



East Africa Practitioners Workshop on Pro Poor Urban Sanitation and Hygiene LAICO Umubano Hotel, Kigali, Rwanda, March 29th-31st 2011

Title 'Best Practice':

'Promotion of hygiene and sanitation in northern Uganda by Water and Sanitation Development Facility North'

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Country, Province/Region, District, Town / peri urban area:

Water and Sanitation Development Facility-North is providing water supply and sanitation facilities in the northern districts of Uganda. The programme covers three sub regions of West Nile, Acholi and Lango with 23 districts.

Initiator of the 'Best Practise:

Water and Sanitation Development Facility North (WSDF-N) is a government of Uganda programme of Ministry of Water and Environment WSDf-N. It is under Urban Water and Sewerage Services Department (UWSSD) of Directorate of Water Development (DWD).

Background of the initiative:

The document presents the undertaking of WSDf-N in promoting hygiene and sanitation in northern Uganda which covers 35% of the total land surface in the country. The region covers 23 districts in the 3 sub regions of Acholi, Lango and West Nile. Despite the large surface area, northern Ugandan is characterized by a low population density averaging 38 persons per Km² far below the national average of 85 persons per Km², according to the 2002 Population Census.

The majority (95%) of the population of the region live in the rural areas, while a minority (5%) resides in urban areas. There are also some refugees from neighboring countries, particularly Southern Sudan and a few internally displaced persons (IDPs) are still living in camps. The northern region is subject to food insecurity, drought and famine leading to seasonal internal migration.

Household sanitation is poor, people largely rely on traditional pit latrines. VIP latrines are often used by the middle class and few rich people have septic tanks/water borne toilets which are later emptied and treated in lagoons/sludge drying bed. A very small portion of the population still practice open defecation and flying toilets as a way excreta disposal. The Sector Performance Report of 2009 indicated that 73.2% of households in urban areas of northern Uganda have access to sanitary toilets.



Pic 1. VIP latrine at one of the households in Koboko town

From 2006, there has been relative peace in Northern Uganda, which has enabled Internally Displaced People to return to their homes. The region is still prone to outbreaks of epidemics as people were returning. According to Red Cross in 2008, Hepatitis E hit Kitgum and Pader districts with more than 8200 cumulative cases reported and 126 deaths.

The present sanitation coverage in northern Uganda is estimated at 62.4%, according to Ugandan standards¹. This figure is lower in Northern Uganda due to long periods of insurgency. Low sanitation coverage has often attributed to lack of demand. However poor coverage is also due to inappropriate toilet technologies.

In northern Uganda, 73.2% of the households in urban areas have access to sanitary toilets (Sector Performance report 2009). At this point in time, the region is also prone to outbreaks of epidemics as people were returning to their original homes.

Challenge in the promotion of sanitation in general include; other priority needs like food clothing, high level of poverty among communities, poor attitude and negligence from the community members and insufficient resources located for hygiene and sanitation promotion (Water and Sanitation Sector performance report 2008).

Cultural stigma is associated with Ecosan toilets, specifically with the human excreta. However, this challenge is being addressed gradually (NGOs in the Ugandan Water and Sanitation Sector performance report 2009/2010)

At the institutional level, the WSDF-N programme faces budget constraints, and staffing have been small compared to the large workload and number of towns to be addressed. Although WSDF-N was promoting health and sanitation, many of the stakeholders were unable to comply with the action plans which they drew up in promoting environmental sanitation and fulfilling their critical requirements like land provision. Furthermore, a few towns were selected without physical plans, largely towns where the intervention was attempted at the time of the insurgency.

Trends

The Government of Uganda through the Ministry of Water and Environment initiated the Water and Sanitation Development Facility – North (WSDF-N) as a mechanism for funding water and sanitation

¹ A sanitary latrine is one which has a strong super structure, ensures privacy, with a leak-proof roof, and a firm floor. The floor could be made of concrete, or if made of earth, should be well rammed and smeared with either cow dung or black soil, for ease of cleaning. When in use, the latrine should not be less than 0.3m from the top.

investments in small towns and rural growth centres in northern Uganda. This initiative is helping to upscale water supply and sanitation coverage in northern Uganda. The Programme forms part of the nationally identified programme in the national sector framework that is being implemented under the Joint Water and Sanitation Sector Programme Support (JWSSPS) funded by a joint contribution of development partners and the Government of Uganda. Currently, the development partners who have funding commitments to the JWSSPS include the African Development Bank, Austrian, Denmark, Germany – KfW, Sweden, United Kingdom and European Union.

WSDF-N promotes hygiene and sanitation by training the communities using Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation (PHAST) tools and forming Water and Sanitation Coordination Committees (WSSC). The goal is to increase latrine coverage to 100% in all the targeted small towns and rural growth centers. WSDF-N starts this process of promoting hygiene and sanitation by:

- Mobilizing the local leaders in the region by using the Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation (PHAST) which is a widely known approach for promoting household sanitation improvements.
- Formation of Water and Sanitation Coordination Committee (WSSC) where they have not been formed and strengthening the existing committees, and working with Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) groups in the districts.
- Since the population and settlements in the targeted centres have not been stable for a long period, the current sanitation situation is ascertained through carrying out baseline surveys to give a benchmark for measuring performance, and thereafter a road map is agreed upon with the community to improve the situation.

Promotion of Ecosan toilets at household and primary schools: The Small Towns and Rural Growth Centers we are operating in have limited capacity and resources and are discouraged from using water borne toilets. Double vault urine diverting and dehydrating toilets are promoted instead. Ecosan toilets are constructed at household level for demonstration purposes. Two masons from each small town/rural growth centre are trained on design, construction and operation and maintenance and are charged with the responsibility of replicating the technology, training households on the use, management and maintenance of Ecosan toilets, plus use of the by-products.

Gender Water and Sanitation Development Facility North is mainstreaming gender into water and sanitation activities. Gender issues are considered, among others, in the formation of water and sanitation committees, selection of beneficiaries for demonstration Ecosan facilities and invitation for the promotional training. In some West Nile societies women do not use pit latrines when pregnant believing that they would not be able to bear more children. Women are culturally responsible for the cleaning of latrines, cleaning the compound, utensils, and men take over the ownership of the resources at home. Similarly, some societies in Acholi and West Nile reported that pregnant women don't use latrines. (WSDF-N training report of Anaka)

Problem and challenges encountered during the start of the project

The communities having lived in internally displaced people's camp for a long time were accustomed to free service and are reluctant to start participating in a self help project, thus slowing down the achievement of our objective of management responsibility and ownership. They are unable to comply in a timely fashion with the action plan drawn and fulfilling their critical contribution like land.

There is limited political support; the local leaders are reluctant to tell the people to participate in service provision.

Furthermore, a few towns were selected without physical plans, particularly towns where the intervention was undertaken on an emergency basis.

Description of the initiative

The provision of piped water supply systems and promotion of environmental sanitation has components such as Eco-san, community mobilization and hygiene education. The project has successfully implemented piped water supply systems and has promoted of hygiene and sanitation in the towns of Kamdini, Koboko, Kuru, Wandi and Anaka and the former Internally Displaced People's (IDP) camps.

Sanitation activities start right from day one. During advocacy meetings, sanitation issues are introduced. Other initial activities are:

- Formation of coordination committees.
- 1st level training
- Baseline survey
- Promotional activities (follow-up, drama, enforcement etc)
- Enforcements

The facility uses demand responsive approaches in the provision of water and sanitation services to the people of northern Uganda. At the onset, WSDF-N convenes inception meetings with the local leaders to create awareness about the programme and the intension to provide piped water supply and sanitation facilities with a view to improving the health of people. Consequently, rural growth centers and small towns were selected through calls for application by the interested towns and centers using previously-established criteria. Baseline surveys were conducted by consultants and project staff together with the local governments. In our context, local government includes districts, town councils and sub counties. Three institutions were formed and trained to follow up the work plan drawn by the local people and ensure sustainability of the facilities installed. These groups are: WSCCs (water and sanitation coordination committees), VHTs (village health teams) and WSSB (Water and Sanitation Service Boards). Communications were also used. For example, radio spot massages, talk shows and local drama performances were organized to help attain 100% latrine coverage.

As mentioned earlier, WSDF-N carries out community training using PHAST tools customized to improve household, school and environmental sanitation and personal hygiene in the five project towns of northern Uganda. Topics in the training include the introduction of various latrine technologies and their functionality, advantages and disadvantages so that the communities select technologies to promote depending on affordability. These technologies include: traditional pit latrines, ventilated improved pit latrines, Ecosan (urine diversion option for demonstrations), water borne latrines in public places. Other training is provided to two masons per town to construct Ecosan toilets and to enable the technology to be replicated in the towns and households.

Major drivers of the process and success

The communities, local council members, heads of institutions, village health team members, NGOs in the sector, interest groups, opinion leaders, masons, law enforcement officers and senior woman teachers, among others have made it possible to implement the projects. The local authorities (town councils, sub counties and the districts) both civic and political cooperated closely with the project management during implementation from the inception to final stages of the projects. The local authorities mobilised the communities to meeting critical requirements, organising Water and Sanitation Coordination Committee meetings, sensitisation campaigns using drama groups and radio programmes. Implementation of the district sanitation ordinances was effectively done. The devoted staff members of WSDF-N triggered the success of increasing latrine coverage in the five projects through mobilising and training the various stakeholders, following up the activities of the communities in a bid to improving hygiene and sanitation in their respective locality. Consequently, many household heads were able to construct sanitation facilities to avoid fines. Households were required to have a sanitation facility as a prerequisite to obtaining a yard connection for water. Furthermore, cooperation and commitment of the local authorities in the implementation was very important. Thus, the health inspectors/assistants, community development officers, LCI chairpersons and parish chiefs/town agents all attributed to successful promotion of hygiene and sanitation in these towns of northern Uganda.

Resources

Training workshops on hygiene and sanitation were attended by required community members, who were mobilised by the specific local authority where the town is located. WSDF-N north staff organises the training internally with communities invited to participate in the training workshops. The training is financed by the WSDF-N. The training on hygiene and environmental sanitation approximately costs four million Ugandan shillings (about Euros 1,204). At the household level, 5 Ecosan toilets are constructed per town for demonstration purposes and materials for these are all provided by the WSDF-N. The Facility's own masons do the construction. Selection of the five households to benefit from the Ecosan was decided by the communities and verified by the WSDF-N. The construction of school sanitation facilities is also a responsibility of the WSDF-N and the school provides water during construction.

Successes

Water and sanitation development facility registered a great deal of success in increasing the coverage in the five towns as many stakeholders were involved. Thus, latrine coverage close to 100% was attained. All the five towns were able to attain latrine coverage of 98% and 99%. However, due to project's definition of safe latrine (a pit with the recommended depth, slab/floor, wall, door shutter/curtain, roof, good ventilation and apron); missing any of these means such a latrine was not considered.

Table1. Showing latrine coverage and hand washing facility at baseline surveys and post construction surveys in the completed towns

S/N	Towns	Baseline	HWF during baseline surveys	Post construction surveys	HWF during post construction surveys
1	Koboko TC	68%	34%	99%	64%
2	Kuru, Yumbe	54.6%	18%	98%	53%
3	Wandi, Maracha	78%	23%	99%	60%
4	Kamdini, Oyam	56.7%	12%	98%	50%
5	Anaka, Nwoya	67.5%	7.3%	99%	56%
6	Lefori, Moyo	93%	74%	98%	67%

The introduction of Ecosan and the replication within the towns was yet another success for the Facility. Thus far 36 Ecosan toilets have been constructed at the household level and 25 stances constructed in five primary schools. About 40 households registered with masons in the five towns with many primary schools interested in the technology. The local communities adopted Ecosan (urine diversion option for demonstrations) using the local materials. Many activities were to promote ECOSAN were undertaken by local leaders and NGOs and during implementation of the project.

Local leaders during the implementation participated in several trainings especially on environmental and hygiene promotion and management of the water supply and sanitation facilities (washing hands, community training on Ecosan toilets, quality of a safe latrine). The following groups were given training: Water and Sanitation Coordination Committees, Water and Sanitation Committees, Water and Sanitation Service Boards, Village Health Teams, School Management, Senior Woman Teachers and civil servants of local authority.

Finally, the WSDF-N Facility has involved the private sector in the management of water supply and public sanitation. The management of 2 public toilets is the responsibility of the private water operator of piped water supply in the town. This is the first of its kind in the region where both water supply and public sanitation facilities are managed by the same private operator and it appears to be working very well.



Pic 2 *Public toilet at Kamdini*



Pic 3 *Completed Ecosan toilet at Abele primary school,*

Lessons learned

In the five towns which are the subject of this paper, as people are returning back to their homes after the LRS insurgency, there are many pressing priorities. Therefore little attention is paid to hygiene and sanitation activities. Constant sensitization to the community members is needed and can counter this challenge.

Enforcement of the ordinances and by-laws by the trained enforcement officers and other responsible officers is helping to improve hygiene and sanitation in northern Uganda. The challenge has been facilitation for the law enforcement officers. Law enforcement officers are in the government structures of both local and central governments.

For better and smooth implementation, there is need to create awareness early enough in the programme time-frame and to mobilize the community, to acquire land for public sanitation and to

form of water and sanitation coordination committee by the beneficiaries. All this should be started before the commencement of the project construction for the successful implementation.

Provision of piped water and sanitation facilities must move together. There is, as well, a need to have subsidies for the communities on sanitation facilities. The WSDF-N Facility needs a standard and a strategy for sanitation facility provision among the community members.

Construction of Ecosan toilets is increasing with 15 Ecosan privately constructed in the towns. However; the community members who want to construct Ecosan toilets are challenged to access Ecopans. Ecopans are not readily available to the public and they are expensive, not affordable to many people. There is need to procure Ecopans in large number and to train masons to implement them.

Management of sanitation facilities especially those of public places should be under the management of water supply. This has been piloted in two towns of Kuru and Kamdini which has been successful. It is worth emulating by other towns. In an attempt to promote septic tanks, drainable latrines, WSDF-N IN future will acquire one cesspool emptier track.

Knowledge, experiences and skills sharing among the different stakeholders are a key in the successful promotion of hygiene and sanitation in the communities.

Provision of water supply should go hand in hand with the promotion of hygiene and sanitation to improve health in towns. All households that will receive a yard connection must meet the sanitary requirements/quality of a good homestead (main house, safe latrine, hand washing facility, drying rack, compost pit, and bath shelter, drying line, animal/bird house and kitchen). This will therefore upscale hygiene and sanitation coverage in towns.

Promotion of environmental sanitation and hygiene practices requires concerted efforts from all the stakeholders in WASH sector specifically the commitments of local governments and community members

10. More information: *contact persons, names, organizations, addresses, email*

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11. Further reading

- Water and Sanitation Development Facility- north regional offices, P.O. Box 318, Lira, Uganda
- Ministry of Water and Environment P.O. Box 20026, Kampala, Uganda
- Red cross annual report, 2008
- Water and Sanitation Development Facility-North Operations Manual
- Ministry of Water and Environment Sector performance Report, 2008 & 2009
- Uganda Bureau of statistics, 2010

- <http://www.visituganda.com/about-uganda/people-and-culture/people-and-culture.php?page=northern>