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## Project to transform waste management systems takes off

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A project to transform waste treatment systems in the country into self-supporting production facilities has taken off.

Known as the Design for Re-use project, it is meant to make the treatment plants become self-sustaining, through the re-use of the waste and treated water that is produced for profit.

The ultimate goal of the project is to improve public health and environmental integrity in urban and peri-urban Ghana, by reducing the incidence of water-borne diseases and mitigating water pollution.

The Design for Re-use project was started in January 2011, through the support of the African Water Facility and African Development Bank, with the Water Resources Commission (WRC), as the executing agency.

The key implementer of the project is the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) and TREND, an NGO, in charge of the training component.

Speaking at a National Level Learning Alliance Platform (NLLAP) last Thursday on the project, a researcher at the IWMI, Dr Philip Amoah, said many of the country's treatment plants had broken down because of the lack of funds to maintain them hence the need to recoup some funds to maintain them.

The profitable wastes that the project seeks to publicise are treated waste water for irrigation or aqua culture, compost for organic manure to fertilise crops and biogas for cooking and generating power.

Later in an interview with the Daily Graphic, Dr Amoah explained that close to 90 per cent or more of the treatment plants in the country, were not functioning, and the very simple reason was that the commission did not have money for operation and maintenance.

"The thinking that many people have is that waste is waste and it has to be thrown away, but then the new thinking is that waste should not be considered as just waste but something that can generate revenue and also be used profitably," he said.

Dr Amoah said as part of the project, a waste treatment plant was rehabilitated at the Presbyterian Secondary School, Legon, to use the effluent to irrigate some crops "and when the crops are sold, revenue from these can be used to maintain the system."

The researcher said the African Cat Fish (Adwen) did very well in the treated waste water and noted that there was the need for a change of mind-set on the use of the waste water, for which they were considering the use of certification from the Ghana Standards Authority (GSA).

A Senior Lecturer at the Kumasi Polytechnic, Mr Edem Bensah, who spoke on the implementation plan for biogas, explained that biogas tanks needed to be built in a dome shape to trap all the gas.

He said building an average-sized plant with a 10m<sup>3</sup> digester would cost between GH¢7,000 and GH¢15,000, depending on the service provider, technology type and construction materials used.

Prof James G. Monney, a retired lecturer at KNUST, suggested that biogas tanks should be constructed at the prisons, since they had sanitation challenges.

Meanwhile, the chairman for the NLLAP, Ms Adwoa Painstil, WRC, said the commission had begun a project at the Nsawam Prison, as it had been found that the prisoners were polluting the Densu River.

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