

Health is wealth

A community approach to sanitation

Voice over

Nigeria; the most densely populated country in Africa. Despite having vast natural resources such as oil and gold, the majority of the 139 million population, live in extreme poverty.

Only 38% of people have access to sanitation and of every 1000 children born 198 will not live to be five years old.

With so many people living without sanitation a new approach is needed to tackle the problem – and WaterAid decided to try community led total sanitation.

First pioneered in Bangladesh in 1999, this innovative approach, also known as CLTS, has proved to be a great success. Through it, WaterAid and our partners helped 2.5 million people in the country gain access to sanitation in one year.

In 2004 a team from WaterAid Nigeria went to Bangladesh to study the approach and see how they could implement it where they worked.

CLTS aims to inspire rural communities to completely stop open defecation and to actively build new latrines themselves.

The village Olorioko in Ekiti state has been identified as one where the approach could work. It is defined as 'high risk' – meaning that a combination of poor infrastructure, low income and high rates of illness and death from water-related diseases, continue to prevent the community from making progress towards a better standard of living.

The community currently practice open defecation in the bush surrounding their houses, as a result many of them suffer:

Gbadebo Adedoye is all too aware of the dangers of drinking contaminated water. His 2 year old son was recently taken very ill as a result of open defecation:

Gbadebo's story is common throughout Olorioko and for this reason he and the other villagers are eager to learn what the CLTS facilitators have come to teach them.

Facilitators – the 'leaders' of the CLTS initiative, first build a relationship with the entire community by talking openly and frankly about 'poo' and toilets; discussing what kind of sanitation the village already has.

Together the villagers participate in various activities and debates designed to illuminate to them the ways in which excrement enters their food and water and why this makes them ill. For many, it is the first time this has ever been explained to them and the thought of ingesting poo is naturally very shocking.

This realisation aims to inspire the community into taking action. And, as the waste of even one person can affect the health of others – a community effort is needed to overcome the problem.

As a result of the day's activities, members of the community are enlightened or 'triggered' into taking action and changing the way they deal with sanitation for ever.

An innovative and flexible facilitator is key in the implementation of CLTS. What works in other countries or even other regions may not have cultural or social relevance here. An understanding of what will inspire the people in Olorioko to make a change is crucial.

The Igba community in Benue state was introduced to the CLTS approach just two years ago. Now everyone in the community uses latrines and it is completely free from open defecation.

The facilitators advised the community on how to build their latrines, but the community themselves decided on the materials they could afford, and built the design best suited to them using local resources available.

Better sanitation was the first improvement here, (water points then followed) the economic benefits that improved sanitation bring are huge; often forming the first step out of poverty. The UN estimates that for every \$1 invested in sanitation you can expect a \$9 return.

**

This community is a key example of how successful the CLTS approach can be. It has helped raise support for similar schemes in the neighboring regions and shown people that even the poorest in the country have a right to sanitation and dignity.

Back at the Olorioko community the village members meet at the church to write up an action plan stating the improvements which need to be made and the timescale over which this will happen.

Influential members of the community are chosen to lead on the action plan and will ensure that every community member commits, because they know that if just one person in the village that does not the rest of the village will suffer as a result. By explaining this, the community work together until everybody has toilets.

The facilitators will leave now and return periodically to check that the progress discussed is being made. The hope is that after just three months the village will be transformed forever.

**

Since the pilot project began in Nigeria many rural communities have witnessed the benefits of the community led total sanitation approach. Now, with the help of local governments the plan is to scale up efforts, so that more people can gain access to safe sanitation and all of the benefits that come with it.

As well as giving people dignity by working together to build simple latrines, these schemes are helping people to improve their health and in turn, their wealth.