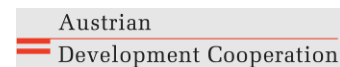


NETWAS Uganda



## Performance Improvement through Learning on Sanitation - PILS

A project funded by



KITGUM DISTRICT LOCAL GOVERNMENT

February 2012

### THE PILS PROJECT CONTRIBUTION TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF ECOSAN TOILETS IN KITGUM DISTRICT

#### BACKGROUND

Kitgum District is located in the Northern part of Uganda and was part of the Acholi District when Uganda gained independence in 1962. Kitgum District is bordered by the Districts of Gulu in the West, Pader in the South, Kotido in the East and Lamwo in the North.

According to the 2002 Uganda Population and Housing Census<sup>1</sup>, Kitgum District has about 283,546 inhabitants, with 53,170 households. The population growth rate is estimated at 4.1%.

The main economic activity in the area is agriculture with an emphasis on food crops such as millet, cassava, cowpeas, potatoes, cabbage, beans, sesame seeds and sunflower. Cash crops include cotton, tobacco, sugar cane and sesame. Some communities rear cattle.

Over 80% of the population are farmers who practice subsistence agriculture. The use of oxen and tractors for production purposes does not exceed 5%; this has resulted in farmers cultivating small fields, which are in most case scattered and are generally giving relatively low yields. Family labour is the most common source of labour, though communal labour is a traditional practice, which has been in place for a long time.

<sup>1</sup> 2002 population and housing census conducted by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics

For more than twenty years, the Lord's Resistance Army rebellion forced over 90% of the population to be displaced when the war was at its highest peak. Populations were forced into camps established in protected villages or sub county headquarters. When the situation normalized between 2006 and 2008, people moved back to their villages.

Due to the disruption by the war, latrine coverage was very low when communities first returned to their villages of origin. Due to this Kitgum District was one of the districts in Uganda with a latrine coverage below the national average for rural areas of 69.7% (Sector Performance Report 2011). Kitgum District had a latrine coverage of 37%<sup>2</sup> between 2000 and 2009.

In 2004, Kitgum District adopted the ecological sanitation technology Urine Diverting Dry Toilet (UDDT) in response to pressing sanitation and hygiene needs in schools and Sub County headquarters.

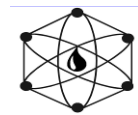
#### OBJECTIVE OF THIS CASE STUDY

To share experiences and lessons learned from operation and maintenance (O&M) of ECOSAN toilets in Kitgum District.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE INITIATIVE

In 2009, the PILS project (Performance Improvement through Learning in Sanitation),

<sup>2</sup> Kitgum District Sanitation and Hygiene report 2009

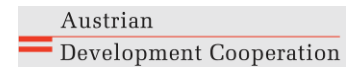


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financed by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and jointly implemented by IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre, NETWAS Uganda and CARITAS Gulu, was introduced in three districts of Northern Uganda: Kitgum, Gulu and Pader. In each district, the initiative targeted 2 sub-counties; in Kitgum District, these were Akwang and Kitgum Matidi sub counties.

The overall objective of PILS was to contribute to improved health and livelihoods of the rural population through sustainable sanitation and hygiene facilities and behaviours at household and primary school level in the selected districts and sub counties. The strategy to achieve this was to support learning for improved policies and practices.

The PILS project had components on learning platforms and action research, targeting returning communities, district and sub-county stakeholders and schools. During the learning platforms, many issues around existing ecological sanitation (ECOSAN) toilets came up. Major issues were:

- Poor introduction of UDDT ECOSAN and its management
- Poor coordination with district technocrats, for example some NGOs bypass the District Water Officer (DWO), the District Health Inspector (DHI), and the District Agricultural Officer during implementation
- Poor monitoring of existing facilities by the district
- Resistance by district stakeholders to pilot other types of ECOSAN toilets like Arbaloo

and Fossa Alterna when the UDDT were not in use

- Inadequate awareness raising on the use and benefit of ECOSAN to primary beneficiaries .

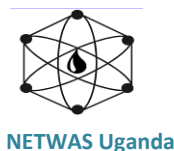
### INITIATOR OF THE TECHNOLOGY IN THE DISTRICT

ECOSAN technology, the Urine Diverting Dry Toilet (UDDT), was first introduced in the district by NGOs like AMREF, OXFAM and Kitgum District Local Government under the district facility grant, with support from the Directorate of Water Development (DWD).

Through the district facility grant, UDDTs were constructed in 7 sub counties headquarters and a few selected schools in Kitgum District. These sub counties are: Orom, Omiya aanyima, Lagoro, Kitgum matidi, Amida, Akwang and Namomokora. Selected schools included Lumule Primary School (P/S), Orom P/S, Alune P/S, Oryang P/S, Akado P/S.

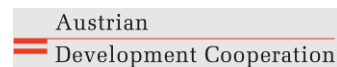
### CONTRIBUTION OF THE PILS PROJECT TOWARDS THE USE AND MAINTENANCE OF EXISTING ECOSAN IN SCHOOLS AND SUB COUNTIES / SUCCESS

- The learning platform at District and Sub County level played a great role in identifying issues around attitudes, misuse and poor operation and maintenance of ECOSAN in schools and Sub County over the past years.



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- The project created awareness among stakeholders on proper use and management of ECOSAN by-products. As far as possible, this was done through sharing of experiences in the area. For example, an Office Assistant of Akwang Sub County headquarters shared during the 4th Sub County learning platform how he had been using by-products from ECOSAN to improve agricultural production. The Office Assistant was processing the by-products from an ECOSAN toilet located at the Sub County headquarters, after it had been abandoned by the users. He used the by-products in his small garden to plant green peppers, and at the end of the season, he earned about UGX 85,000 (US\$ 34) from the sales of green peppers. He told the members of the platform *“people neglect construction and use of ECOSAN and its by-products, but from my experience I encourage communities to construct and use ECOSAN in their households for better crop production and improvement of sanitation and hygiene”*.
- Members of the PILS district platform managed to advocate for the use of abandoned ECOSAN (UDDT) in schools and at Sub County headquarters. At the end of the project, in March 2012, most of the ECOSAN toilets in schools where the PILS project operated were functional. While for example, the ECOSAN toilets at Kitgum Matidi Sub County headquarters had been abandoned. The same happened with 1 block of ECOSAN in Lumule P/S. After awareness raising in the learning platform, these ECOSAN toilets were made functional again.
- The project facilitated an exchange visit for a school that was doing badly in the operation and maintenance of ECOSAN (Lumule P/S, Kitgum Matidi Sub County) with another school that was doing well in the operation and maintenance of ECOSAN (Alune P/S, Akwang Sub County). In this way Lumule School could learn from Alune School, as elaborated briefly in this case below.

### ***Operation and maintenance of ECOSAN in Lumule P/S, Kitgum Matidi Sub County***

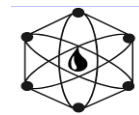
*Lumule P/S had two blocks of ECOSAN (UDDT) toilets, one block for teachers and one block for pupils; because of little or no orientation during the commissioning of the facility, it appeared that the teachers were using the two chambers / drop holes of the ECOSAN toilet at the same time.*

*Further to the above, they had no knowledge on the emptying process when the chambers were full.*

*Teachers claimed that the only knowledge on the use of ECOSAN they had was that they had to pour ashes onto the faeces after use. This scenario prompted the PILS partners to facilitate an exchange visit for this school.*



***Two chamber and vaults of ECOSAN used at the same time by teachers in Alune P/S, Akwang Sub County***

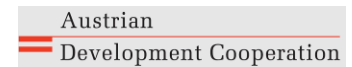


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ECOSAN latrine in Alune P/S Akwang Sub County



Inappropriate use of ECOSAN in Lumule P/S Kitgum Matidi Sub County (urine pipe blocked with faeces and ashes)

### **Outcome from the Exchange visit**

- Pupils and teachers learned on proper use and maintenance of ECOSAN
- They appreciated the need to collect ashes and to pour them into the latrine after use
- The school contacted Oxfam and got fruit seedlings to plant and with the help of by-products from ECOSAN to improve on the yield in the future
- Teachers and pupils who learned from Alune P/S became advocates of change

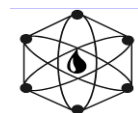
Stakeholders recognize other benefits associated with ECOSAN, as noted below:

- The ECOSAN technology is suitable in areas with poor soil texture, especially water logged, sandy soil and rocky places
- The UDDT ECOSAN are built once and for all; one does not need to build another structure again, thus saving money and land
- There is a strong health benefit from the use of ECOSAN. Human excreta often are the cause of diseases and spreading of the diseases. The composting action of the ECOSAN toilets prevents the spread of disease, sterilizes the waste and kills all the pathogens.

### **CHALLENGES**

The PILS team faced some challenges in advocating for O&M of ECOSAN toilets:

- Community attitude toward use and maintenance of ECOSAN especially at Sub County level was poor, some individuals ignore use of ashes after visiting ECOSAN toilet.
- Low ash collection for use in ECOSAN toilet. According to the Health Assistant of Kitgum Matidi Sub County, "no one from the sub county was charged with responsibility of ash collection, the toilets sometimes had no ashes for use," this contributed to a nasty smell and avoidance by users.
- Awareness on ECOSAN use and maintenance was generally narrowed down to officials at Sub County office, no induction was done at community level though they were the primary beneficiaries.
- Monitoring ECOSAN O&M in schools by district officials was poor, this created a knowledge gap in many schools as they could not get technical advice on learning and improvement.
- Low budget allocation for S/H activities in schools.
- Vandalisation of ECOSAN facilities by communities around schools.

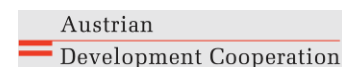


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### LESSONS LEARNED

- Below are some lessons for future planning drawn up during project implementation: Most stakeholders had not been trained or oriented to use UDDT ECOSAN, as a result they could not properly use this technology in schools and at sub county headquarters. In the end, the facilities were abandoned
- Most users were not following the required operation and maintenance practices for UDDT (availability of ashes in the toilet, pouring of ashes after use etc.), thus the ECOSAN toilets had a nasty smell
- Demystifying cultural beliefs on the use of ashes on human faeces proved to be simple among school children
- Practical demonstration on the use of ashes by teachers in ECOSAN toilets promoted quick acceptance by parents for their children to collect ashes and use them in ECOSAN toilets.

- Exchange visits in areas where there is a good show case may promote quick adoption and uptake of new technology.
- Learning workshop and experience sharing can guide stakeholders on best course of action.

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### RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is a need to share and create awareness among the final beneficiaries to prepare them for any new innovation / technology. There is also a need to give adequate training and offer regular follow up to support them in the use of the new technology.
- Involvement of communities / beneficiaries, district technocrats and local authorities at the very beginning of an intervention is key to sustainability.