

VISIT TO MATHARE DURING THE SLTS WORKSHOP

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From 23rd August to 26th August 2010, Kenya hosted an international workshop on School Led Total Sanitation (SLTS). The workshop was attended by participants from Africa, Asia and Europe. It was facilitated by IDS. As part of the workshop, on the last day, 26th August, participants visited Mathare slums to learn from Plan Kenya's experience of piloting Urban Community Led Total Sanitation (UCLTS). The participants spend most of the day interacting with the residents of Mathare and hearing from them what their experiences were since the UCLTS

trigger was done in their communities.

This then is a report emanating from the reflections of the workshop's participants about their visit to Mathare.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT MATHARE SLUMS

The UN estimates that by 2030, 2 billion people will be living in slums. Slums, also known as informal settlements, not only have high population density and substandard housing, but more importantly the residents live in squalor because these areas lack critical infrastructure like water and sanitation. In Kenya alone, over 10 million people already live in slums, and this is increasing at a rate of 7% per year.

Nairobi is the capital city of Kenya with a population of about 4 million. Out of this, about 60% (2.4 million) live in informal settlements (slums) like Kibera and Mathare. The majority of these people have no access to sanitation facilities. Most facilities are not connected to the main sewer lines, or for those who are connected, the connections are not functional as they are either clogged or broken. This sorry state of affairs is what has given rise to what is commonly referred to as "flying toilets", as people defecate in plastic bags and simply dispose of them wherever they deem fit including on rooftops or their neighbors' door steps, while others resort to using plastic tins commonly known as "Kasuku" and draining the shit at the closest trenches.



The government has generally ignored the existence of people in these slums and thus failed to accord them the necessary amenities including sanitation services. The reason behind this attitude by the government is that the informal settlements are "illegal" settlements and as such they are not planned for. Whenever the government has taken note of their existence, the objective has been that of forcefully and haphazardly evicting the inhabitants from these settlements.

More recently and with the expansion of the democratic space and the campaigns that have been carried out by the civil society and human rights organizations, the government has grudgingly



accepted the legitimacy of these informal settlements. However, there have been no efforts to address the poor sanitation situation in these areas. There are no well coordinated and sustainable measures that have been made to improve access to sanitation. The situation has been aggravated by the fact that most of the slum dwellers do not own the houses they live in. The structure owners do not have legal documents for the space they have constructed the structures on. There are also no clearly laid down guidelines for the structure owners defining the quality of housing facilities and amenities that they should have. This

has led to a state of affairs where all manner of structures are put up without adhering to any by-law in regard to safety, security, access and other conveniences associated with housing. Furthermore because the structure owners want to maximize on their profits by making use of every available space, there is total disregard space for sanitation facilities.

The City Council of Nairobi and other relevant government Ministries/departments have equally failed to support these settlements with sanitation and garbage disposal facilities. The net effect of this is evidenced by huge mountains of uncollected garbage and human waste everywhere exposing the slum dwellers, especially children, to a myriad of health problems.

PILOTING URBAN CLTS

It is in light of the foregoing that Plan International, in conjunction with Community Cleaning Services (CCS), is implementing a pilot project titled “Urban Community Led Total Sanitation (UCLTS)” in selected units within the larger Mathare slums. This is a participatory approach that sensitizes communities to analyze their sanitation profile, and inspires them to stop open defecation without depending on external assistance or subsidies. Through this approach, the people of Mathare 10 have collectively taken action to clean up their environment without waiting for government-led interventions.



Mathare 10 is made up of 4 villages namely: Nyangau, Kwamburu, Mashimoni and Gumba. Through UCLTS approach the tenants from these units, together with the structure owners, are collectively coming up with sustainable ways of overcoming the challenge of poor sanitation and a filthy environment. For example, some of the structure owners have agreed to provide space that will be used for latrine construction, and some of the churches have also come

forward to be part of this noble cause. The tenants have started cleaning up some of the open defecation areas and the garbage disposal points and rehabilitating these places through planting

of trees –thus creating space for their children to play in while at the same time sanitizing the environment for the benefit of every resident.

PARTICIPANTS' OBSERVATIONS AND REFLECTIONS



Discussion with local residents revealed that they want to practice safe defecation but they don't have a place to go to: access is limited because use of a private toilet costs 30 shilling per households or 2 shilling per visit per person. Although the problem of sanitation in Mathare is overwhelming, CLTS trigger has ignited the spark among the people especially youth. Natural leaders who emerged during the process have started taking action like motivating people to use toilets that are available in the area.

Moreover, the young CLTS facilitators selected from the area seem to be positive and confident about taking the mission “sanitation revolution in Mathare” ahead. The statement of Frank, one of the facilitators, confirmed this commitment and enthusiasm when he said that *“I just want to remain a facilitator, facilitator and facilitator till the area becomes clean”*. The involvement of young people in the process of change is signaling the beginning of new era in Mathare.

In the urban context handling the issue of sanitation is more complex than in the rural areas because communal solidarity and a spirit of joint action is often lacking. Nevertheless, the UCLTS initiative in Mathare has begun to bring people together, and started transforming people's attitude about open defecation. For example some families have started using structure owners' toilets even if it means paying two shilling for the service. The young girls and boys cleaning the drains and removing the heaps of garbage from the area are a living testimony of their collective commitment to embrace change.

The partnership with Community Cleaning Services (CCS) is a good initiative because cleaning toilets is one of their core functions and they have good experience in this. This initiative is also generating employment for the youth as well as well helping people in getting their toilets clean at a small fee. Mambo, a young man, mentioned that *“I am shit cleaner and earning money out of it as well as helping people to get out of this filthy environment. It's a nice vocation for me”*. The youth who live in Mathare appear to be more positive and are prepared to change their sanitation situation; however, they are constrained by lack of space for latrine construction.

Many workshop participants were shocked to learn about the concept of ‘flying toilet’. Flying toilet means people defecate in polythene bags in their house and then throw them any where. Maria a resident of Mathare mentioned that, *“sometimes in the morning we find shit in front of our house door without any clue of the culprit. We are helpless and forced to live in such situation that is embarrassing and humiliating. But now we can see a ray of hope and are confident that situation will definitely change for the better.”*

The useful lessons learnt in Mathare can be replicated to deal with poor urban sanitation in other countries facing similar challenges.

It was impressive to see the locals make use of the small spaces available to practice horticulture by growing different kinds of crops that contribute to their subsistence. It was encouraging to note that the people of Mathare were positive in their attitude in spite of the hostile environment that they live in. The situation is aggravated by lack of proper medical services within the area.

POINT OF DISCUSSION: TIMING OF TRIGGERING

There was an interesting point of discussion. At what time should triggering in informal urban settlements be done? Should it be done after sanitation facilities have been established, or before they are established? The following arguments were made by the proponents of each side. It is for you to decide where you belong.



Triggering after establishing sanitation facilities

- This will enable more responsible use of the existing facilities leading to sustainability.
- If you trigger before establishing sanitation facilities, people will feel overwhelmed by their situation. This is because they will appreciate the need to stop open defecation, but they will have no facilities to go to. The situation is made worse when they have to pass through overbearing bureaucracies before they can get things done.
- If you trigger before you have sanitation facilities in an urban environment, people may end up being blamed for practicing open defecation when they are not to blame for their situation.

Triggering before establishing sanitation facilities

- If you wait until you have sanitation facilities, then the situation may never change, because no one is sensitized enough about poor sanitation practices.
- If you trigger before creating the facilities, then it will generate a sense of urgency that will mobilize all critical stakeholders to take appropriate action.
- In this situation due to the participatory nature of the triggering process, there is going to be ownership of the decisions made by the communities. The community involvement in problem analysis, decisions making and implementation will lead to greater sustainability of the outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on their own background and experience, participants made suggestions for how they thought the situation in Mathare could be improved:

- Segregation of waste (bio degradable and non- bio degradable) at source or domestic level should be introduced. This can help youth groups involved in garbage collection to collect garbage from the house that is already segregated. As an incentive the people can be paid a small fee. The money for paying them can come from the proceeds raised from the sale of garbage. As they said “taka ni pato” (Garbage is income).
- To achieve the desired results and to sustain a clean environment it is important to involve the women as much as possible as they are important stakeholders in the exercise. They can be encouraged to form groups that will responsible for maintaining cleanliness in given territories or blocks. This can contribute in scaling up the sanitation campaign in Mathare or in other areas also.

- Ecological sanitation could be considered for an area such as Mathare. The advantages that can accrue from such a sanitation are as follows:-
 - Bio gas can be generated which can be used as fuel for cooking.
 - People from the area can run these toilets and can generate money out it by selling urine and compost.
 - It does not require sewerage system
 - It does not require water for flushing shit. This is because the area also suffers from water shortage.
- Government officials and other influential people should be involved in follow up visits. Their participation and appreciation can encourage people.
- Corporate bodies should be encouraged to build sanitation facilities in the informal settlements such as Mathare as part their corporate social responsibility.
- All Church representatives, the structure owners, the facilitators and active partners who are supporting the movement of creating an open defecation free environment in Mathare should be acknowledged and encouraged by recognizing their efforts e.g through the local media.

