

CHAPTER 19

Conclusion: gaps in knowledge and further research needs

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Having considered these different dimensions of sustainability of Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) across different countries' and organization's experiences, it is clear that while there is a lot of existing experience and research that points us in the direction of how to make outcomes more sustainable and inclusive, there are many unknowns that require further investigation. Many of these have been identified by the authors in the preceding chapters. Nevertheless, below, we list some of these gaps in our current knowledge and thinking and propose the key issues that need more research.

Physical sustainability

We need:

- More data on rural sludge disposal practices, and where faecal sludge ends up once the pit is full.
- Formative research into what households do once pits fill up.
- To know what the different options for phasing and timing of CLTS and sanitation marketing are, when using them together – this will vary in different contexts.
- More knowledge on how to reach the poorest – sometimes options developed in sanitation marketing are unaffordable without assistance. Does the introduction of 'aspirational' technologies put households off choosing or building simpler toilet options?
- More formative research on identifying people's needs, financial capabilities, and what is available in the local sanitation market.

CLTS and WASH at scale

Questions include:

- How to improve advocacy for prioritization of sanitation in government policies, with adequate budgets for CLTS and post open defecation free (ODF) activities.
- How to improve routine monitoring of sanitation coverage, quality, and usage.

- How to monitor effectively and cost-efficiently. Monitoring and longer-term follow-up needs to be thorough yet simple, and be integrated as far as possible into existing government systems for it to be sustained.
- How to gather more accurate data, more effectively, and in ways that encourage and support communities.
- How to analyse and translate the collected data into improved practice.
- Does a phased approach encourage progression up the sanitation ladder by the whole community? What are the challenges? How transferable is it to different country contexts?

Research is needed on:

- The revised third party monitoring system in Kenya and whether using Master Certifiers is effective in the long-term. What is needed to incentivize them? Is the process sufficiently open, rigorous, and independent?

Equity, inclusion, the poorest: different needs

We need to know more about:

- How to go to scale without jeopardizing equity and inclusion; ambitious targets can lead to the most vulnerable and marginalized being left behind – instead, they need to be at the heart of any sanitation strategy.
- How to better/more effectively reach the poorest and most marginalized ensuring that they can access affordable sanitation options that respond to their needs.
- How to identify people in need of financial assistance when there are no national poverty identification systems available.
- How to make shared toilets work for those who need them.

We need to study:

- Whether including the perspectives of all toilet users when designing and constructing toilets and handwashing facilities is resulting in an increase in access to sanitation and hygiene for disabled people, older people, and those with chronic illness.
- How to build private sector capacity and interest in delivering products and services for the poorest.
- Reversion to OD in more detail: to what extent is reversion higher among the poorest, marginalized, or vulnerable?
- Whether devolution is resulting in inequity across counties.

Financing

We need to know:

- More about householders' willingness to pay for products and services.
- Whether it is possible to scale-up participatory design.

- What other ways there are to develop low-cost, durable local latrine options that people want.
- If the financial incentives embedded into the phased approach are effective, and reach the right people. Are any people still left behind?
- More about smart, targeted support for the poorest.
- More about the costs of post-ODF follow-up.
- How effective targeted sanitation finance is at reaching the poorest and helping them move up the sanitation ladder? Is it undermining community self-help, or encouraging fraudulent reporting and short-term incentives? Are vouchers or rebates being captured by non-poor households?

Behaviour change and social norms

We need to further investigate:

- What factors will sustain both behaviours and structures. These may go beyond CLTS and involve a combination of interventions. We need to understand what they are and apply this knowledge in programming.
- How to address and challenge social stigma and discrimination associated with pit emptying.
- The reasons why some communities do not sustain collective behaviour change, and what role social norms play.
- Whether Social Norms Theory can translate into practical steps for implementers that are different from 'standard' CLTS practice and lead to sustainable behaviour change. How can it be used to design post-triggering and post-ODF interventions?
- How to address social issues such as the challenges relating to caste and hierarchy in India. To what extent can and should sanitation programmes aim for and intervene in changes in broader social norms?
- How to motivate and incentivize (in financial and non-financial ways) different individuals and implementing units, e.g. Community Health Workers, Natural Leaders, government staff.

Final thoughts

One very important point that will help to improve knowledge and practice on all of these issues and questions is the prioritization of documentation, sharing, and learning. Programmes, projects, and institutions across the board must set up better mechanisms for, and, through providing time and capacity-building, encourage action learning. Flexibility of donors and implementing organizations alike will be crucial to ensuring that there is space for honest reflection, that learning from on the ground realities is fed back into and taken on board by programmes, and that adjustments to the course are encouraged. There are already good examples of processes, spaces, and support

mechanisms for this kind of sharing and learning,¹ but we must be innovative in creating more ways of quickly learning and disseminating what works. For example, the Rapid Action Learning Units currently being established in India are a promising initiative, and we need to find out if they are leading to innovations which can be scaled-up across the country. We hope that the collection of experiences in this book will go some way to further opening up discussion about sustainability, contribute to improved practice, and thus help the millions of people around the world who are suffering the consequences of the lack of adequate sanitation.

About the authors

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Endnote

1. For example, the Sanitation Community of Practice; the SuSanA forum, the CLTS Knowledge Hub Sharing and Learning workshops and the *Frontiers of CLTS* series, the UNICEF *Eastern and Southern Africa Sanitation and Hygiene Learning Series*, and numerous webinars and learning enclaves.