

WASH Campaign Cameroon

Inhabitants of Tinto Council Area Benefit from Improved Hygiene and Sanitation Schemes through CLTS

For the past decades hygienic conditions have been a major health menace to the population of the Tinto council area in Manyu division of the South West Region of Cameroon. Therefore, the over 10.000 inhabitants has undergone a serious campaign to improve water, sanitation and hygiene in the municipality. This is aimed at reducing the rate of poor hygiene and sanitation related diseases, thus improving the health conditions of all villagers.

High urgency in anglophone Cameroon

In the Southwest and Northwest regions of Cameroon we experience a high urgency for improvement of sanitation and hygiene. There are currently three main reasons that prevent a real improvement. First, most villagers are not aware of the causes of the diseases and of the fact that these diseases are related to their own actions. Second, sanitation facilities are hardly available at the rural villages. And third, the government lacks or fails to supply the means to implement sanitation and hygiene programs.



At the same time there are few initiatives that focus substantially on this aspect of health. Therefore, Partner Vision and LiveBuild have decided to start a widespread WASH-program (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) in 24 villages with approximately 72,000 beneficiaries; out of which over 12,000 are children under 5 and approximately 17,500 are women of child-bearing age. Seven communities of the Tinto council area; Nchemba I, Tinto Mbu, Tinto Wire, Tinto Kerieh, Fotabe, Akiriba and Defang were the first communities where the program has started.

Devastating hygienic conditions

The baseline study carried out in Tinto at the start of this WASH program revealed a devastating hygiene and sanitation situation with 0% of households being able to practice simple household water treatment, only about 40% of households practicing safe storage of drinking water, less than 40% of the households practicing proper hand washing with soap, only about 20% of households having access to an improved sanitary facility, and only about 25% of households carrying out proper cleaning and disinfection of the poor and open pit latrines.

Following this rather shocking and unhealthy statistics, the program set out as general objective; to improve by 60% the hygiene and sanitation and toilet situation in seven communities of the Tinto municipality. This was followed by some specific objectives such as increasing by 50% the participation of community members in the monitoring and improving of sanitary and hygiene conditions, reducing open defecation by 70% and increasing by 75% the cleaning and disinfection of toilets in the communities involved by September 2014.

Open defecation as a habit

Mfor Ayukngie II, traditional ruler in Tinto explains: “The issue of Open Defecation is a generational problem that dates back as far as the existence of our fore fathers. They use to spend most of their time in the forest hunting and in the streams and rivers doing fishing. Most often they defecate in the forest as they hunt around or in the waters as they do fishing. They spend limited time at home and saw no need to construct toilet. While at home when they are pressed they just go in the bushes behind the houses and defecate. They hardly find time to clear the bushes around the homes. This practice gradually became a habit and was inculcated by the recent



generations. This is the more reason why up till date our people do not really see the importance of toilet. Most of them still use the nearby bushes as their permanent latrine and that is why they would not want to clear the bushes around their homes. A few sink very shallow holes and cross two or three sticks on it and call it latrine. This issue is really a serious one and we really need help”

The people of this part of Cameroon; “Bayangie” as they are called have a steadfast love for their culture and practice what culture and tradition demands irrespective of the consequences of some of these practices on their health and environment. For example, in every feasting gathering every body drink palm wine from the same cup. This is a practice that leads to spread of contagious diseases.



CLTS considered as the right approach

The above objectives were to be achieved through exposing and empowering community members in each of the seven communities on Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS), facilitated by Cameroonian CLTS consultants from Partner Vision.

Based on these objectives the program adopted some baseline indicators such as; access to water supply and use of household water treatment technologies and safe storage, hand washing with soap at critical moments (after defecation, after cleaning a child, before preparing food, before feeding a child, and before eating), access to



and use of sanitary facilities for the disposal of human excreta (water closet facilities, pit latrines with a slab, composting toilets, ventilated improved pit latrines).

Following the baseline study was the implementation of the different stages of the Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS); Pre-triggering, Triggering and post triggering. After this the communities were introduced to post CLTS activities.

Eye opening exercises

The triggering exercise that created a very high sense of disgust and shame amongst the community members sent a wave of danger signal down their spines. It pushed them to realize that they need to change their habits and behavior.

This eye opening exercise did not only bring shame, disgrace and dissatisfaction on the community members but equally



spur them up for action. In all the seven communities, the members set up an aggressive plan of action to improve on their sanitation and hygiene situation and to put an end to Open Defecation.

Featuring in their plans were actions like; door to door sensitization, institution of community general clean up campaign days, toilet inspection, the “Operation dig your toilet” campaign, group sensitization and mass sensitization campaigns during local market days and other public manifestations.

HYSAN Soldiers

Under the supervision of the CLTS facilitators, each of the seven communities designated 8 members, gender sensitive who were trained as Hygiene and Sanitation Soldiers (HYSAN Soldiers). The HYSAN Soldiers have as task to ensure the strict implementation of the plan of action, carry out interpersonal and mass sensitization campaigns, do door to door toilet inspection and follow up households earmarked for latrine construction. They are supervised by the traditional council under the chairmanship of the traditional rulers (chiefs). The entire exercise is also being closely monitored by the Tinto Municipal Council.



In order to boost up the initiative of the community, Partner Vision reinforced the capacity of the HYSAN Soldiers to enable them carry out their task hitch free. They were trained on Communication for Behaviour Change (CBC), the elementary of WASH, community anchorage, volunteerism, conflict resolution amongst others.

First results

So far in some of the communities where ignition started first like Nchemba I and the Tinto communities, the HYSAN Soldiers have been able to sensitize over 4000 people in over 200 households. The soldiers are also carrying out routine visits to restaurant and bar owners for hygiene and sanitation inspection. They also carry out general sensitization on weekly bases at the Tinto main market.



A monthly community general clean up campaign has gone operational in 4 of the 7 villages; every last Friday of the month, last Monday of the month, first Tuesday of the month and third Wednesday of the month for Nchemba I, Tinto Mbu, Tinto Wire and Tinto Kerieh respectively.

Dig your latrine

The “operation dig your latrine” is on going in these communities though the pace is still slow. This is partly due to the heavy rains in this part of the country and partly due to the fact that it is a completely new phenomenon, thus will take some time for the community to totally engulf it. These heavy rains have rendered sinking difficult. Some 86 newly constructed toilets have been tracked by the HYSAN Soldiers in 4 of the communities. However it is expected that with continuous sensitization and the

advent of the dry season, the operation will double in all the communities. The most important and significant observation so far is that the sensitization process has raised enough awareness amongst the population and the spirit of change is steadily building up in the community members. This is evident of the fact that the CLTS exercise is still a subject of discussion during every gathering and even amongst private conversations.

Also many community members are gradually adapting to the new hygiene scheme proposed by the program such as proper hand washing, water purification and general environmental cleanliness triggered by the monthly clean up campaign.

One year monitoring

Considering urgency, both partners have decided to follow up CLTS with twelve monthly Monitoring and Evaluation visits in all the communities. On monthly bases, PAVIS consultants, visit all the seven communities, having working sessions with the soldiers, traditional and municipal council officials to evaluate progress made, reflect on the implementation strategy, seek solutions to challenges and strategize a way forward. This is aimed at ensuring sustainability and inducing the spirit of project ownership on the community.

The project which started in November 2012 will end in September 2014 when the objectives will be evaluated base on the indicators. It is expected that by this time the communities must have completely engulf and buy the initiative, thus the sustainability and community ownership of the program will be guaranteed.

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