

# Taking Community Led Total Sanitation to Scale with Quality

## Strategies for ODF Verification at Scale

### Introduction

Verification is a process to assess the ODF and hygiene status of a community. Certification is the official recognition of the achievement of ODF and other required conditions. Verification and certification may take place at the same time, or they may be separated and undertaken at different times. They may be conducted by the same people or agency, or by different people and agencies. There is also a wide variety of practices in processes of verification and certification in different countries, and often within countries. In consequence there is experience of a range of options for who verifies, criteria for verification, and process.

This note lists challenges and opportunities in going to scale with quality, presents contrasting experiences and ideas from practices in six countries, and concludes with recommendations/ideas, sources for further information and an appendix on India.

### Challenges and Opportunities

Going to scale with verification poses many challenges:

- Identifying and standardising good practices for consistent application at scale
- Recognising that good verification practices vary with country contexts, e.g. with the way *ODF* and *improved sanitation* are defined in the programme or country
- Determining who should conduct verifications. This is one key to the credibility of the process and becomes increasingly important as programs scale up
- Making the verification process a positive experience for communities so that they learn, are empowered and improve their practices
- Ensuring that verification and certification can keep up with communities' claims to be ODF without excessive waiting time
- Maintaining verification standards at levels which are not so strict that almost all fail, and not so lax that almost all pass
- Managing to go to scale while still encouraging celebrations of ODF verification and certification
- Ensuring resources and capacity to conduct verifications in a timely and effective fashion on a large and sometimes exponentially expanding scale. This critical challenge needs to be anticipated, confronted and planned for at the start of programmes.

## Experiences and Ideas

### 1. India

The major lesson from Indian experience is that if verification is lax and linked with financial or other rewards, it is highly vulnerable to widespread abuse. This lesson and warnings come from Indian experience with the Nirmal Gram Puruskar (NGP - see Handbook pp 54-5). Although the NGP is in most cases not connected with CLTS, it includes verification of ODF status. Since 2004 the NGP scheme has been giving awards to Gram Panchayats (GPs) (local government entities) that achieve ODF status and are environmentally clean. Leaders of successful GPs go to Delhi to be honoured by the President, and receive substantial financial rewards. Standards and processes were the same from 2004 to 2008. Initially their application was very strict: a GP in Mandi District which had made a great effort was failed because TOILET had been painted by mistake on the doors of two store rooms (and this despite the fact that the rooms had no toilet pans). Later as applicants for the award multiplied exponentially across India into thousands, verification and certification were contracted out to NGOs which in turn subcontracted to other NGOs which in some cases subcontracted yet again to individuals for a fraction of the original remuneration. There were many complaints that the evaluators had taken bribes from the GPs. The result was fake reporting, described by one well-informed source as a joke. Then in 2008 and 2009, a team led by Vinod Mishra, director of Training, Key Resource Centre, Nainital, was commissioned to verify, State by State, the ODF status of NGP communities. They inspected 1018 GP applicants in 6 States (Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and Karnataka) and certified 417 GPs and 3 Block Panchayats. However, in 2009 the pass rate became minimal, with only 1 out of 621 applicants successful in Haryana, and none in Bihar. This high failure rate followed the adoption by Government of an on-line verification system in which third party verifiers from NGOs or research organisations from other States are required to stay in the communities overnight. They supply data to the computer programme which then determines pass or fail. Inspections are required to be rigorous, including for instance looking at the fingernails of children in school. Arguably India was too tough at first, then far too lax, and now very strict again, possibly too strict. The system seems to entail little community participation or learning.

See [www.ddws.nic.in](http://www.ddws.nic.in) and appendix for more detail. A comprehensive account of the procedure can be found in *WSP Monitoring Systems for Incentive Programs: Learning from large-scale rural sanitation initiatives in India*, Water and Sanitation Program, World Bank, November 2010.

**Recommendation:** Close control and regular monitoring of the verification process as the country moves to scale

### 2. Ethiopia

In the past different institutions and organisations have had different verification guides. The Ministry of Health has now developed a verification protocol that will be used all over the country by all stakeholders. A draft guide prepared by the government-level CLTS Task Force is already in use. This will be finalised, approved and distributed by the end of 2011.

The sequence according to the draft verification guide is:

- Village self-verification.

- The Kebele (the smallest administrative unit) verifies and writes a letter requesting verification by the district.
- The district sends its own staff to verify, and give certification.
- Finally, the community celebrates its ODF status.

The verification protocol includes indicators to be used by the verifying bodies at the different levels, from village to national.

**Recommendation:** Development of national verification protocols in coordination with all stakeholders .

### **3. Indonesia**

Local government facilitators organize ODF verification events. Verification teams include community health centre and sub-district level staff, together with community representatives from other ODF communities. Members and facilitators of the community being verified do not participate in verification. A standardized protocol is used which:

- explains definitions of ODF and improved/unimproved sanitation and the purpose and process of verification;
- provides a checklist for observation of the environment and household facilities, and
- lists questions to guide interviews with households and community leaders.

In addition, during its visit, the verification team checks indicators of the community's commitments. These include:

- village regulations/sanctions to check open defecation;
- the existence of a monitoring system involving key community leaders; and
- functioning school sanitation facilities.

ODF verification results are immediately shared with the community and, if needed, a time-frame for re-verification is set. (*East Java Total Sanitation and Sanitation Marketing project experience*)

**Recommendation:** Verification can include community commitments for maintaining ODF.

### **4. Malawi**

There is no standardized verification method yet but the GoM is in the process of finalizing a strategy which outlines the verification process. A template for verification will be developed by the national coordination unit and distributed nationwide. The new verification process will be conducted jointly by community leaders, district representatives, and NGOs working in the area. In terms of physical facilities, verification criteria have two levels:

- Level 1 - ODF: Every household uses a latrine with privacy, there is no shit in the bush (100% latrine coverage, sharing is acceptable)
- Level 2 - ODF ++: Every household has a latrine with cover and hand washing facility (100% coverage, sharing is acceptable); all religious institutions, market centres and health centres in the catchment area have latrines with covers and hand washing facilities (100% coverage)

**Recommendation:** The verification process can include different stages of ODF.

### 5. Pakistan

A three-member Verification Committee consists of a community leader, a facilitation agency member and a nominee from local government. The committee holds meetings with stakeholders at the community level and with community institutions, and physically verifies OD eradication. It examines the streets and open spaces and randomly visits some of the households to check that facilities exist and are used properly. The ODF certification is issued by the local government. It expires after six months and the same team visits again to determine whether the community is still ODF.

**Recommendation:** ODF status can be time-bound and subject to re-certification.

### 6. Kenya

For its ambitious programme to achieve an ODF rural Kenya by 2013, the Kenya Government with partners has produced *A Practitioners Guide for ODF Certification in Kenya*. This guide includes training of enumerators to include handwashing, safe water chain, food hygiene, and household environment hygiene and sanitation. The initial large-scale verifications have been conducted by the NGO KWAHO in Nyanza and Western Provinces. Of 349 villages claiming to be ODF, 162 or 48 per cent were found ODF and 187 or 54 per cent not ODF. Verification criteria include latrine coverage, handwashing facilities and dish rack coverage.

#### The verification process in Kenya

The third party certification is to verify and include that:

- All homesteads have functional latrines
- There are footpaths leading to the latrines to confirm use
- The evaluators physically visit the latrines to establish usage
- The evaluators visit previous OD places like bushes, open fields, maize plantation, behind the houses etc
- Hold discussions with children to verify information provided by adults. Also randomly stop children on the way and ask them where they defecate.
- Use smell as a guide to places where there is bad smell to establish what is happening
- Water points are often sites for OD. Visit the community's sources of water within the village such as springs, streams, rivers, boreholes etc and certify that they are ODF

(KWAHO 2011:6)

The process of verification was oriented to be positive for the community, even when found to be not ODF. An injunction for evaluators was 'Do not be the bloodhound but rather a watchdog'. KWAHO reported 'The most critical aspect of the certification exercise was to encourage and celebrate sanitation progress and innovations attained by various communities. Even when the village had not attained ODF status it was our mandate to encourage the natural leaders, the CLTS

teams towards attaining ODF status. The approach also encompassed appreciative inquiry in to the way forward for those communities that had not attained ODF status.’ (KWAHO 2011: 7).

**Recommendation:** Make verification a positive and encouraging experience for the community even if it is found not yet to be ODF

## 7. Cote d’Ivoire

There are 2 major regions in Cote d’Ivoire where CLTS is currently being rolled out – Bouaké and



Tiassalé. Exchange verification missions are planned in advance between the two. The missions last for a few days to a week, and teams include members from the government, NGOs, local authorities and community representatives. The criteria are very clear and the evaluation teams take the role very seriously. At the end of each day, a debriefing session is held to compare notes and to make recommendations, and dates are set for any necessary re-verifications.

**Latrine Inspection in Sileoule Community, Bouaké**

After the final recommendations of the teams are made, celebrations are held to congratulate the successful communities. This inter-regional practice is not only more objective than using purely local teams but has also proved very useful for cross-fertilisation and the exchange of practices and ideas.

**Recommendation:** Include CLTS practitioners from other regions in the verification process.

### Indicators and process for verification

One option for verification is to ask communities to suggest their own indicators and to carry out their own verifications. This would fit before putting themselves forward for external verification.

Indicators vary quite widely between countries and organisations. However, some are very common if not universal:

- Everyone in the community has access to safe disposal of faeces. Latrine coverage is assessed, bearing in mind that a community can be ODF through sharing.
- Latrines have covers
- Latrines are used (there are paths to them, other indicators...)
- There are no OD areas and no evidence of OD
- Handwashing facilities with soap or ash are present and used
- Safe disposal of faeces of young children
- Satisfactory school sanitation and handwashing facilities, separate for girls and boys

Others which are not universal, or ‘secondary criteria’ include

- Latrines are clean
- Plate racks
- Household water cleanliness

- Environmental cleanliness - Solid waste disposal; Composting; Liquid drainage; Soak pit; General street cleanliness
- Latrines for passers-by and/or migrant labourers
- Distance from wells to avoid groundwater pollution
- Latrines in markets, public places, government buildings, transport centres...and these are kept clean.

The **Ghana verification guidelines** (Checklist for Community ODF Verification and Certification, 2010) include a second stage after ODF of the 'Model Clean Community', where the following criteria apply:

- At least 90% of all houses in the community should have an improved latrine
- An increase in hand washing practice (evidenced by hand washing facilities with soap or other agent) close to toilet facilities, in institutions such as schools and health posts
- An improvement in general environmental sanitation (evidenced by maintenance of refuse dump sites, waste water management, clearing of bushes, absence of animal droppings and clean lanes and alleys) in the community
- Evidence that initial rudimentary latrines are moving up the sanitation ladder

A good process often includes:

- Verification is by a third party
- The visit is an unannounced surprise
- Transects and visual inspections
- Household visits and discussions (often random, a percentage of the total)
- Discussions with children, also old people
- A positive and appreciative attitude, even when the community does not qualify, looking to the future and reinforcing actions to achieve or sustain ODF
- Subsequent follow up leading to re-verification and/or celebration

### **Recommendations/ideas**

Drawing on the experiences and approaches above and other sources, our recommendations and ideas are:

- Plan ahead anticipating the need to go to scale with verification. Avoid the situation in one country where at one time there were over 200 communities waiting, and only some 20 had been verified. Identify who or which organisations will be able to handle rapidly expanding demands for verification.
- Ensure resources will be sufficient. Funds needed for verification at scale will be substantial and need to be budgeted for well in advance, especially when a programme is ambitious and expanding fast.
- Prefer third party verifiers. Those with interests in positive outcomes should not be involved. Verifiers should be rewarded for impartial thoroughness. Choices of participants present many options including – Natural Leaders and others from neighbouring communities, NGOs from other areas, local Health Workers, and other officials or volunteers. Verification should not be subcontracted.

- Train and monitor those in third party verification organisations. Make sure they are familiar with CLTS
- Encourage community involvement as part of a learning process. Whether failing or passing, make verifications positive experiences, looking to future pride and self-respect, sustainability and/or achievements. With participation and transparency in verification, a non- ODF community will learn what is needed to get ODF status and may be motivated to do that soon. Verification findings can be shared in open meetings, with care not to humiliate.
- Do not treat verification as a one-off but part of a continuing process. In Pakistan and some other countries, a verifying team revisits a community after a period such as six months. In Kenya, there is a revisit to confirm ODF status before celebration takes place. Some national protocols include different levels of ODF (eg Ghana, Malawi).
- Probe very high rates of passing (say over 70 per cent) or very high rates of failure (say, again, over 70 per cent). With very high failures, consider stopping triggering and concentrating on post-triggering follow up. With very high passes, raise questions whether criteria and their application are adequate
- Use celebrations after verification to build community pride and confidence, and to encourage others. Government officials, politicians, local leaders, and other stakeholders to be invited, and Natural leaders honoured. Press and TV coverage where appropriate. Masons and others may use the occasion, leading to moves to sustainability up the sanitation ladder.
- Recognise that in going to scale, communities may increasingly have to organise their own celebrations with less outside involvement. To the extent possible, provide encouragement and support.

#### **Sources:**

WSP 2010 *Monitoring Systems for Incentive Programs: Learning from large-scale rural sanitation initiatives in India*, Water and Sanitation Program, World Bank November

Mukherjee, Nilanjana. Wartono, Djoko and Robiarto, Amin. 2011. *Managing the Flow of Monitoring Information to Improve Rural Sanitation in East Java*. Water and Sanitation Program

KWAHO 2011 *ODF Third Party Verification: Nyanza and Western Provinces*, Kenya Water for Health Organization and GOK-Unicef WASH Program

GOK/UNICEF/KWAHO/IN TOUCH *A Practitioners Guide for ODF Certification in Kenya*

Kar, Kamal with Robert Chambers 2008 *Handbook on Community-Led Total Sanitation* pp. 54-5

Chambers, Robert 2009 *Going to Scale with Community-Led Total Sanitation: Reflections on Experience, Issues and Ways Forward*, Practice Paper Number 1, IDS Sussex, pp 28-30

#### **Appendix 1: NGP verification and certification in India.**

Verification can go for top down target approaches. NGP verification in India has motivated fake reporting because every district management wants to be able to report more achievements.

The Government of India has been doing ODF verification since 2004 and providing Nirmal Gram Puruskar (NGP) awards by the President of India to qualified villages. Any Gram Panchayat, Block Panchayat or District Panchayat which fulfils the criteria can apply for the award. A 15-member NGP team from the Government of India selects verifying agencies at the national level and gives them responsibility for verification of ODF status.

From 2004 to 2009, the verifying agencies were also the recommending agencies. In 2008, the Government started a 10% cross verification of recommended panchayats by a third party, and in 2009 made this 100%.

From 2004-2009, the survey format contained four sections- Village Profile, Community Focus Group Discussion, School and Aganwadi (child care centre) Sanitation Facilities, Solid and Liquid Waste Management and General Cleanliness.

Significant, realistic and useful changes occurred in the process and indicators for the NGP in 2010 (see [www.ddws.nic.in](http://www.ddws.nic.in)). The verifying agencies that carry out the survey are now separated from the recommending agency. Every verifying agency sends three persons (two investigators and one team leader) to each gram panchayat (GP), where they spend 24 hours. Five different formats for surveys have been created by Gol:

- General information about GPs- revenue of villages and habitations, and discussion with panchayat members, teachers, aganwadi members.....
- Household survey- If households are below 500 then the investigator has to go to 50 households and if households are more than 500 then investigator has to go to 100 households for door to door verification.
- School survey- this is very descriptive, including number of students, classrooms, and sanitation facilities for boys and girls, availability of teachers etc. Investigators make a separate report for each school.
- Aganwadi survey- this is also very descriptive, including number of children, classrooms, sanitation facilities for boys and girls, availability of teachers etc. Investigators make a separate report for each anganwadi.
- Solid and liquid waste management and general cleanliness.
- Photographic proof that the investigators have been to the community takes the form of a photograph of them in the presence of a community leader and showing some landmarks.

After the survey, the survey agency completes the online entry. Gol has developed a software programme for the identifying those who qualify to be awarded the NGP. In case of failure, States have three weeks to appeal with proof. If Gol is satisfied with the appeal, then a second survey team visits the GP to check the facts.

The new process is stricter and more impartial, though still vulnerable to abuse because of the large financial rewards which follow certification. Many States still have a large number of NGP awards for GPs which are actually not ODF. There is no community involvement or empowerment in the verification process.

Source: edited from Annexure 5 NGP verification shared by Vinod Mishra, Director, Trainings, KRC, Nainital, in Knowledge Links *Mapping CLTS in India: terrain and trajectory*, June 2011 on CLTS website