recovery.

Project brief

The creation and operationalization of the Communal Committee on On-Site Sanitation (CCAa) marked a major milestone. This multi-stakeholder body structures dialogue between the municipality, ONEA, decentralized services, desludging operators, and civil society, while promoting more inclusive participation in decision-making.

Priority actions also targeted improved management of public and school latrines, strengthened collaboration with desludging operators, and the establishment of municipal monitoring tools. The strategy provides for a gradual increase in treatment capacity, consistent with ONEA's mandate, and the emergence of a reuse value chain within a circular economy approach.

RESULTS AND TRANSFERABLE LESSONS

The program strengthened the municipality's role in a context marked by the presence of a strong national operator. The establishment of the CCAa and adoption of a municipal strategy clarified responsibilities, institutionalized stakeholder dialogue, and reinforced the municipality's legitimacy as the territorial lead for sanitation services.

Bobo-Dioulasso demonstrates that an inclusive citywide sanitation service is built first and foremost on structured and coordinated governance, based on a shared diagnosis, sustained multi-actor coordination, and clear allocation of responsibilities — essential prerequisites for major investment.

BURKINA FASO

OUAGADOUGOU

POPULATION
3 MILLION

PROJECT DURATION
2024-2025

BUDGET
USD 130,000

LOCAL CONTEXT AND PRIORITY ISSUES

Ouagadougou, a rapidly growing metropolis, relies primarily on on-site sanitation. Although the city has several faecal sludge treatment plants operated by ONEA, the service chain still faces coordination challenges, regulation of desludging operators, and limited reuse of by-products.

The municipal roadmap developed during the first ISSV support phase (2021–2022) set a clear direction: affirm the City's strategic role in local sanitation governance while structuring formal cooperation with ONEA, responsible for treatment infrastructure. The dual objective is to strengthen municipal competencies (regulation, management of individual and public access, strategic steering) and organize the service chain through institutional complementarity and permanent dialogue.

The project therefore aims at progressive and sustainable structuring of the sector: clarifying roles, regulating operators, introducing municipal monitoring tools, developing reuse pathways, and anchoring actions within an integrated municipal strategy. Ultimately, this dynamic prepares for the creation of a dedicated municipal structure, modeled on existing operational agencies in Ouagadougou, to strengthen the City's operational capacity and position in sector governance.

ACTIONS IMPLEMENTED

The project combined institutional strengthening and demonstration actions.

Legally, the regulatory framework governing technical licensing of desludging operators was updated, with transitional measures to support gradual implementation. A framework agreement with ONEA was initiated to formalize responsibility-sharing and establish a joint steering

Project brief

committee. In parallel, a permanent multi-stakeholder dialogue platform was structured to organize coordination, strengthen regulation, and ensure joint monitoring.

Within its own competencies, the City strengthened the building permit system to integrate on-site sanitation requirements. A municipal data monitoring system was also initiated to improve strategic oversight.

These developments were supported by operational demonstrators: construction of public toilets meeting enhanced accessibility and management standards; deployment of a digital monitoring platform; and equipping hygiene brigades to strengthen inspection capacity. A pilot project for reuse of dried sludge linked to urban agriculture was also launched. Finally, a feasibility study prepared the creation of a dedicated municipal sanitation and environment agency.

RESULTS AND TRANSFERABLE LESSONS

The program repositioned the City of Ouagadougou as a strategic actor in inclusive sanitation, with clarified articulation with ONEA. Formalized dialogue, progressive operator regulation, and the introduction of municipal monitoring tools structured the sector within a regulated cooperation framework.

A key lesson is that when treatment infrastructure falls under a national operator, municipal empowerment relies primarily on strengthening steering, regulatory, and coordination functions. Demonstration projects played a crucial role in consolidating operational capacity and translating municipal competencies into concrete action.

Ouagadougou illustrates a progressive and replicable pathway: clarify responsibilities, structure dialogue, test solutions at municipal scale, and anchor progress in a sustainable institutional framework.

CAMEROON

DSCHANG AND SYCOME

POPULATION
160,000 IN DSCHANG
500,000 IN THE MENOUA REGION

PROJECT DURATION
2023-2025

BUDGET
USD 30,000 (EXCLUDING THE ECOSAME PROJECT)

LOCAL CONTEXT AND PRIORITY ISSUES

In the Menoua region, sanitation relies almost exclusively on on-site systems, mainly consisting of traditional, poorly sealed latrines. Informal dumping into rivers and wetlands leads to diffuse contamination of water resources and significant health risks. Desludging operations have long remained poorly structured, with no organized treatment solution.

In response, the Syndicat des Communes de la Ménoua (SYCOME), which brings together six municipalities around Dschang, committed to the gradual construction of a shared intermunicipal faecal sludge management service. The challenge is both institutional and operational: structuring governance, professionalizing the sector, and preparing treatment infrastructure adapted to local realities.

The AIVF programme provided targeted support to this dynamic, complementing the structuring ECOSAME project (2022–2026), which implements operational activities across the territory within a technical cooperation framework involving AIMF, Nantes Métropole, and the Loire-Bretagne Water Agency.

ACTIONS IMPLEMENTED

AIVF support focused on institutional strengthening and consolidation of governance tools, building on studies carried out during the ISSV phase (2018–2021). The preparation and structuring of the municipal hygiene and sanitation bylaw were supported through ongoing technical assistance, with cross-cutting integration of gender considerations into studies and training.

Project brief

SYCOME benefited from a study tour dedicated to monitoring and regulation of the sector, strengthening local capacity in service organisation and oversight. The intermunicipal body was supported in consolidating its shared steering role, while technical assistance enhanced artisans' skills in building improved latrines and improved management of public toilet blocks.

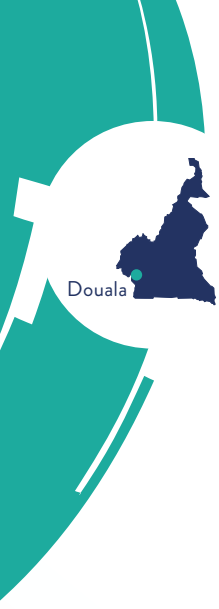
In parallel, the ECOSAME project acted as a demonstrator: establishment of an intermunicipal public desludging service, development of controlled temporary disposal trenches, and construction of pilot sanitation blocks. These experiments helped refine technical and economic choices, identify constraints related to disposal sites, and progressively regulate practices. Lessons learned directly informed technical studies for the future treatment plant (preliminary and detailed design phases), leading to realistic phasing and preparation for launch in 2026.

RESULTS AND TRANSFERABLE LESSONS

AIVF support consolidated the institutional foundations of Menoua's intermunicipal inclusive sanitation service. Strengthening the regulatory framework, integrating gender considerations, structuring governance, and improving public sanitation management professionalized local public action at intermunicipal scale.

The articulation with ECOSAME constitutes the project's central lesson: capacity strengthening produces durable results when embedded in a progressive operational approach. Testing public desludging services, temporary disposal solutions, and sanitation demonstrators allowed practices to evolve before investing in heavier infrastructure.

Dschang illustrates a gradual and replicable pathway: consolidate governance, experiment at small scale, draw technical and economic lessons, then secure structuring investment. This sequence confirms that an intermunicipal sanitation service — despite coordination complexities — can emerge through controlled and progressive capacity-building supported by concrete operational demonstrators.



CAMEROON

DOUALA

POPULATION
3, 4 MILLION

PROJECT DURATION
2024-2025

BUDGET
USD 80,000

LOCAL CONTEXT AND PRIORITY ISSUES

Douala, Cameroon's main economic hub, is characterized by rapid and largely informal urbanization. Sanitation relies almost exclusively on on-site systems, with most households financing latrines or septic tanks themselves. Manual and informal desludging remains common, leading to uncontrolled discharges and high pollution risks. Until 2025, sludge management mainly relied on the degraded Bois des Singes site. The commissioning of the new Ngombé treatment plant marks a major structural turning point.

In this context, the Douala Urban Community (CUD), contracting authority for major sanitation projects, must simultaneously prepare operation of its first FSTP, structure the faecal sludge management chain, and integrate equity considerations in a metropolis marked by strong territorial inequalities. The challenge is not only technical: it involves shifting from largely informal management to a regulated, planned, and inclusive public service aligned with the city's environmental ambitions and its Sanitation Master Plan.

ACTIONS IMPLEMENTED

The AIVF programme first supported the integration of equity and social inclusion throughout the service chain. A detailed diagnostic identified the most vulnerable areas and populations, analyzed inequalities in access, and incorporated a gender perspective. This work guided investment priorities and introduced a social lens into metropolitan planning.

A second component focused on public toilets. The study assessed service levels, reviewed existing standards, gathered user expectations, and proposed a structured reform: governance adjustments, site prioritization, adapted management models, improved facility design, and development of budgetary and financing scenarios.

Project brief

Finally, the project supported the CUD in structuring the regulatory and institutional framework for faecal sludge management. This included support for regulating on-site sanitation and desludging services, as well as drafting a Municipal Action Plan 2025–2035 — a roadmap for scaling up inclusive public services around the new FSTP.

RESULTS AND TRANSFERABLE LESSONS

The program strengthened CUD's capacity to strategically steer inclusive sanitation at city scale at a pivotal moment — the commissioning of its first FSTP. Integrating equity and gender into diagnostics enabled better targeting of priorities and ensured future investments follow a more inclusive logic.

The public toilet study produced immediately actionable recommendations, demonstrating the value of combining technical analysis, governance reform, and user expectations to improve a subsector often overlooked but central to urban hygiene.

A key lesson is the importance of anticipating the commissioning of a treatment plant with parallel regulatory and institutional structuring. In Douala, infrastructure development was accompanied by clarified responsibilities, multi-year planning, and sector regulation. This sequence provides a relevant model for large metropolitan areas transitioning toward safer, more equitable, and sustainable sanitation services.

CAMEROON

YAOUNDE

POPULATION
APPROXIMATELY
3 MILLION

PROJECT DURATION
2023-2026

BUDGET
USD 150,000
(EXCLUDING THE ISSV
PROJECT)

LOCAL CONTEXT AND PRIORITY ISSUES

Until the late 2010s, Yaoundé faced a situation typical of major Central African metropolitan areas relying almost exclusively on on-site sanitation. The absence of a functional treatment plant, combined with sustained demographic growth and diffuse urbanization, resulted in uncontrolled dumping and saturation of the informal Nomayos site, within a fragmented governance framework. The faecal sludge management chain was driven by dynamic private operators but lacked effective regulation, a consolidated municipal strategy, reliable flow monitoring tools, and clear integration with urban planning.

This situation had marked social implications, exposing residents to health risks linked to poor sludge management, as well as to safety and dignity concerns associated with inadequate or unsanitary facilities.

The first phase conducted with AIMF (2018–2022, approx. €4 million) marked a major turning point with the construction and commissioning of the Etoa Faecal Sludge Treatment Plant (FSTP), a structuring infrastructure co-financed by AFD, the Gates Foundation, and French decentralized cooperation. This achievement formalized sludge discharge practices, established a public-private partnership with the desludgers' association, and laid the foundations of a municipal strategy through the Municipal Sanitation Action Plan (PAMAP). It also introduced digital traceability tools and strengthened the Yaoundé Urban Community's (CUY) capacity in regulation and contractual oversight.

Building on this momentum, the AIVF project focused on consolidation: securing the technical and financial sustainability of the Etoa plant, structuring biosolids reuse, and embedding sanitation within coherent urban planning. The objective is now to anchor a regulated, scalable municipal public service fully integrated into urban policies.

Project brief

ACTIONS IMPLEMENTED

The project aimed to consolidate the operational and strategic dimensions of the sector following commissioning of the city's first FSTP, ensuring its long-term sustainability.

A first component focused on technical optimization of the Etoa plant. Adjustments improved stormwater management, enhanced equipment reliability (particularly sludge pumps), and reorganized truck unloading areas. Operational monitoring support was provided to both the operator consortium and CUY to improve technical and financial performance. Technical and economic monitoring tools, applicable to the plant and public toilet blocks, were developed and transferred to municipal teams through targeted training.

By the end of the project, treated volumes significantly exceeded initial design assumptions, confirming desludgers' adherence to the formalized system and the robustness of the economic model, particularly municipal revenues and fees generated. In response to potential saturation risks, CUY initiated a phased capacity expansion strategy: short-term intensification through compact solutions and medium-term planning for a second treatment plant, with land already being secured. This gradual approach illustrates controlled investment phasing based on real operational data rather than theoretical projections.

A second component addressed biosolids reuse. Agricultural trials improved compost quality, strengthened hygienization processes, and developed a gradual commercialization strategy, embedding the sector within a regulated circular economy framework.

Finally, a cross-cutting component strengthened CUY's institutional capacity in contractual regulation, performance monitoring, gender integration, and digital truck traceability tools. Coherence between the urban master plan, sanitation scheme, and PAMAP was also reinforced.

RESULTS AND TRANSFERABLE LESSONS

The intervention structurally transformed faecal sludge management in Yaoundé into a consolidated municipal public service. The Etoa plant now functions as the pivot infrastructure of an operational public-private partnership, with formalized sludge discharge, effective fee payment, and a stabilized contractual framework. The municipality now has steering tools, reliable flow data, and strengthened regulatory capacity.

Yaoundé demonstrates that successful citywide inclusive sanitation depends not only on constructing infrastructure but on rigorous preparatory structuring and post-investment consolidation: technical stabilization, operator professionalization, monitoring tools, municipal capacity-building, and integration with urban planning. It highlights the importance of progressive investment phasing grounded in real operational data.

GUINEA

KINDIA

POPULATION
200,000 TO KINDIA; APPROXIMATELY 270,000 IN THE INTERMUNICIPAL AREA

PROJECT DURATION
2024-2025

BUDGET
USD 20,000 (EXCLUDING THE FDC PROJECT)

LOCAL CONTEXT AND PRIORITY ISSUES

Kindia, a fast-growing secondary city, relies exclusively on on-site sanitation. Studies conducted during the ISSV preparatory phase (2021–2022) revealed highly heterogeneous facilities, mainly traditional or poorly improved latrines, often unsealed and located near water points. Management practices remain largely informal: abandonment of pits once full, predominance of manual emptying, and uncontrolled environmental sludge discharge. This sustains persistent fecal contamination and increasing pressure on local natural resources.

The diagnostic also revealed a fragmented sector, with manual and motorized operators coexisting without formal organisation or secure discharge/treatment sites. In the absence of a clear strategic framework, the Urban Commune of Kindia (CUK) lacked tools to plan investments, regulate operators, and progressively structure an inclusive sanitation public service.

The project's objective was therefore to initiate a realistic and gradual trajectory: secure analytical and land foundations, structure local governance, and test operational solutions adapted to municipal capacities.

ACTIONS IMPLEMENTED

The first phase secured the Sèguéya site, intended to host a pilot FSTP and the future municipal landfill. A preliminary design study was prepared for an interim treatment solution suited to local technical and financial conditions. Technical assistance supported updating municipal hygiene regulations, structuring a local sanitation strategy, and strengthening project ownership, particularly in operator regulation.

Project brief

With the emergence of new private operators, the project entered an operational phase through the AIMF Cooperation Fund. A transitional controlled trench system was developed on the secured site to receive sludge under regulated conditions. This demonstrator tests organized sludge discharge, generates data on volumes and practices, and initiates structured dialogue with private operators ahead of final infrastructure construction.

RESULTS AND TRANSFERABLE LESSONS

The project launched Kindia's transition toward a more structured and inclusive on-site sanitation service. Initial steps secured land, consolidated diagnostics, and strengthened regulatory and strategic frameworks, preparing realistic investments.

A key lesson lies in the implementation of a regulated transitional system: in the absence of an immediate plant, this simple solution reduces informal sludge discharges, structures dialogue with private operators, and tests regulatory mechanisms. Lessons directly inform preparation of the final infrastructure, supported by AIMF and the City of Nantes.

Kindia shows that in secondary cities, reform depends on gradual scaling combining land security, institutional strengthening, and operational demonstrators that foster stakeholder ownership and rapidly reduce health risks.

MAURITANIA

NOUAKCHOTT

POPULATION
1,2 MILLION

PROJECT DURATION
2023-2026

BUDGET
USD 90,000
(EXCLUDING THE
PCAEA PROJECT)

LOCAL CONTEXT AND PRIORITY ISSUES

In Nouakchott, sanitation relies almost exclusively on on-site systems. Most households use individual pits of varying quality, with often inadequate greywater management practices and frequent reliance on manual desludging, particularly in the most vulnerable neighborhoods. These practices generate uncontrolled sludge discharges and significant health risks.

Although responsibility lies with the National Sanitation Office (ONAS), collective sewerage remains marginal: fewer than 5% of households are connected to a network leading to an aging wastewater treatment plant, whose equipment is largely dysfunctional and whose sludge treatment facilities are inoperative.

In response, the Region of Nouakchott has progressively strengthened its role, in coordination with ONAS, to structure a more operational governance framework for faecal sludge management. The challenge was primarily institutional: organize the sector, clarify responsibilities, modernize the regulatory framework, and integrate vulnerable households. The project builds on the PCAEA program supported by AIMF and Francophone decentralized cooperation, with the ambition of establishing consolidated regional governance.

ACTIONS IMPLEMENTED

The project made fully operational a regional consultation framework bringing together ONAS, the Region's local authorities, and key partners. This platform enabled shared priority-setting and preparation of a metropolitan inclusive sanitation strategy, supported by updating the legal framework governing desludging.

Project brief

Professionalization of the sector was a major focus. The creation of the first association of motorized desludgers structured the sector and strengthened dialogue with authorities. At the same time, manual desludgers — highly present in informal settlements — were included in regulatory discussions to support a gradual transition toward safer practices without abrupt exclusion.

A social dimension was introduced through a study of a "social desludging" mechanism for vulnerable households, defining appropriate targeting and pricing modalities.

Finally, in late 2025, a transitional trench-based discharge site was developed in Tevragh Zeina. This controlled burial solution provided a first formal alternative to informal dumping, quickly channeling significant flows and generating reliable data on collected volumes.

RESULTS AND TRANSFERABLE LESSONS

The project consolidated the Region's driving role in sanitation governance, using the consultation framework as a central coordination lever between public and private actors and preparing a unified regional strategy. It demonstrates that even in the presence of a national body such as ONAS, proactive engagement by a territorial authority can energize and operationalize sector policies in a complementary manner.

Structuring desludgers and modernizing the regulatory framework progressively professionalized the sector. A key lesson is that in highly informal contexts, gradual and concerted regulation proves more effective and sustainable than coercive approaches.

The trench experiment was a decisive demonstrator: strong adherence by desludgers, significant volumes collected, and controlled costs. This success confirms that reform can build on governance strengthening, professionalization, and pragmatic transitional solutions before engaging in large-scale investments.

MAURITANIA

ROSSO

POPULATION
60,000

PROJECT DURATION
2024-2026

BUDGET
USD 110,000

LOCAL CONTEXT AND PRIORITY ISSUES

Rosso, a border town located on the Senegal River, is experiencing demographic growth in a highly constrained environment. The shallow water table and recurrent flooding reduce the effectiveness of on-site sanitation systems: pits fill quickly, emptying is frequent, and informal manual practices persist.

The city has no sewer network, and the faecal sludge treatment plant (FSTP), built in 2016, remained underutilized for years due to access, operational, and service structuring problems. At project start, much municipal equipment was out of service, limiting the municipality's ability to provide safe services.

In this context, AIVF acted as a relaunch lever, in coordination with the Inclusive Sanitation Study Project in Five Mauritanian Cities (PETAIV), financed by the African Development Bank. The dual objective was to reactivate a minimum service in the short term and strengthen municipal capacity to prepare future structuring investments.

ACTIONS IMPLEMENTED

The AIVF programme combined institutional support and targeted operational measures.

The first component strengthened local governance. Technical assistance revitalized the municipal consultation framework, bringing together the municipality, state services, and local actors around a shared roadmap. The municipality was supported in strategically reviewing the Sanitation Master Plan and formulating its positions in dialogue with PETAIV, strengthening steering capacity and clarifying responsibilities.

Project brief

The second component focused on restoring equipment. The municipal vacuum truck was repaired, monitoring equipment acquired, and the FSTP rehabilitated (improved access, cleaning of structures, site security). Acquisition of a second truck was identified as a strategic lever to sustainably strengthen collection.

Finally, a study visit to Senegal facilitated exchanges on management models and sector structuring, refining technical and organisational choices for the plant and local service.

RESULTS AND TRANSFERABLE LESSONS

The project restored local capacity for sludge collection and treatment while consolidating the institutional foundations of the service. Reviving the consultation framework improved coordination among the municipality, state services, and operators, repositioning the municipality as the central actor in sector steering.

Rosso shows that before undertaking heavy investments, consolidating existing services, clarifying responsibilities, and progressively structuring management tools are decisive steps.

It also highlights the importance of regulated transitional solutions in complex environments. This sequence — operational relaunch, institutional consolidation, and preparation of structuring investments — provides a relevant model for secondary cities facing strong environmental constraints and limited technical capacities.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

BUKAVU

POPULATION
APPROXIMATELY
1 MILLION

PROJECT DURATION
2023-2024

BUDGET
USD 30,000
(EXCLUDING THE
FDC PROJECT)

LOCAL CONTEXT AND PRIORITY ISSUES

Bukavu, capital of South Kivu, is a dense city located on the shores of Lake Kivu, characterized by constrained urbanization, rapid demographic growth, and an unstable security context. Sanitation relies almost exclusively on on-site systems dominated by unsealed traditional latrines. Emptying is mostly manual, and the city has no treatment plant. Direct sludge discharges into ravines, rivers, and the lake cause significant environmental degradation and recurrent health risks, including cholera outbreaks.

Studies conducted with AIMF under the ISSV framework (2020–2022) revealed a poorly structured sector, lacking an operational regulatory framework and immediately viable treatment solutions. Given topographical, financial, and security constraints, a gradual approach was adopted: initiate reform through high-impact sanitary investments — particularly in markets — while laying the foundations for progressive sector structuring, integrating gender and accessibility considerations.

ACTIONS IMPLEMENTED

Following comprehensive sector studies (technical diagnosis, stakeholder mapping, institutional analysis, and initial strategic orientations), the project deepened two main axes.

The first concerned the design of modern public toilet blocks in priority markets. Technical and socio-economic studies covered sizing, preliminary and detailed designs, development of a lease-based economic model, and integration of gender, accessibility, and user safety requirements.

Project brief

The second axis focused on institutional structuring, including drafting a municipal decree, establishing a consultation framework, and developing a capacity-building plan with monitoring tools.

An operational project to build sanitation blocks at five priority sites was launched through the AIMF Cooperation Fund. However, renewed conflict led to temporary suspension of construction works. All technical, legal, and economic tools remain finalized and ready for rapid deployment when security conditions allow.

RESULTS AND TRANSFERABLE LESSONS

The project shifted from an initial ambition of full sector structuring to a sequenced strategy adapted to a fragile context. Bukavu now has a consolidated sector diagnosis, an emerging regulatory framework, and an operational economic model for public toilet blocks ready for implementation.

A key lesson is the need to adapt inclusive sanitation to local realities. In unstable contexts, prioritizing public sanitation in markets enabled immediate health impact while preparing broader sector reform. Bukavu illustrates how a progressive trajectory based on solid technical foundations and targeted investments can remain credible even in crisis situations.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

LUBUMBASHI

POPULATION
4 MILLION

PROJECT DURATION
2024-2025

BUDGET
USD 80,000

LOCAL CONTEXT AND PRIORITY ISSUES

Lubumbashi, the DRC's second-largest city, is organized into seven municipalities theoretically responsible for sanitation. In practice, communal technical and financial capacities remain very limited, and the City carries out most public hygiene actions. Liquid sanitation is poorly structured: inherited infrastructure (old network and lagoons) is highly degraded, and most households rely on on-site sanitation, with coexistence of motorized and manual emptying and direct sludge discharge into stormwater drains.

Although a 2023 urban decree defines local sanitation policy orientations and frames public service delegation, its operational implementation remained incomplete. In a metropolis characterized by intense economic activity, particularly mining and industry, the challenge is institutional and strategic: activate the existing regulatory framework, structure faecal sludge management, and lay the foundations for a more regulated and inclusive service.

ACTIONS IMPLEMENTED

The AIVF programme supported the City through two complementary levers: governance structuring and production of an operational strategic diagnosis.

A sanitation consultation framework was formalized, bringing together City Hall, the University of Lubumbashi (Interface Unilu-Society), the Federation of Congolese Enterprises, and local organisations. In this economically dynamic metropolis, this dialogue platform integrated private actors — including those with significant technical and logistical capacities — into discussions on sector organisation. It clarified roles between public authority and operators, fostered shared diagnosis, and explored progressive structuring of motorized and industrial desludging as a professionalization lever benefiting all neighborhoods, including the most vulnerable.

Project brief

In parallel, an in-depth diagnostic study analyzed institutional, social, technical, and economic dimensions. It highlighted data gaps, fragmented practices, and associated health risks while proposing scenarios for scaling up collection and regulation. The study provided concrete guidance for progressive sector organisation, investment prioritization, and integration of equity and inclusion.

RESULTS AND TRANSFERABLE LESSONS

The project transformed an under-activated regulatory framework into a concrete institutional dynamic. The City now has an operational consultation framework, a structured sector diagnosis, and technical and organisational scenarios to plan progressive scaling-up of inclusive sanitation services at city scale.

A key lesson is that in large metropolitan areas, governance structuring and economic actor involvement are prerequisites for sustainable reform. Mobilizing the formal private sector, alongside public action, can professionalize the sector, improve standards, and generate resources benefiting the entire service within an inclusive perspective.

Lubumbashi demonstrates that credible reform can begin with activating the regulatory framework, fostering multi-stakeholder dialogue, and planning progressive development before engaging in heavy infrastructure investments.

ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE DES MAIRES FRANCOPHONES

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Publication of the International
Association of Francophone Mayors

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