

CLTS Programme

Mchinji District, MALAWI

Acting WASHE Coordinator: *Thomas Mchipha*

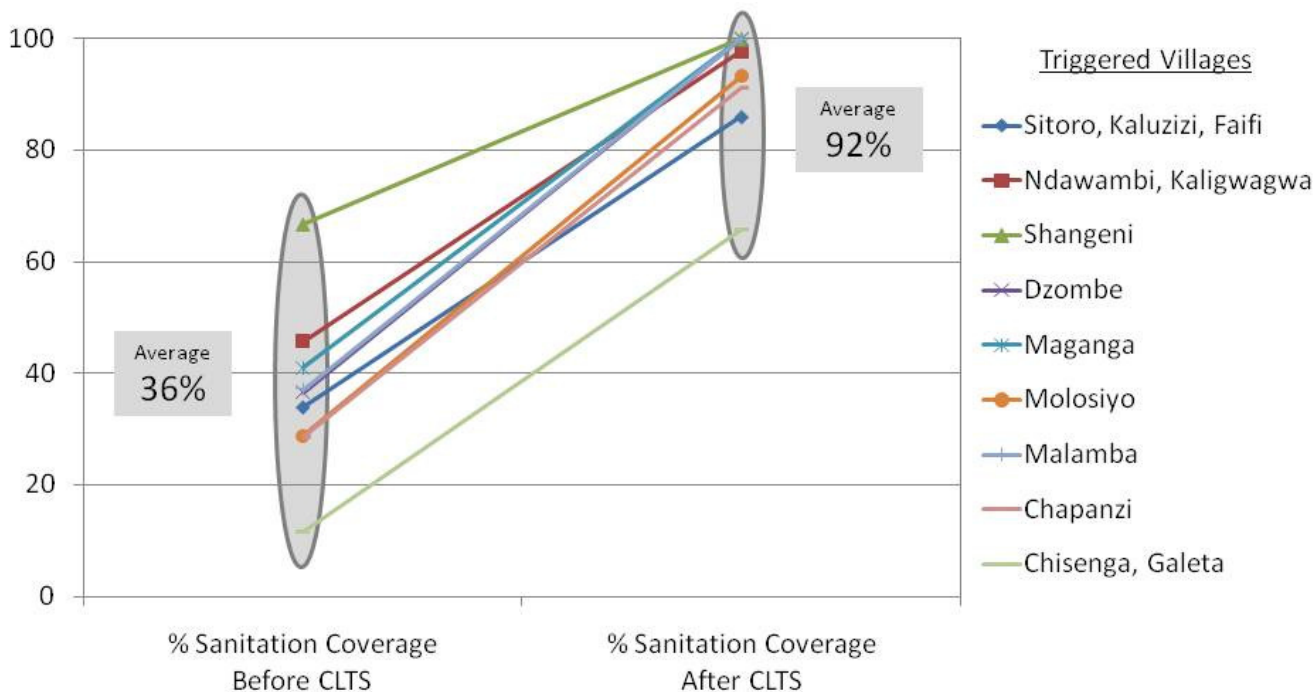
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Since late 2008, local government staff in Mchinji District have collaborated to create and deliver a 'Community Led Total Sanitation' (CLTS) Programme. These CLTS leaders and their associated front-line field staff come from the offices of Environmental Health, Water, Community Development, Forestry, Education and the District Assembly.

In Mchinji, CLTS facilitators mobilise communities to use latrines and completely eliminate open defecation without any external subsidy or material provision. They are able to do this by asking questions that 'trigger' a realisation among community members that open defecation results in the ingestion of human faeces, and serious negative health impacts. As a result of this facilitated discussion, the community becomes motivated to take collective action to change sanitation practices. The CLTS facilitator then supports emergent 'natural leaders' in developing and carrying out a practical strategy to ensure that all members of the community are using latrines. The strategies usually contain specific provisions for ensuring that vulnerable community members are taken care of, such as single mothers and the elderly (*visit www.communityledtotalsanitation.org*).

So far in Mchinji District, 4 training sessions have been conducted to orient over 100 district personnel in CLTS facilitation techniques. At least 144 villages have been triggered and approximately 71 of these villages have been certified 'Open Defecation Free' (ODF) so far. Even in villages that have not been officially verified ODF, front-line staff have recorded huge increases in the number of latrines constructed and in use.

The graph below shows the first 13 villages triggered in Mchinji during November 2008. On average, the starting sanitation coverage (number of latrines divided by the number of households) was 36%. After CLTS facilitation by district staff, sanitation coverage rose to 92%. This improvement represents 622 new latrines constructed and used by the community without subsidy from UNICEF or district government.



Highlights of the Mchinji District CLTS Approach

Among the 12 local government districts in Malawi implementing CLTS, Mchinji's programme is particularly strong. There are several aspects of the Mchinji District approach to implementing CLTS which may be interesting and useful to those involved with CLTS programmes elsewhere.

UNCONVENTIONAL MANAGEMENT APPROACH

- The acting WASHE Coordinator (Deputy DEHO) has a very inclusive and participatory management style. His positive attitude makes him approachable by staff who report to him, despite traditional hierarchy barriers that can have a tendency to constrain open communication.

CO-OPERATION BETWEEN SECTORS IN THE DISTRICT

- Members of the District Coordinating Team (DCT) for Water & Sanitation have excellent working relationships with one another. Environmental Health, Water, Education, Development, Forestry and the District Assembly collaborate regularly and effectively to provide input on the CLTS programme. They also role model and provide leadership that is needed to generate enthusiasm and secure the participation of front-line staff from their respective departments.

DECENTRALISED SUB-DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

- After the third and fourth CLTS training sessions in Traditional Authority (T/A) Mkanda, several of the extension workers in attendance decided that they would band together to form a 'Task Force'. This sub-district team defined their mandate to manage, monitor, and motivate their fellow extension workers to actively support CLTS in the months following the training. The CLTS results so far in T/A Mkanda suggest that this sub-district leadership approach is an effective practice (*see CLTS Practice Note #1*).



Several members of the CLTS Task Force in T/A Mkanda after they did a monitoring visit to some triggered villages. (Left to right: UNV, Forestry Asst., Community Development Asst., Primary Education Advisor, Sr. Health Surveillance Asst.)

Current Challenges

The greatest challenge in Mchinji is that the district officers leading the CLTS programme are stretched by many other responsibilities, WASHE-related and otherwise. With limited time available to monitor and verify the work of their CLTS facilitators, ground-level teams are not being pushed and supported to achieve as much and as quickly as they could with more coaching and supervision. This management strain should be somewhat relieved when a replacement District Water Officer (i.e. WASHE Coordinator) is hired.