

A CLTS Task Force for T/A Mkanda

August 27, 2009

Summary

During the week of July 13th, the Mchinji District Coordinating Team (DCT) trained extension staff from T/A Mkanda in CLTS facilitation. After practicals, they realised they had triggered more than 50 villages in a single week. As the DCT contemplated how they would manage to support and monitor progress in so many villages, a group of extension workers decided to choose an alternative, sub-district level solution. Extension workers from T/A Mkanda would form a **CLTS Task Force** to manage CLTS in T/A Mkanda and communicate progress to the DCT.

Role of Task Force

The most basic definition of a Task Force is an **official unit of CLTS-trained extension staff providing leadership at the sub-district level**. In T/A Mkanda, members of the Task Force opted to define their specific roles as follows:

- Encouraging immediate and on-going follow-ups to take place by the HSAs who 'own' the triggered village
- Receiving and soliciting data on CLTS progress from these HSAs – and compiling this data for the T/A
- Planning for any remaining follow-ups that the Task Force can do themselves to hasten progress
- Communicating with and preparing summary reports for the Deputy DEHO and other DCT members
- Verifying Open Defecation Free (ODF) status of CLTS villages as needed
- Organising for new villages in T/A Mkanda to be triggered, supported and monitored

T/A Mkanda Task Force Members

In Mkanda, 10 people volunteered to drive the activities of the Task Force:

- Community Development Assistant (CDA) – Chairperson
- Primary Education Advisor (PEA) – Secretary
- Forestry Assistant (FA) – Treasurer
- Senior Health Surveillance Assistants (Sr. HSAs) – Members
- Health Surveillance Assistants (HSAs) – Members
- United Nations Volunteer (UNV) – Member



Some members of Mkanda Task Force, after they undertook a monitoring visit.
Left → right: UNV, FA, CDA, PEA, Sr. HSA

Advantages of a Task Force

There are many possible advantages of establishing a CLTS Task Force in a T/A. The Task Force is a management unit, closer to the ground that can **provide support to front-line staff**, be a **source of energy** and **positive role modelling** for CLTS, and act as a **communication bridge** to help the DCT understand what is happening for CLTS in the T/A. Delegating some responsibilities to a Task Force also gives DCT members more time to focus on the bigger picture for CLTS. Also:

- The Task Force can interact with HSAs more regularly than DCT members can because they live in the T/A. This means challenges might be recognised and addressed more quickly, and front-line staff might be supervised more regularly than if the DCT directly managed extension workers. There would also be more opportunities to role model good CLTS practices and attitudes, especially for Task Force members with a CLTS triggered village.
- They already have existing working relationships with fellow extension staff assigned to triggered villages in T/A Mkanda, whereas members of the DCT are less known to these front-line extension staff. In Mchinji, the DCT hopes that front-line extension staff will conduct regular CLTS follow-ups and possibly even new triggerings as part of their regular duties. The Task Force may be more likely to succeed than the DCT at spreading this mindset, since they are peers. (Or, could the new hierarchy created by a Task Force strain these relationships?)

Mchinji's Best Practices

For a Task Force to be effective, the members must be truly motivated and active leaders. Mchipha, the Deputy DEHO from Mchinji shares an understanding of their 'best practices' in forming a Task Force in T/A Mkanda:



Thomas Mchipha. Dep. DEHO & Acting WASHE Coordinator for Mchinji District.

- During CLTS training in Mkanda, many extension workers emerged as 'Natural Leaders' among their peers. These are ext. workers in T/A Mkanda who became particularly excited about playing a leading role to realise the potential of CLTS.
- These 'Natural Leader' extension workers proposed the Task Force concept themselves during Action Planning at the end of the Training Week.
- Members volunteered to be on the Task Force. No one was obligated to join.
- Once formed, the Task Force members defined their own role and responsibilities. Then they informed the DCT of what they could expect from the Task Force.
- The WASHE Coordinator offered to help the Task Force source funds from UNICEF to support additional CLTS activities in Mkanda (i.e. ODF Celebrations, etc).
- CLTS was introduced as a *new way* to help extension workers succeed at fulfilling and *old duty*. This lessens the burden on Task Force members to 'convince' their fellow extension staff to undertake CLTS follow-ups and new triggerings.

Questions to Ask Yourself

There's no guarantee that forming a Task Force will ensure good management and monitoring for CLTS. Before, during and after the creation of a Task Force in your District, ask yourself the following questions for a stronger Task Force:

- Are there actually 'Natural Leaders' emerging from among the extension staff you've trained on CLTS? (i.e. Can you clearly recognise very enthusiastic extension staff who clearly understand CLTS concepts and practice?)
- Are all of the Task Force volunteers genuinely excited to be leading CLTS? Or, are some only interested in case there will be other incentives as a Task Force member? (i.e. attending workshops, being 'the boss' of their peers)
- Do you have representation from different sectors on the Task Force? (Not a necessity, but a consideration.)
- To what extent are you telling the Task Force members what their role is *versus* asking them what they think?
- Does the Task Force plan on directly facilitating all new CLTS triggerings in the T/A? Or, will they scale-up CLTS in the T/A less directly, by supporting non-Task Force extension staff to carry out new triggerings? (If the Task Force is a special Triggering Unit, you may want to ensure the Task Force members are all great CLTS facilitators. If the Task Force is organising and supporting other extension workers you need them to be strong 'coaches'.)
- What management responsibilities have you delegated to the Task Force, and which ones are still yours? Are you certain this arrangement has been clearly understood between the DCT and the Task Force?
- How can you best supervise the Task Force? What kind of interactions should you have with them (i.e. phone calls, field visits, report submissions) and how frequently? Have these expectations been mutually understood?
- For your context, is a Task Force even an appropriate solution for sub-district CLTS management and monitoring? Why or why not? What other ways (besides a Task Force) could extension staff in CLTS-triggered villages be supported and encouraged to do their follow-ups and report post-CLTS changes?