



# Tracking Progress and Sustainability: Monitoring, Verification and Certification of CLTS

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Monitoring, verification and certification are essential for ensuring the success and sustainability of Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) efforts. Monitoring assesses and documents progress towards and the sustainability of Open Defecation Free (ODF) status. Verification and certification provide a goal for communities and help implementing agencies and governments to ensure consistency and reliability of desired outcomes.

This Learning Brief considers the issues and challenges that are emerging around monitoring, verification and certification as CLTS is being used at scale. Whilst there has been progress, significant gaps in practice still remain. These would benefit from further innovation and lesson learning. This document complements a longer report, *Keeping Track: CLTS Monitoring, Certification and Verification*, accessible at <http://www.communityledtotalsanitation.org/resource/keeping-track-clts-monitoring-certification-and-verification>.

## Overview of CLTS monitoring, verification and certification

Monitoring is a key element of post-triggering and post-ODF follow-up. It is carried out by different stakeholders for a range of purposes:

- **Process monitoring** assesses the quality and effectiveness of the CLTS intervention, e.g. the facilitation style, engagement of Natural Leaders, and emergence of community sanctions.
- **Progress monitoring** assesses movement towards ODF communities, districts, regions and countries. Communities monitor their own progress towards ODF declaration.

Local government or Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) assess performance across a locality. National agencies monitor the attainments of programmes and national targets, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

- **Post-ODF monitoring** is key in order to sustain ODF status over the long term, improve the range of positive hygiene behaviours, ensure inclusion and promote sanitation upgrading.

Once a community has reached ODF they can request verification: the process of assessing behaviour change for the purposes of certification. Verification aids

the achievement of high standards and prevents variability in performance. Certification is the official recognition resulting from the achievement of ODF and other related conditions.

## Key issues and challenges

### What to monitor, verify and certify?

**A clear definition of the expected outcome of the CLTS process will aid effective monitoring, verification and certification.** The simple existence of a toilet is no longer considered an adequate outcome, and collective behaviour change reflected in a community's ODF status is being adopted as the key indicator for sanitation programmes. A range of proxy indicators of ODF are applied relating to the standard of toilet required, its location (away from water sources), evidence of use, the availability of handwashing facilities, safe water practices, solid waste management and maintenance of communal spaces. Different 'stages' of improved behaviour have also emerged relating to movement towards a more sanitary community, e.g. Total Sanitation (Nepal, Nigeria), Model Clean Community (Ghana), ODF ++ (Malawi) and ODF Stages 1, 2 and 3 (Kenya).

There are still gaps in what is being monitored and verified, e.g. partial usage, handwashing, equity of access and participation, including by age, gender, poverty level, disability, cultural or ethnic groups. Increasing attention is being paid to the issue of post-ODF sustainability monitoring which could help to identify slippage problems early, and allow local staff to respond appropriately. A limited amount of CLTS related health impact monitoring (e.g. diarrhoea, stunting, nutrition etc.) is currently taking place though this is far from routine (Robinson, 2016; UNICEF EAPRO 2015).

### Who is doing the monitoring, verifying and certifying?

**Who carries out monitoring, verification and certification is key to its acceptance, credibility and use of data.** Ideally, all stakeholders, from community level to national level should play a part. Monitoring of progress to ODF and of maintenance of ODF status should be done both internally within the community and externally. Verification and certification are typically carried out by a team designated by government, involving government stakeholders, community members and external agencies.

## Methods

**Various qualitative and quantitative methods are used for monitoring, verification and certification.**

Methods include:

- Reporting formats or checklists
- Visual methods, such as community maps, stickers on houses,
- House to house, exchange visits and community meetings
- Mobile phone and social media

Reporting formats are usually easily understood and managed by external staff and aid transfer of data into government or NGO management systems. However, they do not necessarily facilitate community participation or ownership unless combined with more engaging methods. With participatory visual methods the community tend to take an active role thus increasing ownership of the process. The visibility of households' ODF status adds to the pressure for behaviour change.



Figure 1: ODF verification exercise, Chibombo District, Zambia. Credit: Petra Bongartz

There are a growing number of examples of the use of mobile phone technologies for monitoring. Data and photos can be entered into mobile phones and automatically uploaded to a computer database, reducing paperwork and increasing speed of data transfer and potentially reducing misreporting. For example, in Zambia a national Mobile-to-Web real-time monitoring system piloted by UNICEF has resulted in better accountability, higher quality data and better cost efficiency per community targeted (UNICEF ESARO, 2015).

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aids credibility and objectivity</li> <li>• Helps ensure standardization and replicability across the country</li> <li>• Should be more impartial</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is time consuming and can lead to delays</li> <li>• There are cost implications</li> <li>• There is still a possibility of personal bias</li> <li>• May not be as participatory or supportive</li> </ul>

Table 1: Pros and Cons of Third Party Verification

## Reliability and accuracy

**Reliability and accuracy of data are prominent challenges when working at scale and innovative solutions are needed.** Third party verification can help ensure that local vested interests do not lead to misreporting, and also to maintain transparency and replicability. A third party verifier should come from another district or region or should represent an organisation with no links to CLTS implementation in the communities in question, and therefore have no vested interest in the outcome of the process. There are a number of pros and cons to third party verification (Table 1).

## Attitudes for Monitoring, Verification and Certification

**A critical issue in monitoring, verification and certification is the attitude of those carrying out the activity towards the community.** These processes should be participatory, positive experiences, encouraging pride and self-respect, ensuring acceptance of findings, and reinforcing sustainability of positive achievements.

The verification methodology used by Plan International Kenya encourages the community to suggest their own result based on observations from the verification team in a community meeting (S. Musyoki, pers comm, July 2016).

## Phased Verification

**Regular monitoring of toilet usage is required up to and beyond ODF to ensure behaviour change is sustained.** There may be one or a number of external verification stages depending on the country protocol. Having several levels or stages to the verification can aid objectivity and credibility of the process, and sustainability of ODF. In Tanzania there is a single verification; in Uganda, there are 3 verifications over three months by parish, sub-county and district; and in Nigeria, 3 different teams make up to 9 verification visits over 6 months.

## Incentives

**ODF monitoring, verification and certification roles may require incentives.** Integrating these activities into posts within an NGO or government department is key to sustainability. Natural Leaders or WASH committee members may also be involved in a voluntary capacity. Incentives are relevant to ensure that the job is done effectively and that volunteer roles are sustained long term. Forming networks or associations of Natural Leaders, or developing their role as sanitation entrepreneurs, has been trialled. Paid staff and volunteers alike need training, capacity building, mentoring and encouragement in order to be motivated to do their work effectively and sustainably.

## Management Information Systems

**Data collected under monitoring and verification systems requires effective management.** A review of 12 Asian countries found that basic government CLTS monitoring data was not readily available at either national or programme levels (UNICEF EAPRO, 2015). International donors have been supporting several countries in developing health Management Information System (MIS) systems and integrating CLTS progress data within them. Ensuring that an MIS is owned by relevant sector institutions and policy makers is key, as well as capacity building in utilisation of the information.

## Structures and processes for coordination, learning and sharing

**Stakeholder fora, networks and platforms are needed to ensure ongoing training, documentation, lesson learning and effective communication between all players.** They can help to ensure uniformity of standards, availability of trained verifiers, coordination between stakeholders and the sharing of good and bad practice, and thus improve all aspects of monitoring, verification and certification processes. However, finding budget and time for, as well as cultivating a culture of reflection and learning are a challenge in many contexts.

## Recommendations

Reflecting on these issues the following are recommendations to be considered when designing or altering monitoring, verification and certification systems:

- Produce clear national definitions and protocols for monitoring, verification and certification. This will aid clarity and consistency of practice for all implementing agencies. Nevertheless, these should allow for variations in context.
- Conduct monitoring activities both within the community and using external actors. Think about different roles and purposes of monitoring, verification and certification. Appropriate methods should be selected to suit the purpose, ensuring that the community are engaged.
- Develop methods and set aside time and resources for more systematic monitoring and verification around issues such as sanitation marketing and upgrading; sustainability; handwashing; inclusion; equity; and impact.
- Consider different strategies for improving reliability, accuracy and timeliness of monitoring and verification. These could include involving third party agents, ensuring multiple stages of monitoring and verification, and looking at different data collection technologies.
- Ensure data are being effectively collated, shared, and utilised, i.e. feeding into improved policy and practice. CLTS data collection may be integrated into wider health MIS systems. It is important to note that data are only useful if used to demonstrate progress or contribute to programming.
- Consider ways to establish or strengthen appropriate attitudes, incentives, structures and processes that facilitate learning and change around CLTS. These are needed at local, national and international level.

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