

**Blog from the annual review meeting of the project *Empowering self-help sanitation of rural and peri-urban communities and schools in Africa*,
21-25th February 2011, Awassa**

Day 1: 21st February 2011

Carolyn Nabalema, Plan Uganda

Being that Uganda was grappling with the issue of marginalized groups, I think this is a worthy lesson/ insight to take back home!

During triggering, facilitators can raise issues on how to support the elderly and physically challenged. A reasonable width of squat holes in consideration of young children who might fear using latrines with wide squat holes can also help. However, supporting the physically challenged and marginalized groups by communities to enhance ODF attainment should be handled in a way that empowers them into self support for latrine/ sanitation improvement and not reinforce their helplessness by assuming they cannot make it on their own. Some physically challenged, widows, etc are actually able to support their latrine construction for example financially, if enabling environments such as access to information on masonry skills in the community, among others, are enhanced for them.

Dan Kapatuka, Plan Malawi

Partnerships are very crucial in the scaling up of Community Led Total Sanitation. Due to resource constraints, a single organization cannot reach out to many districts. For instance in Uganda, Plan is using the government's line ministries to develop and advocate for a country level strategy on CLTS and Sanitation Marketing. Being Lead and Chair Organization for WASNET, Plan Uganda can help influence decisions in the sanitation sector there.

In CLTS, behavioural change is achieved once the communities own the project process, this can be achieved through working together with them to form checklists (and not necessarily imposing on them) which can be used as the basis for attaining ODF status. The process can further be owned through monitoring construction and other follow ups, communities should develop a mindset which will gear them towards doing things to help up lift their lives than doing it for Plan. Once ownership has been attained, community members can always go on exchange visits to program areas where CLTS has yielded remarkable results and outcomes. This can further help in the sustainability of the concept. The CLTS approach in some countries for example in Sierra Leone is successful because there is always close link and follow up by Project Coordinators from Plan who give feedback to facilitators once triggering has been done in a particular community. The feedback is in form of advice and direction while focusing on the next triggering process. This has helped facilitators there to better their approaches for different communities.

In Kenya there is good progress in the implementation of urban community led total sanitation (UCLTS). The Kenyan government's MoHPS has also adopted the CLTS approach to make lasting strides in the improvement of the country's rural sanitation status, as a means to check on the progress made in improving the rural sanitation, the government set annual targets and coordination for CLTS activities.

In CLTS it should always be noted that it is important to put much emphasis on ODF follow ups until ODF status has been achieved rather than to continue triggering

additional communities. There is also need to understand social – cultural dynamics of target communities; in some countries mother in-law and son/daughter in-law do not use the same latrine because to do such a thing is a taboo. In cases like these it's when the natural leaders can be crucially used to break those cultural barriers.

Empowered communities will help “differently abled” groups of people with physical support like digging and construction of latrines at places near their households, it important to observe equity in this project if success, i.e. ODF is to be achieved. This is where youths groups can also play an additional crucial role than just helping their households build latrines.

The CLTS approach has failed to prosper where communities are very complacent about their sanitation situation. In communities where sanitation subsidies took place, it is difficult to effect behavioural change among community members who have their mind set on waiting for hand outs (dependency syndrome) than developing simple means to improve their sanitation situation. Further to this the reluctance or complete lack of participation/commitment and dedication from local government trainers has proved to be another barrier standing in the way of attaining 100% sanitation coverage in many countries.

Day 3: 23^d February 2011

Mascha Singeling, Plan Netherland

The biggest change

The translator tells me that it's time to go, and just as I want to follow him, a woman wrapped in a white linen cloth, takes my hand and pulls me into her garden. With a big smile on her face she shows me the toilet that her families build from leaves and a plastic sack that serves as a door. On the ground there is a hole that is covered by a white stone that is attached to the roof by a string. She enthusiastically demonstrates how they wash their hands with the ashes and the bottle with water that is placed next to the toilet.

I show her my camera and she proudly poses next to toilet so that I can take a picture of her with her toilet. After this she pulls me into her house that consists of the same round structure as the toilet, but only bigger and finished with clay. After my eyes have adjusted to the darkness, I can see a bed on my left side and a small orange kitten is walking on the floor. Suddenly I hear water running. As I turn my head I can see that it's not water, but that a cow is urinating inside the house. Half of the house serves as a barn, the other half is used for sleeping and eating.

The same woman that just proudly showed me her own toilet that her family built to prevent them from getting sick, also lets their cattle urinate and shit in the same room in which they sleep and prepare their food! I am still trying to wrap my mind around it, when the translator enters the house and says it is really time to continue now. The women still smiling, holds my hand as she leads me to a large field, and other people join us on the way. On the fields the entire village is enthusiastically clapping and singing the shit song. In the bus back to the hotel, a colleague of mine tells me that all the villagers have proudly constructed their own toilet and they are now demanding the local government to help them to improve their drinking water supply.

And then I realized that the biggest achievement in this village was not the toilets that they build but the self-esteem that has empowered them to improve their own live. The toilets that they build are just the first step which has given them to confidence to take charge and continue to improve their own living conditions.

Day 4: 24th February 2011

Dan Kapatuka, Plan Malawi

It came up in Plan Zambia presentation that volunteers who are engaged in sponsorship and Agric programs receive support and incentives in the form of bicycles, umbrella, and T-Shirts and this is not happening in CLTS volunteerism. This poses a great challenge in the work of CLTS program in the communities.

It was mentioned that CLTS project should consider procuring working tools for volunteers. This needs further discussion at all levels

In Sierra Leone women and girls are subject to cleaning latrines. Some natural leaders have started to raise awareness of the need to involve boys and men as well.

It appeared in some of the presentations from the field visit groups that latrines constructed in the communities do not have hand washing facilities attached. Therefore, the hygiene component of CLTS needs to be encouraged and monitored.

Women and elderly people were most interested in latrine construction. In some parts of Niger, provision of latrine is a must and is part of the requirement for engaging a woman in marriage.

Daniel Sarpong, Plan Ghana

A strong network of natural leaders will help to achieve sustainability of the program in the longer term. Members from different countries shared their views about integrating gender issues into CLTS because as was observed through the field visits, women were not part of the natural leaders, all were men. The deliberation favoured the inclusion of women into the natural leaders' network. This being the time when Plan Worldwide is implementing the gender Policy, so all countries should move in the same direction and Plan Ethiopia should deliberately include on promoting gender in its programming such as the CLTS.

A lot has been learnt from Plan Ethiopia in its successful implementation of CLTS especially the construction of road side latrines which are visible in all the communities that were visited during the Pan African CLTS Workshop. The management and maintenance of the latrines is the whole community's responsibility. However the household which is most near to the latrine is given more responsibility to look after the latrine. The Shit Eradication Committee (SED) also takes a lead role in the management of these road side latrines. Another thing worth mentioning is child participation; children in Gaaluko Haro Kebele were able to convey different messages on practicing good hygiene as well as being agents of change in their respective communities in discouraging members of their villages to practice open defecation.