



Taking Sanitation into their Own Hands

The role of women as sanitation champions in Northern Uganda



By **Tetra Tech International Development**

IN WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE

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Although the overall toilet coverage in Uganda is at 77.2%, open defecation is still high at 22.9% and 12.1% in rural and urban area respectively, hand washing with soap at 36% in the rural areas and 40% in urban areas according to the Water and Environment Sector Performance Report 2019.

Open defecation rate is highest in the north at (18%), in some rural districts as high as 51%. Specific to the seven USHA intervention districts in Northern Uganda, households practicing OD is at 23%, with Agago and Omoro at 50% and 24% respectively.





The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is funding the Uganda Sanitation for Health Activity (USHA) to accelerate sustainable improvement in quality, access and supply of water and sanitation services, and improving hygiene behaviors in priority sub counties in 20 focus districts in north, central and eastern Uganda targeting to achieve 2,500 villages declared Open Defecation Free (ODF) by end of project-- January 2023.

A big part of this support is expanding the adoption of positive WASH behaviors through social behavior change initiatives by anchoring improved sanitation to positive attributes - prestige, convenience, durability and comfort.

In Northern Uganda where Open Defecation (OD) rates remain much higher than the national average, USHA implements the Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach to support communities to attain Open Defecation Free (ODF) status using the CLTS Enterprise Model - a combination of the traditional CLTS and Market Based Sanitation (MBS). Toilet products with washable interfaces were developed with the “Do-It-Yourself (DIY)” approach as the main model of delivery in the north. USHA also developed maps of the baselined villages indicating all households in the village; households without toilets



are color-coded “black”. These are used to ‘trigger’ the communities to abandon the practice of OD using community mobilization techniques. A local sanitation committee that consists of volunteers, community leaders, Village Health Teams (VHTs), and masons is trained and supported to rally community members to implement action plans made during the triggering sessions with priority focus on households practicing OD.

Turning the Adversely Affected into Champions

Due to the effects of the two-decade war in the north, several women were left widows, divorced or abandoned due to the abduction and killing of their husbands; and polygamy—culturally considered prestigious—has left a great number of women to fend for their families because of lack of adequate support from their husbands. These women are disproportionately affected by lack of access to adequate sanitation services and minimal decision making powers, yet their full and quality participation is strongly correlated with increased effectiveness when empowered and engaged on issues that affect their lives.

Jacinta Angwec, a 30-year-old housewife and mother from Tikginokeli Village in

Agelec Parish, Arum Sub County in Agago district, has had a touching journey to improved sanitation. With her eldest child only 16 years old, she is also the first of three wives to her husband. Since she became aware of the benefits of sanitation services after attending a CLTS triggering session in her village, carried out by USHA sub-grantee Soroti Rural Development Agency (SORUDA), she was determined to construct a toilet in her home and she sold a goat to cover the costs of materials and construction.



Jacinta Angwec in front of her new toilet facility.



Jacinta's new toilet facility and bath shelter

Jacinta recalls paying the pit digger UGX30,000 (approx. \$8.15) and a trained mason UGX20,000 (approx. \$5.44) as labor for the construction of the latrine. She purchased used iron sheets from a neighbor at UGX3,000 (approx. \$0.82) for the door and a jerry-can to construct a tippy tap at UGX2,000 (approx. \$0.54) all totaling to UGX55,000 (approx. \$14.95).

Community Leadership in Tikginokeli Village

At a baseline, 20 of the 38 households in Tikginokeli village were practicing open defecation. However, with the recently conducted ODF verification exercise by the district in May 2021, the village passed as open defecation free. This achievement is attributed to the committed Sanitation committee, comprised of three women and one man, that was formed during a CLTS triggering session in the village. These committees are self-driven and motivated to carry out their roles including door to door visits to motivate, educate, and sensitize the community on sanitation.

"The impact of the project in my village is evident, we no longer defecate in the bush. We shall support and encourage the neighboring villages to do the same."
— Lucy Akun, member of the Tikginokeli village Sanitation committee

Rose Lalam, a 50-year-old widow of Abuga West village, Ongako sub county, Omoro district—another USHA intervention district through Agency for Corporation and Research

in Development (ACORD)—
says her old facility
collapsed due to heavy rains
and flooding.

Much as the neighbors had
toilets, some did not allow
her household to access in
times of need. Rose shared
that she was not respected
by the locals, sneaking to
the neighbors' latrines in
their absence during day
and going to the bush at
night. People in her
household constantly
suffered from poor
sanitation-related diseases
such as diarrhea. Her
decision to improve her
sanitary status was driven
by trying to achieve better
health. She was able to use
locally available materials
and leverage the help of her
family members using the
USHA "Do It Yourself (DIY)"
approach to avoid incurring
cost.



| Rose's newly constructed toilet facility

Abuga West recorded a total of 14 households practicing open defecation out of 44 households in the village at baseline. Every household in the village now has access to a toilet facility and has self-claimed to be open defecation free.

Since August 2020, by far, **6,348 households have built new latrines** and **443 upgraded existing sanitation facilities** with **77 villages declared open defecation free** in the seven districts of USHA intervention in Northern Uganda.



Footnotes

Photos courtesy of Agatha Angwech for USAID Uganda USHA

Uganda

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