



MARCH 2021

Storytelling Compilation

Failure in WASH

what have we learned?



WHY FAILURE IN WASH?



To commemorate [World Water Day 2021](#), the Sustainable Innovation in Hygiene group of the Water Youth Network WASH cohort developed a competition inspired by the Nakuru Accord. This year we collected online submissions from young people (18 to 35 years old) who have experienced **failure in the WASH sector**, these could entail an experience of being on the receiving end of a failed intervention or being involved in the development of a project that did not quite accomplish its purpose.

This document compiles those stories and the takeaway messages or lessons learned from each. The objective of this activity was to *help promote a culture of sharing and learning that allows people to talk openly when things go wrong**. We also want to encourage and inspire all individuals and organizations to become signatories of the [Nakuru Accord](#).

*Excerpt from the Nakuru Accord

BOREHOLES IN KENYA

By Dan Kibet Kiso

Working with boreholes to enhance clean water provision has been a journey of ups and down. A borehole drilling was being undertaken in the coastal aquifers of Kenya and water oozed out, but when the test pumping team came in, there was no water.

This prompted my intervention where we drilled 2 meters away from the failed borehole, and with close monitoring of water quality together with proper design, I managed a successful borehole with lots of water, although the result was a bit salty. Nevertheless, the casings were not settling well due to moving rocks of limestones at depths of 34m. Through reaming the borehole we eventually achieved success.

This was quite a challenge because the host community and the school within it were really in need of better quality water – thankfully this was eventually achieved.



Borehole drilling

Main Lesson Learned

"Never give up and always be professional in handling projects that impact people directly."

1

WATER IN CAMEROON

By Fonyuy Carlos Bintar

In 2015, we had an intervention to improve access to potable water for the forest people (pygmies) of east Cameroon through the drilling of boreholes (groundwater). Boreholes were constructed near their settlements, but instead of them accessing this nearby water source, they abandoned the settlement and went deep inside the bushes to collect water, never using the boreholes. The project didn't achieve its intended outcome or impact of improving access to potable water for this community.

Main Lessons Learned

1

"The social and cultural representation of the people were not taken into consideration in the design of the project."

Children go a very long distance to fetch water, which is time consuming. This long distance provides for parents' privacy. The time also allows the young women to share their own stories together and have a better understanding of each other (i.e. to socialize).

2

"Project design without the social and cultural representations of the beneficiaries did not serve the purpose or always failed."

SANITATION IN TANZANIA

By Burhani M Mustapha

In 2019, while working with a water organization, we had a project in Kilolo district in Iringa region, Tanzania. The project was to contribute in achieving health improvement in Tanzania through the improvement of sanitation and hygiene.

Kilolo district has 24 wards, 110 villages and 540 sub-villages, our task was to encourage people to build improved latrines and stop open defecation, as well as promote good hygiene practices in all districts and their sub villages. It was a tough task since it was only to be performed with 4 members of staff with the help from the district health officers and LGAs.



Former Pit Latrine

Kimara village was among 10 villages we had in our second milestone, our goal was to ensure all people in these 10 villages stop defecating in the open by improving their latrines and to promote hygiene practices including handwashing. We used different methodologies to ensure people changed behavior, we used promotional events like sports, village meetings, house to house visits and so forth.



Improved Latrine

After three months many people built improved latrines, including in Kimara village, but most of the people were not using the improved latrines, instead they either defecated in the open or used their traditional latrines. We witnessed this situation during our external verification to identify villages with ODF status.

After external verification ended, we agreed to conduct village meetings in Kimara because we wanted to learn why people built improved latrines but then still went to poo in open areas or in their traditional latrines.

We were informed that the village had a water crisis, they did not have enough water to use the improved latrines built (mostly flush toilets). As you can imagine, it was difficult for them to use their improved latrines without water, that is why most of them decided to go back to open defecation or to using traditional latrines.

We failed to understand the nature of the demand and access to water of the village so that we could propose the most suitable latrine type, specifically, latrines that do not use a lot of water. This was the failure during our intervention in Kimara village. The good news is that in July 2020 Kimara village was declared as ODF after the installation of water systems in their village that largely solved their water crisis.

Main Lessons Learned

1

First, we cannot separate water from sanitation and hygiene promotion, water plays a great role in making sure that sanitation and hygiene are well performed within the community. You cannot build a hand washing facility in your community if you do not have access to water. It is also difficult to maintain improved latrines and general cleanliness if you do not have access to clean and safe water, that is why we cannot separate these three aspects. Water projects should be prioritized to areas with improved latrines, or both should go hand in hand.

Second, to study the natural resources of the community before intervention is the best way of achieving desired deliverables. We failed Kimara because we did not learn that the village had a water crisis, we could have proposed better options like improved latrines that do not use a lot of water or Tippy Taps as hand washing facilities because these do not require a lot of water.

2

CLTS IN SOUTH SUDAN

By Labina Bongiria Patricia Kenyi



Labina evaluating a facility

It was the year 2019 when the organization I work for was awarded a grant to implement a WASH project. The project focused on safe water, improved sanitation and hygiene (SWIS) and one of the project outputs was to have 9 communities/villages triggered through the Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) methodology to achieve Open Defecation Free (ODF) status.

The objective was to eliminate open defecation and improve hygiene practices of those communities. It was expected that at the end of the 8 months duration of the project, those communities would practice better sanitation and hygiene, and live in an ODF environment.

The success of a CLTS project in the context of South Sudan depends much on the priority needs of that community, mass mobilization, influence from community leaders, effective triggering and follow up after triggering. How the CLTS approach is implemented varies from one organization to the other and below is how our organization does its implementation.

Before triggering any of the communities, training of CLTS facilitators and sanitation committees is done and attended by representatives from the youth and women's groups, county officials and the village chief. The trainings include a practical session where the community is 'triggered' in order to have a hands-on experience on how triggering is done.

The facilitators together with their committees then go out to the various villages to do mobilization and follow through the process of triggering, i.e. transect walks, shit/water demonstration, shit/food demonstration, shit calculation, shit flow diagram and medical expense calculation. After triggering, the community draws up an action plan on when to start digging their latrines and over what time-period.

Based on the action plan, the CLTS facilitators together with sanitation committees then follow up with the communities twice a week. Organization staff go once a week, and joint monitoring that involves the county officials is done monthly to check on the progress of latrine digging by doing house-to-house visit and conducting community meetings that aim at addressing any challenges the community may be facing.

It is from the follow up results that indicate whether a village is ready for verification as ODF. Internal and external verifications are then carried out to confirm that each household has met all the requirements of an ideal home, i.e. a latrine in use, aperture cover, handwashing facility with soap, bathing shelter, clothes drying line, utensil drying rack and garbage pit. With all these in a place in each home, a village is declared ODF and celebrated through a cultural event that involves dancing, singing, success story telling and speeches from state and National government officials.

CLTS was implemented by our organization following through this process. However, out of 9 communities triggered, only 6 achieved ODF status, whereas the rest FAILED to achieve ODF status. Failure was attributed to a number of factors ranging from planning and construction, coordination with other actors to team support and capacity building, to influence from local leaders.

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Main Lessons Learned

Some of the villages proved more difficult to trigger as the trigger sessions were held at the beginning of the cultivation season. The ideal timing for CLTS triggering would have been in the middle of the dry season between January and March. However, the project started at the beginning of March which is the beginning of the wet season. So people gave more time to farming than constructing latrines. The planning of the project should have anticipated the availability of communities and their needs for labor.



Most of the CLTS facilitators and sanitation committees had no experience with CLTS. Due to this gap, the training of these teams took a long time which derailed the CLTS schedule. Despite this, the teams worked very hard to ensure villages were triggered and verification exercise conducted with encouraging results.

The tendency of some actors to not follow the “no-subsidy” policy for sanitation promotion contributed to failure. One of the communities we triggered had previously undergone triggering through a subsidized approach by another actor. The community was reluctant to participate in the CLTS approach because they wanted subsidies in the form of latrine construction materials. With this mindset, the community showed disappointing results. Coordination of approaches between actors to follow the “no subsidy policy” is essential and plays a big role in the successful implementation of CLTS.



Some of the communities are rigid in their cultural norms and therefore refused to accept CLTS. For example, in one community, the cultural pride of defecating outside, especially by men to show the size of their shit, which depicts how well they are fed by their wives. The norm proved difficult to break even with ‘correct’ CLTS procedures. Triggering to shame and the influence of many village chiefs could have contributed to acceptance of the CLTS approach.

WATER INTERVENTION IN KENYA

By Caleb Kabarak Letair

My story is based on what my community experienced at the receiving end of an intervention. Laikipia County experiences intense droughts yearly, because of this, some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) started constructing water interventions in the area without involving the community. Due to illiteracy and lack of involvement, the community perceived that the projects and NGOs moved in to grab (occupy) the land, and they ended up vandalizing the projects, little did they know that they were meant to solve rampant water problems in the area.

Main Lesson Learned

In my opinion WASH projects run by community are more successful than those run government institutions or NGOs.

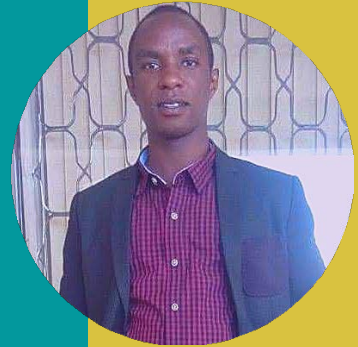
"Whenever, there is any project, the community has to be educated fully on the benefits of the project through community engagement, community education, installing the project, education follow up and handing over of project for community to run and monitoring and evaluation."

1

MEET THE AUTHORS

DAN KIBET KISO

I am a geologist with experience in groundwater management and development who has greatly supported WASH programs in Refugee camps and coastal regions of Kenya.



FONYUY CARLOS BINTAR

I am an environmental engineer specialized in WASH, a humanitarian expert in market-based programming, sustainable development ambassador, agriculture and environmental consultant from Cameroon.



BURHANI M MUSTAPHA

I am a youth development and WASH intervention expert interested in #SDG6, I currently work as a freelance WASH advocate in Tanzania in amplifying youth voices about water, sanitation and hygiene so as to achieve water and sanitation for all by 2030. I formerly worked on WASH interventions with MAMADO (Maji na Maendeleo Dodoma), an NGO in Dodoma, Tanzania, as a sanitation officer.



MEET THE AUTHORS



LABINA BONGIRIA PATRICIA KENYI

I am a civil engineer by profession specializing in water, sanitation and health (WASH) engineering. I have close to five years of expertise in WASH programming that ensures clean water and safe sanitation is accessible for all and is sustainably managed, and believe that this has the potential to unlock economic growth, productivity and improve investments in health and education.

I am currently a WASH Programme Coordinator at Rural Water and Sanitation Support Agency (RUWASSA), a local NGO meeting needs in South Sudan's communities with water supply, sanitation and infrastructural development. I am responsible for the development, planning, implementation and monitoring of WASH projects.



CALEB KABARAK LETAIR

My name is Caleb Letair from Kenya. I was born and raised in arid and semi-arid areas of northern Kenya in the pastoralist community. Despite being from a marginalized community where water and sanitation matters are just on hands of well-wishers, I was able to overcome all these challenges and joined university to pursue a bachelor's degree in water resources and environmental management with hopes of going back to help change the situation.