

Side event on Urban CLTS, Tuesday 3rd July 2013

Realising the Right to Total Sanitation: Hybrid CLTS Nakuru's Experience Practical Action and Umande Trust

"I saw it as a calling. I can't leave things the way they were"... said Francis Otiyo, youth leader and community health volunteer from Ponda Mali village in Rhonda.

He was speaking as part of the side event at the 36th WEDC conference. He was there with four other community leaders, describing their part in making their settlements open-defecation free. Mrs Ali, a village elder from Rhonda explained what 'total sanitation' means to her: that it is about more than just adequate toilets, but also extends to handwashing with soap and running water, good drainage, safe collection of solid waste, and sufficient access to clean water. These are the dreams of the community, which they think they can begin to realise, helping their lives and those of their neighbours become healthier and more dignified. "We don't want to eat each other's shit any more" they said.

Since the start of the project just over a year ago, Practical Action and Umande Trust have worked with a team of 140 community health volunteers, each responsible for around 500 people. Grace Oyamba from Kaptembwo described the steps they've taken so far. Together with the project staff, they have carried out triggering activities with local residents (tenants) who have come up with action plans to decide how they are going to deal with open defecation and open dumping of pit contents into nearby drains and on open ground. They used demonstrations such as bringing food and placing it near some faeces, and seeing the flies moving from one to the other. They mapped their areas, identifying plots and open areas which are 'hotspots' of open defecation. They also worked together to come up with appropriate sanitation designs that will last, and to persuade landlords to invest. They have brought together the local administration, elders, chiefs and churches, and involved all the schools too.

The project team have made it easy for landlords to invest by facilitating them to take loans at a reasonable interest rate from a local bank. Together with representatives from different sections of the community, they have come up with a set of 6 sanitation designs which have been pre-approved by the council and which will suit the different circumstances found across the settlements. They have also worked with pit emptiers to regularise the valuable work they do, make it safer for them, and find places where they can safely dispose of the pit contents. Life has changed for them too. Some find less need to get drunk before they can bear carrying out their work. At home perceptions are changing, with people seeing them working in a business that is accepted and respectable.

Mr Raja, a village elder from Rhonda, talked about the many challenges of working in an urban context. Residents are diverse and mobile. Many stakeholders need to be involved. Some landlords are also residents and can see the value of improving sanitation, but others are not living there, are hard to reach and hard to persuade – with some even being issued letters threatening legal action if they do not comply (as a last resort).

The community were asked about whether any areas had achieved the status of being verified as ODF. That will be audited by the Ministry of Health. "We are not there yet, but almost" they stated. "We know the OD hotspots through our mapping, and are focusing on the areas where the problems are the worst". It was suggested that some of the village names might have to change when that status is achieved, because they will no longer

reflect a cleaner, brighter reality – names such as ‘Jasho’ meaning ‘sweat’ or ‘struggling’; and another area known as ‘sewage’. The community members valued the suggestion, but each name has its own history, and they are keen to hold onto that. But at the same time, they are looking forward to the day when they can celebrate their village gaining that precious ODF status.

In closing, Robert Chambers remarked **“I am very, very impressed with what you have been able to achieve in just one year”**. This was echoed by many of the other conference delegates. The experience of presenting to a large international audience and going away with many words of encouragement has given these local champions renewed energy for the tasks ahead. The target is that by mid-2015, 8 of the 13 villages will have been declared ODF.