

Project Malio: a detailed insight into SEED Madagascar's lessons from Year Two

True to development initiatives around the world, SEED Madagascar's largest urban sanitation and hygiene project, Malio, has continually adapted to meet the evolving needs of the community of Fort Dauphin and incorporate emerging project learning. Indeed, the three-year project was built upon lessons learned from SEED's previous urban sanitation projects and several subsidy-based rural sanitation projects, as well as research on international best practice. Project Malio adopts a hybrid version of the Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach; combining subsidies for the poorest and most vulnerable in society with triggering style events, and an extended household education and follow-up programme to ensure beneficiaries remain open defecation free (ODF). These activities have run alongside extensive sanitation and hygiene education across the town's public schools and in-depth training and capacity building sessions for local organisations working towards improving sanitation and waste management issues. Providing subsidies alongside more participatory grassroots activities has enabled SEED to access the community's most vulnerable and has ensured that infrastructure meets required standards, however it has presented several challenges surrounding the implementation and long-term sustainability of project activities. We hope that our learning documents can contribute to the broader discussions of implementing sanitation and hygiene projects within challenging contexts.

CLTS Challenges: the Fort Dauphin Context

What happens when the shock factor fades? Whilst triggering style activities continued across *fokontany* (small suburbs) into year two, the team began to question whether traditional CLTS shock and disgust techniques, such as 'shit-fly-food' and 'shit calculations', had the desired impact. As people became accustomed to seeing and discussing triggering taking place within the town, the disgust at the prospect of eating others' shit – so crucial to motivating significant behaviour change – seemed to reduce rather than gather momentum. Constraints in staff resources and funding meant that triggering events could not take place simultaneously across the town, potentially having a detrimental effect on the motivation of the community to take unified action in the rejection of OD practices. This delay both between triggering of different areas, and in some cases, between triggering and follow-up activities and construction support, has resulted in residents in other *fokontany* becoming used to the messages disseminated without the initial 'shock' factor. Furthermore, as word spreads through the town that it is possible to get a subsidised latrine if certain criteria are met, motivation to take independent and immediate action is reduced. As a result, much discussion amongst Malio staff in year two focused on how triggering can elicit the motivation to ignite sustained behaviour change towards latrine use; prompting several refresher training sessions and additional workshops on facilitation. With the shock factor diluted, there is an increasing onus on engaging facilitation and for staff to truly motivate communities to take action, alongside meaningful follow-up sessions and achievable actions plans.

Related to this, previous sanitation projects within Fort Dauphin have resulted in specific beneficiary expectations, based on previous engagement. In this context, families have come to expect a latrine or a subsidy from SEED projects. These preconceptions are likely to impact engagement in activities, empowerment and latrine ownership – an issue which cannot be resolved easily – however, a review

in methodology and project design may be required to ensure long term sustainability of projects within the area. This is symptomatic of many subsidy-based projects globally, evidenced by the ongoing discussion of the appropriateness of subsidies alongside CLTS triggering activities within the WASH sector. As our projects aim to target the most vulnerable in society, it is certainly something which will continue to be discussed in Fort Dauphin, where extreme poverty remains a major barrier to accessing sanitation facilities, especially as construction materials and space are at a premium.

How can we support the community to develop feasible action plans? A key aim of Malio is to support the community to find local solutions to the widespread problem of open defecation (OD) and assist the community to develop plans which define practical steps to reduce OD across Fort Dauphin. As momentum for the project grew across the town in year two, the use of fining those who continue to use OD sites has been a frequently discussed suggestion at community meetings. However, without clear municipal enforcement strategies, it is difficult for community groups to implement this independently. Although bylaws exist stating each household must have a latrine, neither support for this to be implemented nor means for enforcement exist. Although each *fokontany* is overseen by a chief who maintains significant influence within the area, they have neither mandate nor resources (nor in some cases, the will) to implement *dina* (local, informal laws). How then can SEED support the community to develop plans which are locally appropriate but also feasible? As more and more people learn about project Malio and get involved with local campaigning through mass mobilisations and action days, there is increasing knowledge of the detrimental effects OD can have on health, but this does not always transfer to changed behaviour. Throughout year three, SEED will continue to work closely with community action groups in awareness-raising but also in exploring feasible forms of encouragement to stop the use of OD sites.

Faecal Sludge Management and the Issue of Emptying

Are the costs of emptying latrines affordable? As latrines built in year one begin to fill SEED continue to look into sustainable, affordable ways for households to empty latrines. Currently, each beneficiary household is required to pay a 5000Ar (£1.30 at February 2017) contribution to their latrine (a meaningful amount but which does not price out the poorest), collect the construction materials from a communal location and help to build the latrine. These techniques are used to ensure commitment and buy-in to the project. However, given that the cost of emptying a latrine can be up to 30,000Ar (£7.70), in an environment where sustained financial management is not engrained due to ongoing fluctuation and instability, some families will struggle to afford these costs. Many families do not have disposable income which they can save to pay for the cost of emptying the latrine, especially if many people are using the latrine and it fills up very quickly. Ideally those families unable to pay for an emptier would be motivated to empty the latrine themselves, but preliminary faecal sludge management (FSM) research points that this may be unacceptable to many Fort Dauphin residents. A full, unemptied latrine poses detrimental impacts to sustained behaviour change, with people reverting to OD rather than emptying their latrines. To understand this issue better, we decided it was imperative to research household's willingness to pay for the emptying of their latrines or whether motivation existed to enable them to do it themselves. As such, we obtained further funding to conduct research about FSM in project year three, which will be crucial to developing sustainable emptying strategies and campaigns towards the end of the project and looking towards a sustainable future for SEED's sanitation projects. Indeed, if the research shows

that inability to pay for emptying is a major factor, future projects should examine whether target beneficiaries who can afford to maintain of the latrine should be prioritised over the most vulnerable in society. This research will also look into how SEED can best support existing pit emptiers to become more formalised and develop their own business models to promote pit emptying as a viable employment option. In addition, SEED will work with those households who wish to empty their own latrines to ensure that emptying is completed as safely as possible.

Will the rate of latrine filling impact on use? Malio latrines have been designed so that they can be emptied from both the top (by taking off the SanPlat) and the side (from a removable piece in the wall of the latrine). As there is no official safe disposal area within Fort Dauphin, latrines are emptied into a much larger pit at the side of the latrine, with the aim that latrines can be emptied at each side and by the time it is needed to be emptied into the first dug hole the faecal matter will be safe enough to handle. However, with some latrines which are being used by several families, the rate of emptying has overtaken the time taken for safe decomposition of sludge. For these latrines, it is important to advise families to monitor where faecal sludge is being buried and make sure that it is not dug up for at least two years. In areas where land is scarce, this will have an impact on how often the latrine can be emptied and therefore may impact on how often the latrine is used. Furthermore, if households require additional latrines to ensure they do not fill too quickly, it is likely this will only be considered if the benefits of using a latrine can be seen quickly enough and outweighs the initial investment into further infrastructure.

Are VIP latrines the right design for Fort Dauphin? As year two saw the completion of a large proportion of the 800 ventilated improved pit (VIP) latrines allocated, the Malio team have been discussing the design of these and whether further improvements could be introduced. VIP latrines are designed to be built in windy areas with the doors and pits kept open. This enables air flow into the pit and up through the ventilation pipe where, the smell is taken away. Flies go into the pit and then are attracted to the light from the ventilation pipe, however fly screens prevent the flies from escaping and they die. Pipes can be painted black to increase heat which draws up the air and effectively keeps ventilation flowing. However, a lack of land in populated areas has impacted the wind flow design from being effective. As such, the latrines built so far by the Malio project have lids and beneficiaries are advised to keep closed to stop flies going into the pit. As the VIP latrine is not working as designed, the smell reduction that the pipe offers is very limited, causing some instances of social conflict between neighbours. Furthermore, beneficiaries are generally unwilling to keep latrine doors open because of the prospect of other people using them; most latrines are kept locked. With Community Liaison Officers advising that uncovered faeces in a latrine is comparable to practicing OD, it is difficult to see how the messages of the importance of keeping the lid/cover open will be properly administered to the community. In year two, the construction team trialled some latrines without the ventilation pipe to see what effect this would have on the smell and community perception; however, many beneficiaries complained because they had not received the pipe, and seeing that others before them had, felt that this had an increased impact on the smell. Looking towards future projects, it will be necessary to evaluate whether it is more appropriate to adjust our latrine designs or increase our capacity to provide further education to ensure VIP latrines are used

correctly. However, in communities where not everyone has access to a latrine and there are concerns over others using and dirtying household latrines, it is unlikely that many doors will be kept unlocked.

Hygiene Promotion without Full Access to Water

How can we support schools which have no access to a mains water supply? Many of the Malio formal and informal educational sessions and awareness-raising delivered within Fort Dauphin focus on improved hygiene practices, such as hand washing. However, many schools, health care facilities and homes lack the basic infrastructure and access to water that these practices require. Behaviour change research shows that for handwashing to become a sustained practice it must become habitual, and this often fails if any barriers (such as access to water) are present. Therefore ensuring that adequate infrastructure is in place is a crucial aspect of sustained behaviour change. For example, tippy taps may be built next to latrines, but in areas where water is bought by the bucket and in such scarce supply, sustained hand washing at crucial times may not always be prioritised. Providing both educational and infrastructure support for the 17 public schools within Fort Dauphin is a key element to the project's town wide strategy to reduce OD. Ensuring that schools have access to a water source, however, is outside of the project's remit at the current time. Nonetheless, Malio has been supporting schools to develop maintenance and management plans which outline achievable steps to ensure schools have continued access the sanitation (including the use of water for latrine cleaning and hand hygiene). Staff have facilitated meetings with the local water supplier and local authorities to support schools accessing a regular water supply. With weak institutions and very tight budgets this has often been a significant challenge which is set to continue into year three, and possibly beyond the scope of the project. However, SEED have found that low-water use solutions have gone some way to increasing handwashing, as connection to mains water is not required.

Reviewing the workload of School Liaison Officers. With a target of providing sanitation and hygiene education sessions to 10,000 students per year, the School Liaison Officer was found to be over-stretched in year two. An extra staff member was recruited to this role in order to ensure all education sessions continued to be interactive and in-depth. This allowed more time to be spent on secondary and high school sessions, which were often outside of the standard timetabling to ensure they did not interrupt lessons. We found that providing participatory, informal sessions using props such as puppets were successful in engaging older students. Ongoing review of the education sessions will continue into year three, with learning informing school-based projects in the future.

Communication is Key

How can we improve communication within a diverse staff team? Communication played an important role in year two; as latrine building amplified and staff workload increased, good communication was key to ensuring deadlines were met. To improve communication flow, weekly team meetings were restructured and monthly management meetings for activity leaders were introduced. The conservative, unfailingly polite Malagasy culture does not naturally lead to

constructive criticism and peer evaluation, so capacity building workshops were required to encourage constructive meetings. Greater communication and increased knowledge of individual roles and responsibilities allowed for a more supportive working environment and ensured activities continued to run in the absence of key staff. Quarterly reviews of project activities served as monitoring and feedback sessions, bringing the whole team together to share learning and challenges faced.

In addition to increasing feedback and evaluation sessions, audits of completed latrines provided useful insight into the success and challenges faced in year two. Further, they enabled verification of the type, if any, hand washing facilities had been built by families, and whether they were being used. It also highlighted some inconsistencies within data which confirmed the need to have several staff members present to triangulate information provided. However, this took up significant human resources and time to collect, and so to ensure that this was done as efficiently as possible, community sanitation agents based in each suburb were used to provide detailed information of the layout of areas and knowledge of the community.

Year two of Malio has provided the team with some very interesting challenges and lessons, both from an organisational and methodological point of view. As SEED continues to discuss and learn, we welcome any suggestions and comments, or dialogue with organisations facing similar challenges. If you would like to get in touch, please email info@seedmadagascar.org