



Plan

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Final Evaluation Summary

Empowering self-help sanitation of rural and peri-urban communities and schools in Africa

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Empowering self-help sanitation of rural and peri-urban communities and schools in Africa
Plan Netherlands commissioned an end evaluation for the Pan African CLTS Programme, which was performed by Andy Robinson and supported by FH Designs: Matt Bond, Ross Kidd, Jose Mott and Paul Tyndale-Biscoe.

Plan was among the first organisations to introduce the Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach in Africa. The CLTS approach particularly aims to raise awareness of the sanitation and hygiene practices in rural communities, and triggers the population into collective action to improve the sanitation situation by themselves. A major principle of CLTS is no toilet subsidy and empowerment of communities to improve their own sanitation and hygiene situation.

In 2010 Plan Netherlands launched a large CLTS programme in 8 countries in Africa. As the program covers both East as West Africa, it was called 'The Pan African CLTS Programme'. The overall goal of the programme is to contribute to a reduction in infant and child morbidity in Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Malawi, Zambia, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Niger, and empower rural and peri-urban communities. To accomplish this the objective of the programme is to improve the sanitation and hygiene situation for 2.1 million people in 805 rural and 36 peri-urban communities and 742 schools through the use of CLTS. Besides this general objective the programme also aimed to improve the CLTS approach by sharing experiences through learning alliances and action learning and to promote the CLTS approach internationally in order to scale up the approach through more organisations and in more countries. The Pan African CLTS Programme is co-financed by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was implemented between January 2010 and March 2016.

This document summarizes the main findings and recommendations emerging from the final evaluation of the program undertaken by a team of international and national consultants between October and December 2015. The evaluation included randomly sampled household and school surveys, evaluation visits by (inter)national consultants, and interviews with program-level stakeholders in all eight countries.

The evaluation included detailed household and school surveys. The surveys were designed to assess sanitation and hygiene outcomes in the ODF communities reported by the program, using a smart-phone survey application to enable rapid implementation of the sample surveys in 4,993 households across 170 communities, and 102 nearby schools. Given that verified ODF communities were reported in every year of the project, a broad range of sustainability outcomes were covered by the survey – from communities verified as ODF more than five years ago, to communities verified earlier in the same year.

It is important to recognize that the household and school surveys provided a far higher level of sustainability evaluation than is customary in this sort of final program evaluation. The surveys measured not just what the program achieved, but whether these achievements lasted over time, which tells us something about the quality and relevance of the interventions. The survey findings were challenging for the Plan project teams, as they exposed some serious sustainability problems (which some programs would prefer not to share with others). Therefore, Plan Netherlands should be applauded for the transparent nature of the evaluation, and for its decision to use the evaluation as a learning tool for future policy, programming and practice.

Main Conclusions

The Pan African CLTS program triggered more than 1,300 ODF communities, with a verified ODF population of 1.82 million people. Almost three-quarters of these ODF results (1.34 million people) were achieved by the Ethiopia project, with a remarkably high project cost efficiency due to extensive support from local government.

In all, program interventions reached almost 2,000 communities, and the evaluation found that the program approaches empowered communities and generated real benefits for poor households, women and other disadvantaged groups.

Sustainability outcomes were varied, with poor ODF sustainability in the country projects that started with the highest proportions of people without toilets (Niger and Ghana); and impressive sustainability (92%-96% households with private toilets) in the three country projects with the lowest levels of open defecation nationally: Malawi, Uganda and Kenya. These sustainability results confirm that it is possible to achieve and sustain ODF communities using a relatively simple CLTS approach, particularly where social norms encourage latrine use and good sanitation practices.

Five factors were identified as critical to project performance and sustainability:

- starting sanitation conditions, which influenced social norms in project areas;
- enabling environment for CLTS, which encouraged greater government support in countries with a mature CLTS policy and program environment;
- government engagement, linked to the enabling environment, the project approach (whether NGOs or local government were the main partner) and the resources available to local governments;
- quality of project management, including staff turnover; and
- use of shared sanitation in ODF communities, which appeared to be a proxy for limited acceptance of the CLTS approach.

Another cross-cutting factor was weak monitoring and evaluation systems. While this sometimes reflected the quality of the project management, with good managers tending to establish systems that provided reliable information on progress and performance, the limited results framework and low project staffing made it difficult for the program management to spot over-reporting or implementation problems, and hard for the project management to identify sustainability risks. The main lesson is that stronger sustainability monitoring is required to identify sustainability problems early, and allow the project teams to respond appropriately.

The evaluation found that internal knowledge management had worked reasonably well, particularly through the use of annual reviews and the CLTS website (with support from the IDS team). However, few external stakeholders were aware of the program or its achievements, and a large number of useful lessons may be lost because little documentation or knowledge management was undertaken.

Recommendations

• Design for sustainability

The evaluation suggests that sustainability is linked to the enabling environment and level of local government engagement. Any future program should recognize these critical factors and assess whether the enabling environment for rural sanitation and hygiene, and the level of local government commitment, are appropriate before investing in a large-scale intervention. Where appropriate conditions are not found, alternative (smaller scale) interventions are required to develop local models of best practice that can be used to influence the enabling environment.

• Program for impact

More clustered and large-scale interventions, aiming to cover entire sub-districts or districts, will produce more visible outcomes and impacts. The increased scale and visibility of the program outcomes and impacts can garner support from local government, politicians and other stakeholders, which in turn can leverage more resources and capacity to the program, and assist with sustainability.

• Strengthen M&E systems

Stronger M&E frameworks and systems are important, with specific indicators to be reported for sanitation outcomes, handwashing and other hygiene outcomes (including menstrual hygiene management), measurement of disaggregated indicators (including child sanitation and hygiene, and female toilets), and separate frameworks required for school sanitation and hygiene outcomes.

Sustainability and impact monitoring should be built into programs from the start, through periodic household surveys, child growth monitoring, and health post surveys. Where there is an intention to assess health impacts, specialists should be engaged at the outset to establish evaluation approaches, and associated data collection and analysis protocols, that will yield statistical valid results.

For M&E systems to be effective, programs need to establish a culture of monitoring and enforce simple, reliable data collection processes. M&E data need to be regularly used and checked by higher levels, in order to provide incentives for project staff and partners to report timely and reliable progress, performance and sustainability data.

- **Provide adequate capacity for specialist interventions**

Handwashing and hygiene promotion, baby and toddler-focused sanitation and hygiene interventions designed to reduce stunting, school WASH, supply-side strengthening and sanitation marketing, and networking and knowledge management are all important sub-sectors and program areas that require specialist inputs and specific project budget, capacity as well as appropriate results targets and indicators.

Plan International needs to assess the relative benefits of complex programs, containing many different components, against the simplicity that encourages program scale and cost efficiency. The key recommendation is that, where the program focus is clear, the design should recognize areas that are beyond the core competences of the country project teams and ensure that adequate support is provided for any specialist interventions.

- **Look beyond ODF**

As is well recognized in the WASH sector today, ODF outcomes are merely a first step towards the comprehensive sanitation and hygiene improvements required in rural communities in developing countries. A phased approach to sanitation development, in which the ODF outcome is the first step in a series of verified sanitation and hygiene outcomes, provides a path to the higher level outcomes desired by many governments. It also provides a solid framework for follow up and sustainability monitoring, with verification of the required outcomes at each phase of the sanitation development, including re-verification of previous outcomes.

Way Forward

The end evaluation confirms that 1.82 million people (79% of the programme target group) are living in verified ODF communities as a result of programme activities. Plan is especially content about the fact that most of the target communities were empowered through project activities to improve their own sanitation and hygiene practices. A shift in social norm was found during the evaluation; new households construct latrines, and collapsed latrines are reconstructed. We believe this shift in social norm will contribute greatly to the sustainability of project results. Another positive outcome of the programme is governmental involvement at local, district and national level, and in many cases facilitation of the CLTS process. In all country projects an inclusive CLTS approach was used, resulting in women and girls taken on roles as natural leaders and members of sanitation committees. Plan believes this is a great empowerment tool that improves the situation for women and girls.

Besides these positive results the end evaluation also revealed weaknesses related to the programme design, monitoring and management. These were translated into very useful recommendations, such as more clustered interventions, and practical recommendations for strengthening M&E and project management. Plan wants to share the lessons learned and recommendations that come out of this end evaluation openly with the wider WASH sector as we believe they can contribute to improve the CLTS approach in general.

Plan Netherlands has taken all the recommendations of the end evaluation on board and will use them to scale up the CLTS approach in future programmes.



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