Letters to the Editor

Authors Response

This letter is the authors response to the letter to the editor by D. Berendes, K. Levy, J. Knee, T. Handzel, V. Hill (2014) Journal of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for Development, 4(4), 733. doi:10.2166/washdev.2014.102, regarding the original paper N. Preneta, S. Kramer, B. Magloire and J. M. Noel (2013) Thermophilic co-composting of human wastes in Haiti. Journal of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for Development, 3(4), 649–654. doi:10.2166/washdev.2013.145.

Dear Editor,

The authors of the paper 'Thermophilic co-composting of human wastes in Haiti (*Journal of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for Development* **3**(4): 649–654)' are grateful for this opportunity to reply to the questions raised by our collaborators at the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Emory University. We very much appreciated the research carried out by CDC and Emory University and hope to be able to continue this collaboration in the future. As such, we regret any misunderstandings that may have resulted from our early publication of these results or the way in which their findings were portrayed.

We agree fully with the authors of the CDC/Emory study that helminth ova and vegetative bacteria have very different inactivation kinetics and as such it is important to do periodic testing for *Ascaris lumbricoides* (*Ascaris*) as well as *E. coli*. Given the difficulty of testing for *Ascaris* in Port-au-Prince, SOIL tests for *E. coli* on a regular basis as an indicator for other pathogens, while working to build capacity for regular *Ascaris* testing locally.

We would like to clarify that since the publication of the paper in 2013, the Haitian Government's water and sanitation authority, DINEPA, has released a document, which includes microbiological standards for compost from human waste. This technical document entitled 'Filières de traitements des matières de vidange' outlines acceptable limits for *E. coli* and *Ascaris* of 102 CFU/g and 0 viable eggs, respectively. According to this document the CDC results would indicate that SOIL's compost is within the acceptable range for these two pathogens.

Finally, we deeply regret the misunderstanding that led to the early publication of these results in a peer-reviewed journal. Our article gave only a brief overview of the extensive work done by CDC and Emory University and we look forward to the independent publication of their data, which is sure to include more thorough and accurate interpretations and conclusions.

Sincerely,

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