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**TRANSFORMATION TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE
AND RESILIENT WASH SERVICES**

**Town sanitation planning experience in small towns:
a case of Northern Uganda**

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Town Sanitation Planning is a holistic approach piloted by GIZ in partnership with the Ministry of Water and Environment, aimed at building capacity of local governments to develop and implement integrated and sustainable Town Sanitation Plans. It focused on improving various sanitation-related measures at the local level including coordination of town planning, sanitation marketing and behaviour change communication, involvement of the local private sector, fully-fledged stakeholder participation and law enforcement. The objective of the project was to make use of Town Sanitation Plans as a basis for planning and prioritizing investments which may result into tangible improvements to sanitation services delivery. Formation of multi-disciplinary and inclusive Sanitation Task forces, inclusive capacity development, private sector participation among others were some of the achievements and lessons learnt from the project. Challenges were encountered including among others; limited resource allocation due to low revenue base of the Town Councils, low income levels of the inhabitants which makes it difficult for the uptake of standardized lined pit designs. As an up-scaling plan, there is need to Streamline financing mechanisms and build local capacity to take up the process and ensure a reduced cost.

Background

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) has been implementing the Reform of the Urban Water and Sanitation Sector (RUWASS) programme which promoted the town sanitation planning (TSP) approach in Uganda. GIZ and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) partnered in a two-year project for 'Capacity Development of Town Councils to design and implement integrated and sustainable town sanitation plans' which was undertaken between March 2015 and September 2017, in six selected small towns in Lango sub-region in Northern Uganda, namely Aduku, Apac, Ibuje, Kamdini, Loro and Oyam. The main objective of the GIZ/USAID project was to make tangible improvements to sanitation services delivery in the project towns, in collaboration with the Water and Sanitation Development Facility – North (WSDF-N), which is the regional office of the Central Government's Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE). Following the promising outcomes of this project the global GIZ program 'Sanitation for Millions' which is funded by the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and co-funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation are now focussing on the implementation of the developed 'Town Sanitation Plans' (TSPs) to unlock remaining bottlenecks in sanitation service delivery for household and institutional non-sewered sanitation in a typical small-town setting.

The specific objectives of the town sanitation planning project were:

1. To improve capacity of local governments in the six towns to plan and implement sustainable sanitation interventions and promote integrated and participatory town level sanitation planning.
2. To increase access to sustainable sanitation for households, public schools and health facilities in the six towns.

3. To improve the management of sanitation services including transport, treatment and reuse or disposal of excreta in the six towns.
4. To improve hygiene conditions in households, public schools and health facilities.
5. To increase private sector participation in delivery of sanitation products and services.

Processes engaged in TSP

1. **Selection of towns:** this involved identification of towns that have identified poor sanitation as a problem and lacked clear plans on how to solve the sanitation challenges. Representatives of the towns were visited and briefed on the possibility of getting support to develop tailor-made town sanitation plans for their towns. The key players (i.e. the local authority, GIZ and WSDF-N) signed MoUs specifying the respective roles.
2. **Formation of the Sanitation Task Forces (STF).** These STFs were ad-hoc multi-disciplinary committees, chosen from local authority's technical staff, responsible for the planning and implementation of routine town activities. These committees were chaired by the Town Clerk whose office also spearheaded all of the STF's activities. The Health Inspector held the secretariat position of this committee as the custodian of sanitation responsibilities in the Town.
3. **Capacity building of the STF members for TSP process.** The members of the STFs were oriented on the roles of the STFs and how their offices were expected to support the TSP processes. Capacity assessments were undertaken to identify needs for the STF members and trainings for their capacity development were carried out, focusing on major skills to enable the development of town sanitation plans. These trainings included planning and performing adequate assessments, communication and mobilization, law enforcement and creating a supportive legal environment, public private partnerships, planning and resource mobilization. It was realized that it is crucial to conduct needs assessments and apply such trainings according to the needs of the towns, and not only to fulfil program work packages.
4. **Establishing a baseline assessment.** For proper planning, the towns conducted baseline assessments to identify their actual sanitation situation and understanding the magnitude of the problems. To support this process of data collection and analysis, GIZ procured smart handsets to aid data collection and developed an online data management system (DMS) being hosted by the MWE at <http://www.wsdfsanitationdms.ug>.
5. **Local stakeholder forum.** These forums consisted of sanitation stakeholders of the towns including land lords, business owners, civil society representatives, and church leaders among others. The forums were avenues for updating town residents on the sanitation plan developments, validating collected data for decision making and getting feedback on the undertaken activities to improve the sanitation situation.
6. **Developing the town sanitation plans and embedding them into the Town Development Plan.** With guidance from the consultant and WSDF-N, the STFs developed their specific TSPs. The TSPs outlined short, medium and long-term activities, the respective costs and possible revenue sources. After the development of the TSPs, they were embedded in the Towns' five-year development plans.
7. **Implementation of TSPs.** The implementation process of selected TSP short-term activities was initiated by the project partners and supported through partnerships with NGOs operating in the localities being 'International Lifeline Fund' (ILF) and 'World Vision Uganda' (WVU). The NGOs carried out mainly behavioural change communication (BCC) activities. For showcasing best practices of Uganda, the project organised learning visits to Kampala and Fort Portal. Sanitation-related campaigns under the motto 'Keep the Town Clean' were initiated in the project towns and perceived very well, also because the politicians took lead.
8. **Monitoring, evaluation and reporting.** To allow reporting on the sanitation situation and development across the towns, reporting channels were developed and a data management system (DMS) was put in place. The key stakeholders evaluated the project and a future roadmap was developed by linking the towns to WSDF-N for continuous support.

Achievements and outputs of TSP project

1. Six Town Sanitation Plans developed, one for each town (WSDF-N, 2017). The Town Sanitation Plans (TSPs) have now organised the investment requirements in sanitation interventions (hardware and software) according to short, mid and long-term targets, set until 2025. The plans elaborate the various interventions in households, schools, health centres considering a holistic approach across the sanitation chain.

Targeted BCC campaigns were carried out in the in six towns. Numerous Behaviors Change Communication (BCC) tools (GIZ, 2017) were developed to aid the implementation of the campaigns. The

awareness raising campaigns have had a positive impact on inhabitants in the six towns. There is increased public interest, participation and willingness to improve the level of sanitation. The radio talk shows have been flooded with response calls from inhabitants providing ideas on sanitation improvements. These towns have reported a drop in the cases of open defecation as results to the BCC campaigns. The keep-the-town-clean monthly activity has been well received and voluntary participation in cleaning activities has increased.

Table 1.

S/no.	Description of achievement in Oyam Cluster	Baseline	Post
1	Hand washing practice	24%	48%
2	ODF villages Kamdini	0 of the 14	11
3	Basic sanitation coverage	67%	75%

- Six Town Sanitation By-laws developed addressing town specific sanitation standards and aspirations that need to be enforced. Six By-laws have been developed and forwarded to the Attorney General for ratification. The development of the By-laws has been a contentious issue that has shown positive outcomes. Due to the awareness raised in the process of making the by-law, citizen groups are already actively advocating and emphasizing clearing of sanitary lanes to be solely used for sanitary activities. Illegal dumping of faecal sludge in wet lands and open spaces in towns have stopped due to the arrests and impounding of the exhauster truck by the law enforcement units.
- Designs for low cost toilets developed and piloting with of 20 toilet blocks (each 6 stances) are ongoing in schools and health centres. The planning process identified the need for developing low cost sanitation toilets designs to fulfil the needs of the households and institutions. In close cooperation with the Sanitation Task Forces (STFs), Water and Sanitation Development Facility North (WSDF-N) and the private sector, low cost, pre-cast, emptiable options for toilets were developed. These designs are now being implemented in 5 schools and 2 health centers in the 6 towns.

Table 2.

Sno.	Description	Av. Cost before (WSDF N)		Av. Cost of Pre- cast Designs (supervision Consultant)	
		UGX	USD	UGX	USD
1	6 Stance school toilets (Boys)	28,000,000	7557	23,000,000	8518
2	6 Stance School Toilet (girls)	32,000,000	8636	25,000,000	9259
3	1 Stance house hold facility	5,000,000	1350	1,500,000 (Contractor Amach)	556

- Establishment of a Data Management System; A data management system, accessible online through <http://www.wsdfsanitationdms.ug/index.php> has been installed also on stand-alone computers in each of the six towns to aid offline data collection and analysis and then updating the online database. Additionally, this system was primarily used to compile the baseline information, but in the future, will be used as a monitoring system to assess the change in the situation. The DMS is also linked to the ministry server such that data upload can be done instantly. Additional training was provided to the Health Officers to handle the DMS.
- Capacity of 6 STFs and town councils has been enhanced to start preparing dedicated budgets for sanitation related activities from the TSPs and to actively and continuously engage on awareness creation with the population.

Unintended outputs

The initial focus of the TSP approach targeted solely on-site sanitation related topics, though during the process the scope of the TSPs expanded to a broader range of environmental sanitation topics and other issues related to town-specific interests. This enabled a keen interest of stakeholders to engage and to use the forum to revitalise on imminent yet neglected public health issues. This has partly triggered a range of unintended outputs being:

1. Improved solid waste management - the 'Keep-Town-Clean Campaigns' initiated by each of the town councils as part of the awareness raising strategy take place at regular intervals¹ and has gathered momentum in the towns. The campaign involves communities, businesses, religious institutions and transport hubs (Boda stages) who are actively taking part in voluntary cleaning activities not just during the specific campaign days but continuously.
2. Improved political motivation - the participatory process involved in planning and the awareness raising activities have, in some towns, increased the political will to work towards improving sanitation.
3. Closer connections and competition between towns
4. Improved demand for water supply - towns like Loro have benefited from water supply systems being built by the WSDF-N. Since applicants for a water connection must have a toilet and hand washing facilities in place, the town board of Loro prioritised to have piped water system to be installed to boost demand for sanitation.
5. Adoption of TSP as an approach to urban sanitation improvement by the Joint Sector Review 2017.

Challenges and lessons learnt from the TSP process

1. Need for a multidisciplinary approach in formation of Sanitation Task Force – throughout the entire process; all stakeholders that can affect sanitation should be brought together, have their capacities built such that they can improve sanitation – especially in the light of sustainable sanitation as the central focus. The long planning process added time constraints on the STF members.
2. Governance structures are very important. This focuses on the political leaders in that they are very significant in mobilizing people and resources for any undertaking. Politicians are known and listened to by their people; they are therefore capable of mobilizing people to focus on sanitation improvements at households, schools, health facilities and public facilities. The low resource allocation for Town councils towards Sanitation limited implementation of sanitation activities. Implementation of TSPs require larger funding requirements (improvements in hardware, software and governance)
3. There is need to have a holistic approach to sanitation (across the entire sanitation service chain) – to ensure sustainable management of the sanitation chain, without leaving out any element right from containment (latrines/toilets) to treatment and re-use. The Low-income levels of majority inhabitants greatly affected the implementation of the designed containment and use of available transportation methods
4. Private sector engagement is very important – there is need to encourage more to join and get interested in sanitation. The Low private sector development limits involvement yet TSPs need a good local partner to support implementation.
5. Enforcement is quite lacking in some of the towns; it should be supported by facilitation of the enforcement Officers. Possibly, there could be enforcers attached to sanitation issues. The bylaws already in place should be enforced. The human resource rotation within Town Councils affected continuity as capacity development is required for proper engagement.
6. Funding is a major driver of sanitation; many towns have no funding for sanitation and for those that have, it is so limited – yet sanitation is a day-today activity. Worth noting is that with TSPs in place, towns increased their budget for sanitation (some had doubled or even tripled their budgets)

Table 3.					
S/no.	Town	Budget before FY 2014/15		Budget After FY2017/18	
		UGX	USD	UGX	USD
1	Oyam TC	3,000,000	810	10,000,000	2699
2	Apac TC	45,280,600	12238	48,360,000	13070
3	Aduku TC	16,163,136	4368	30,000,000	8108
4	Ibuje RGC	11,013,000	2976	16,325,000	4412
5	Loro TB	33,000,000	8919	39,500,000	10675
6	Kamdini TB	10,300,000	2784	28,700,000	7757

Up-scaling and implementation strategy of TSPs by MWE

The Ministry of Water and Environment has taken the decision to include Town Sanitation Planning in all forthcoming water supply and sanitation projects. This shall provide better information on actual demand for sanitation related investments and ensuring better sustainability of the installed infrastructure due to improved capacities of the local governments and the private sector. As part of this process all the other three regional Water and Sanitation Development Facilities (WSDFs) will be trained on the TSP process by WSDF-N with adequate TSP guidelines in place. In addition, MWE is also preparing a national FSM guideline in order to streamline all relevant processes (planning, finance, O&M and monitoring) related to on-site sanitation systems, which are most prevalent in urban areas of Uganda. Eventually this shall enable the sector to attract more sanitation financing in the drive for the SDGs in 2030.

Besides the streamlining of the planning process in the sector, tangible results in attaining safely managed sanitation services in the six small towns are necessary to showcase how the plans can effectively translate into measureable sanitation improvements in urban areas. This is the basis for the current phase of implementation activities supported by the GIZ Sanitation for Millions program. It aims at building strong processes in the town councils to continue BCC and awareness creation activities and to enhance their monitoring and enforcement capacities of the sanitation by-laws. Moreover, it aims at improving the coordination capacities of the town councils to guide the utilities, private sector including financing institutions and civil society to jointly organise faecal sludge management and effectively increase demand and actual construction of improved and 'emptyable' household toilet facilities.

Conclusions and recommendation

TSPs present a logical way forward to prioritize investments needs that are required to improve water and sanitation service situation over a period of time, much as it may have its pros and cons. However, the most crucial factor is funding or financing of WASH infrastructure and services. So, scanning for opportunities to finance the plan is as important as developing the plans. This means that, as such plans are developed, there must also be efforts to source out for opportunities that will finance the plans, or else, the time and effort spent on developing the plans will be a wasteful exercise and will only lead to frustration for the persons involved in the process. Tangible way forward to prioritize funding and coordination needs by the local government and line ministries to improve sanitation services in urban areas over the short, medium and long term is very key. It is expected that the streamlining of the sanitation planning processes in Uganda will lead to further optimisation of the TSP process on its own. Financing TSPs can make tangible improvements in the sanitation situations within the different towns, which is possible with multi-stakeholder involvement and active participation of the political body especially in resource mobilization. However, the 'proof of the TSP concept' lies in achieving actual improvements in safely managed sanitation as part of the SDG agenda. Here, a well-institutionalised monitoring mechanism is also necessary to show the existing evidence of the impact of TSPs and lobby for more sector support. Moreover, the current implementation process of TSPs needs to be well facilitated, monitored and understood as a pre-condition to make further recommendations on the legal, regulatory and financial frameworks for upscaling of non-sewered sanitation in small towns.

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Notes

¹ In Apac, Kamdini, Aduku and Ibuje the cleaning activities happen every month, and in Loro and Oyam, they take place every Tuesday.

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