

## **"Shit should have its own house and people should have their own house": Impressions from a CLTS training workshop in Calai, Angola**

*"When we shit, those who are living downstream have the privilege of drinking our shit!"*

*"The war is over and we now have our freedom so even the shit is free. We can shit anywhere we want!"*



### **Stopping OD in the Cubango-Okavango River Basin**

We have just finished a CLTS training workshop in Calai, southern Angola – on the northern bank of the Okavango River which links Angola, Namibia and Botswana. Actually the river is called “Cubango” in Angola, “Kavango” in Namibia, and “Okavango” in Botswana. The Angola workshop was the third in a series of CLTS training events held in the three countries.

The Cubango-Okavango River Basin, one of the world’s largest inland water systems, is shared by Angola, Botswana,

and Namibia. The three countries are managing this ecosystem together through the Okavango River Basin Water Commission (OKACOM).

The workshop was organised by the Southern Africa Regional Environmental Project (SAREP) – a project which supports OKACOM to address threats to the basin’s ecosystem, improve livelihoods of basin communities, and improve the communities’ access to water supply and sanitation.

One of the biggest environmental threats to people in this area is open defecation (OD). People who shit in the bush along the river not only pollute their own environment, but also the environment of those who are living downstream. As the Angolan workshop participants teased us, *“When we shit up here, you get the privilege of drinking our shit down there.”*

SAREP’s CLTS program raises awareness of how shit pollutes the river and villages along the river and triggers action by communities to stop open defecation and build toilets.

As the first step towards this goal in southern Angola, we trained 30 volunteer members of ACADIR, an Angolan NGO which works on environmental and natural resource management. The Calai office of ACADIR is run by a dynamic community organiser called David Osuna Kawika, who participated in the CLTS pilot in the neighbouring Huila Province organised with UNICEF support. Kawika has tons of experience in community organising in Angola and Zambia and played a crucial role in organising the workshop and motivating all of those involved.

The other members of the training team came from Botswana – Gomolemo Mokete (SAREP engineer) and Ross Kidd and Puseletso Kidd (participatory trainers).

We arrived in Calai thinking we would conduct the workshop in Portuguese, but soon discovered that many participants had very little Portuguese, so we used the local language (Ngangela) as the

major medium for the workshop, with translation between English and Ngangela. Luckily several participants had lived in Namibia for several years and were comfortable in English and they took on the translation role. Working in two languages slowed things down a bit, but ensured that those who knew both languages had a thorough understanding of the issues.

### **Doing CLTS in a post conflict situation**

The workshop was run in Calai, a small town on the northern side of the Okavango. This area was affected by the civil war, forcing many families to flee to Namibia, Botswana and Zambia. The civil war ended ten years ago and people have returned to their villages and are rebuilding. We found lots of people building houses, using poles, thatch and other local materials. We used this to argue that people have the skills, experience, and materials to build toilets. This area is very poor economically but communities have a strong motivation to rebuild their lives, so they responded positively to the CLTS process.

There are very few toilets in this area. In Calai town only 20% of the households have toilets and in the neighbouring villages there are no toilets. The main source of water is the Cubango/Okavango River – the river is used for bathing, washing clothes, collecting water, and shitting.

The workshop was held in the shade of a tree outside one community member's house. Workshop participants came from Calai and two villages near Calai – Ndamudamu and Vanda. There is no regular transport in this area, so participants from Ndamudamu and Vanda had to walk 5km to the workshop site each day and another 5 km walking home.

The workshop was held in the open, not in a building, so neighbouring villagers often joined us to see what is happening – and got pulled into the triggering activities, discussion and singing.



### **Getting Started**

The first day was a bit slow – we took a while to get the logistics sorted out – but ended with a strong commitment by some participants to build their own toilets. They argued – *“How can we persuade others to build toilets if we don't have toilets ourselves? We need to show what is possible – and then they will listen to us. Otherwise they will just laugh at us”*

When discussing the problem, some participants told us: *“Many of us do not see open defecation as a problem – we see it as a normal part of daily life. We don't see shitting in the bush as a problem – it is simply how we live.”*

This view started to be challenged on the second day of the workshop when we demonstrated the 8 triggering activities - Shit Mapping, Shit Walk, Shit to Food Flows, Water & Shit, Food & Shit, Shit Calculation, Shit & Handwashing, and Ignition – and these sessions sparked a lot of interest.

The Shit Mapping and Shit Walk got everyone thinking about the problem of shit – and started a discussion on what happens to the shit left in the bush or along the river. At this point several

trainees refused to admit that they were eating shit, but the Shit to Food Flows exercise made everyone change their mind –

*We used to hide our shit in the bush. We thought that was the end of it. But now we know that it follows us back to the house, carried by flies, wind, dogs, chickens, pigs, children, and even our feet – and gets into our food and water.*

People felt shocked and angry but by this point they accepted that eating shit was a reality. As one participant said:

*I'm shocked – this is the first time I have discovered that we eat shit. I wake up in the morning and put on good clothes, but I am eating shit. When I eat a delicious meal, I am eating shit. When I go to the river, I drink shit. Now we know that shit should have its own house and people should have their own house. I have learned that we need to have separate houses to keep shit.*

We then divided into two teams – and the members of each group started to practice the eight triggering activities. Each team had roughly 15 members and we assigned two participants to facilitate each activity. We did lots of coaching while participants were practising their sessions in order to help them get the right approach, and we helped build up confidence through praising good aspects of their performance. The practice sessions were conducted on the second and third days of the workshop.



We also improvised ten new songs to add some energy and reinforce the basic messages – “WE DON’T WANT TO EAT OR DRINK SHIT”. Each song was short and simple and aimed at getting everyone to join in the singing and in the dancing which animated each song. We also used lots of claps – rainstorm clap, WASH clap, chief’s clap, and lots of others – to keep up energies.

### **We are “facilitators”, not teachers**

The idea of “facilitation” is new to this area. Leadership is normally provided by political leaders, teachers or preachers, who gives speeches, so people are only

used to one way communication - being told what to do. One of our main objectives was to help people learn this new approach called “facilitation” – asking questions, encouraging responses from many people, rephrasing each response, and asking more probing questions to create a good discussion with everyone involved. We explained that our job as facilitators is NOT to “tell” people or disseminate messages – our job is to ask questions and get them talking and making their own analysis to discover that they are eating shit. Community members can only be sparked to change if they do the talking and come to their own conclusion about shit, for example, that “we are tired of all the shit in the village and angry that we are eating shit and want to do something.”

Throughout the workshop we worked hard at helping trainees learn the basic facilitation skills – asking open questions, encouraging responses from many people, rephrasing and probing. The two key skills to be learned are REPHRASING and PROBING. We helped trainees see that rephrasing has a number of functions – it ensures that everyone hears what has been said so they

can learn from each person's contribution and add their own ideas, and it helps the facilitator organise the discussion, to work out what question comes next. PROBING is also crucial – some trainees would ask a single question to one person and then stop – we explained that the questioning needs to continue, so that it is not just one or two more vocal villagers talking. Probing helps to get more ideas and to get more people participating so the understanding and commitment which emerges is collectively owned. We also explained that each triggering activity needs to achieve a clear output eg Shit Mapping shows that the whole village is full of shit, the Shit Walk creates anger and revulsion towards shit, the Shit to Food Flows helps people see that their shit comes back to the house via flies, animals, etc and results in people eating shit, etc.

#### **EXAMPLE OF A SERIES OF PROBING QUESTIONS USED DURING SHIT MAPPING**

Question: *Where is most of the shit on the map?*

**Response: Along the river**

Question: *What happens to this shit?*

**Response: Shit is washed into the river. In some cases people themselves take shit into the river unknowingly on their shoes or feet.**

Question: *What happens next?*

**Response: We carry this water back home.**

Question: *And what happens next?*

**Response: Family members drink the water**

Question: *What does this mean?*

**Response: We are drinking shit – our own shit or our neighbour's shit**

#### **Practising the new skills in the community**

On the fourth and fifth day of the workshop the two teams organised triggering meetings with the community – two rural villages on Thursday and two wards in Calai on Friday. These meetings were a further opportunity to practice the skills – this time with a real audience.

One of the Calai meetings, unfortunately, had to be cancelled, because when the team arrived, they found a funeral being held, so they paid their respects to the family and then went to join the other team in the other ward

When we arrived in each village, there were few people waiting for us, so we went house to house to mobilise our own audience. We divided into pairs and each pair went off in different directions to invite villagers to come to the meeting. This method worked well and within 90 minutes roughly 40-50 people had gathered. The majority were women, because many of the men are away in other parts of Angola or Namibia, doing migrant labour. The audiences also included lots of children who jumped into the activities and songs and added lots of enthusiasm.

While people were gathering the team sang some of their songs to attract an audience and to build up their morale. They also did the preparations – gathering local materials for Shit Mapping and finding a pile of shit not far from the meeting place to be used for Shit Mapping.

The SHIT MAPPING created a lot of excitement and fun. Everyone joined in marking their houses and shitting places. We found that drawing the river and road and one other landmark (eg church) at the start made it easier for everyone to get oriented and mark their houses and shitting places. When we discussed the map everyone talked about the large amount of shit along the river, and that most people go to shit behind their houses at night.

We then invited everyone to join the SHIT WALK. This created a strong reaction in all three village meetings. A few people stormed out of the meeting and went home. This showed us that this activity needs a clear introduction. We need to explain that for Shit Mapping we are using yellow powder to represent shit, but in the Shit Walk we want to see real, fresh, disgusting shit – and discuss how we as a community feel about it.



The SHIT TO FOOD FLOWS exercise was one of the most successful activities. All audience members were given cards and markers and asked to draw a picture or word describing things which take shit from the bush to the home – and then tape their card on a flipchart picture showing pile of shit in the bush and a house with food. People generated lots of ideas, including NDZINDZI (fly), LIPUNDZI (dung beetle), MUNIKE (child), KATALI (dog), KATUMBI (chicken), NGOMBE (cow), and NGULU (pig). The facilitator asked each person who had written a card to describe in detail how the shit moves from the bush to the home and into our food. For example one person said that a dog eats the shit in the bush and gets shit on his mouth. The dog goes home and plays with children who get shit on their hands, and then they eat food. In each case the facilitator asked – “What does this mean?” And each time people responded – “We are eating shit!” Then everyone jumped up to sing the song – “WE DON’T LIKE TO EAT SHIT!”

The WATER AND SHIT exercise created a strong response. The facilitator handed a bottle around the audience and invited everyone to drink. Everyone had a drink. Then he put shit into the bottle and offered it again, starting with the headman. When the headman saw the facilitator moving towards him with the shit filled bottle, he jumped up and ran out of the meeting place – and watched the rest of this exercise from the edge of the meeting. During the discussion people pointed out the comparison with water in the river – “Yes, there is tons of shit in the river but we don’t see it so we drink river water. But we saw you put shit into the bottle so there is no way that we will drink that water. You can drink it yourself!”



### **Moving towards Action**

At the end of the meeting people talked about what they had learned from the process -

*Before this meeting I didn't realize that I was eating shit. Sometimes I shit without washing my hands and then I give shit to children without knowing that I am doing it. At night I go behind my house and shit – but now I know that flies bring the shit to the house and I am eating this shit. From today I will no longer eat my shit.*



*I thought we were leading modern lives, but I now realize we are eating our own shit. We go to the river, step on shit and carry the shit into the river. We wash clothes and collect water all at the same place and some of us even shit there – and we bring shit back to the house in the water.*

*We thought we left the shit in the bush, but we now know that it follows us back to the house and causes us problems. No wonder*

*our kids are sick all the time.*

*In our culture it is a disgrace to talk about shit or to see a man shitting. I didn't want to join the Shit Walk, but the young people persuaded me to join them. But now I see that we are eating our own shit. My children are sick because of all the shit spread across our village*

We then organised small group discussion so people could decide what they wanted to do. The group reports included comments such as:

*We have to stop eating and drinking shit and to build toilets, using local materials and simple methods. We need to get every household involved in building a toilet. Our headmen should lead us in mobilising everyone for action.*

*This process really touched me. People in my village listen to me, but I don't have a toilet. From here, I am going to build my own toilet.*

On our final (sixth) day of the workshop ACADIR came up with plans for follow up – visits to the three villages already triggered and new triggering meetings in other villages in this area. This process will be supported by SAREP who will help with low cost methods for strengthening the pit against collapse, since soils in this area are really sandy. Eight headmen joined the final workshop and pledged their support for the followup process.

By the end of the workshop roughly 2/3 of the participants had become skilled and confident in doing the CLTS triggering – and committed to keeping the process going. ACADIR is a strong organisation with good leadership and we have high hopes that this process will lead to real ODF action at the community level.

**Gomolemo Mokete is the SAREP Engineer and Ross and Puseletso Kidd are CLTS Training Consultants – all three are based in Botswana.**