

## CLTS FINALLY ARRIVES IN EAST POKOT

In January I had an opportunity to conduct a CLTS training workshop in East Pokot that was sponsored by Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development. The training was attended by ACTED staff and community representatives. The training was held in Churo town which is mainly inhabited by the Pokot community. The Pokot is a pastoralist's community that leads a semi-nomadic life. Livestock is an indicator of wealth in the community. The more you have, the wealthier you are. The community is part of the larger Kalenjin ethnic community. Latrine coverage is very low in the area (5%), and most people practice open defecation.

During my discussions with the participants in this workshop, it emerged that the act of defecation is considered a taboo subject and nobody talks about it openly. It is assumed that human beings defecate, but it is considered dishonorable to be seen going to defecate. Even in cases where one is suffering from diarrhea, they will not admit to it, as it is regarded as disgraceful to discuss matters related to defecation. A person would rather suffer in silence than confess about their predicament. Going for defecation is therefore done very secretly, and the person doing it, must take special care to ensure that he is noticed by no one. I further learnt that in this community, *"It is taboo to even discuss such matters as farting...in case some one farts accidentally where people are, he will feel very guilty and walk away in shame, and the rest will stay silent feeling embarrassed."*

The community also believes that when one "puts shit in hole, it is like one is burying themselves and this is likely to attract bad omen". The bad omen feared here is death. This belief therefore encourages open defecation.

It is in this cultural context that we planned to introduce CLTS. As I explained the methods used during CLTS trigger the participants felt very uncomfortable with them. They were simply shocked to learn how CLTS trigger is conducted. "There is no way a Pokot will take you to where he defecates" they said. "It is abomination to carry shit and bring it to where people are gathered", some said. "It is a taboo to use the word 'shit' in a community meeting" another complained. "We shall be thrown out if we try these things you are telling us", they protested.

I explained that these are the CLTS tools, and they have been successfully employed in other communities in and outside the country and there has never been any reported hostility from the targeted communities. I managed to calm them down and they practiced how to employ the triggering tools. They were more confident this time, and the following day they went to carry out actual CLTS trigger in the villages. At the end of the exercise, they were happy with the outcomes, and the following are some of their quotations,

*"I feared that the community would be hostile and abandon the meeting the moment we start talking about shit. Contrary to my fears the community was very receptive to our*

*message. I could not believe that the community was even ready to show us where they go for defecation.”*

*“I was afraid and fearful about the CLTS triggering process. I thought the community would be very hostile and chase us away...I have now realized that the most important thing is to have good facilitation skills. A good facilitation skill is what is essential and critical to success.”*

*“Throughout the training, I was not convinced that CLTS can work. I am now fully convinced about the power of CLTS.”*

The community members who were triggered also had a chance later on to share with us experiences of the outcome of the CLTS trigger in their village. This is a sample of what they said,

*“We were trained in the past on the importance of good hygiene and sanitation practices following a cholera outbreak in our village, but we did not take it seriously. This time round after what we saw when the facilitators came to our village, we must do something, we are going to change.”*

*“When I saw the amount of shit produced by our village that goes into our dam, I got very alarmed and concerned*

*“When we were elected to the sanitation committee, we held a meeting and decided to be an example to everyone. We are going to be the first ones to construct latrines in our homes. We are prepared to sell a few of our goats and buy the materials required to construct a latrine.”*

At the end of the workshop I had opportunity to visit the villages and confirmed that work had started and a wind of change was blowing. The community had started walking the talk of stopping open defecation.