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**An update of themes and trends in urban  
community-led total sanitation projects**

*J. Myers (UK)*

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*This briefing paper identifies common themes and trends of Urban Community-Led Total Sanitation (UCLTS). The study relies on literature from 14 different projects across India and Africa alongside articles that focused on UCLTS and participation in urban sanitation projects. The hope is to provide an overview for those working in the field by identifying common characteristics, problems and opportunities. The paper ends with a list of recommendations for those currently working on UCLTS projects and those interested in transferring the CLTS model to urban environments.*

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**Introduction**

Urban poverty in the global South can only be significantly reduced if the urban poor can influence decision makers and be given space to design and implement their own initiatives (Satterthwaite and Mitlin, 2013). Given that Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) encourages and enables people living in poverty to decide together how they will create a clean hygienic environment, can the approach make a significant contribution in this area? It was originally designed to be used in rural areas and applying it in an urban environment is a major challenge (Wellington et al., 2011). Yet, there have been a small number of projects that have attempted to use Urban Community-Led Total Sanitation (UCLTS). These few cases have shown that UCLTS can enable the urban poor to play a central role in the decision making, designing and implementation process.

**Why this exercise is important**

This exercise is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, by drawing together all these cases we can identify common challenges and opportunities that could help inform practice of new and existing projects. Secondly, as cities grow the topic of urban sanitation is becoming more and more important. In many countries a large number of resources have been put into building extensive networks of CLTS professionals. Findings from this may be useful for those professionals wishing to transfer their skills to the urban environment. Thirdly, a better understanding of the UCLTS process could inform practice in rural areas. For example, questions surrounding subsidies for the poorest, faecal sludge management and where to start on the sanitation ladder have all been found to affect the sustainability of CLTS in rural areas (Cavil et al., 2015). Urban projects have to face these issues head on. Finally, rural and urban labels differ across countries and any clear boundary between urban and rural is becoming increasingly blurred (McGranahan and Satterthwaite, 2014). What is labelled as a town in sub-Saharan Africa can be smaller than villages in India. In Northern India, particularly in highly populated areas, there is often very little space in-between villages and can resemble small and medium sized towns.

**Method**

To complete this review projects described as using an UCLTS approach were identified. In total, 14 projects were found in 9 countries, all at different stages of using a UCLTS process:

1. Community-Led Environmental Project, Cairo, Egypt
2. CLTS in Himbrty, Eritrea
3. Clean Kumasi, Accra, Ghana
4. Urban CLTS Pilot Project, Lekpongunor, Ghana
5. Northern Region Small Towns Water and Sanitation Project, Karaga and Bincheratanga, Ghana
6. Nanded City, India
7. Kolkata Urban Services for the Poor, Kalyani, Kolkata, India
8. UCLTS, Delhi, India
9. Community Led Total Sanitation in Urban Areas, Nakuru, Kenya
10. Mathare 10, Kenya
11. Project Malio, Fort Dauphin, Madagascar
12. UCLTS, Rosso Mauritania
13. UCLTS, Ugep Town, Nigeria
14. UCLTS, Nationwide, Zambia

The literature on these fourteen projects included project plans, published papers, blog pieces, conference papers and grey literature. In addition, a wider set of sources that discussed CLTS in urban environments was also drawn upon.

## **Characteristics, problems and opportunities**

### **The approach**

UCLTS projects often do not strictly adhere to the traditional methodology. However, the projects always appear to be concerned with behaviour change and aim for open-defecation free communities. Triggering is often used. Most projects also adopt the no latrine subsidy approach. However, Project Malio in Madagascar intends to include them (Azafady, 2015). Many projects also explicitly describe their use of Natural Leaders. Guidelines have not been agreed upon and many experiment tools are being tried. However, one could question if UCLTS guidelines would make sense when programmes are so dependent on the local context.

### **Land rights**

Land rights and tenure problems are difficult subjects and not as straight forward as they initially appear. A lack of land rights can mean people (Qualye, 2012; McGranahan, 2013; van Maanen) and companies (McGranahan, 2013) are unwilling to invest. Often, governments also do not want to allow infrastructure to be built as they fear that this will legitimize illegal settlements. In the case of landlords, it has also been suggested that installing improved sanitation facilities is an opportunity for them to increase rents (McGranahan, 2013) Moreover, in Nakuru, Kenya, landlords are often poor themselves and rely on the rental money as the only source of income (Mwanzia and Misati, 2013).

Yet, though insecure land tenure undermines the incentive to invest it does not weaken the incentive to engage in sanitary behaviours (McGranahan, 2015). Furthermore, including landlords in the process has been found to be effective in Nakuru. There, a Landlord Forum was set up where landlords were triggered to take action (Pasteur and Prabhakaran, 2015). Gaining an adequate understanding of land rights, the different stakeholders and the effects this might have on programming is an important prerequisite for any UCLTS project.

### **Size and boundaries**

Many UCLTS projects list the size of the population as being a major challenge. Sub-dividing urban communities into smaller “neighbourhoods” alongside clearly defining the project boundaries and areas of intervention has proved to be important (van Maanen; WSSCC, EAWAG and UN HABITAT, 2011). A project in Ghana found that segmenting a town into manageable parts using existing and known boundaries was highly effective (Cowater, 2012). In Hambryt, Eritrea, the town was divided into three zones and then into clusters of 50 households. Triggering then happened at the cluster level (UNICEF Eritrea, 2013). In Nanded, triggering was done in communities, schools, engineering colleges, markets, anganwadi centres, in housing blocks and with beggars (Knowledge Links, 2011). In Mauritania the town was sub-divided and competition between different neighbourhoods was encouraged (van Maanen).

### **Space**

Individual households are sometimes unable to build toilets due to the size of their plots. This has been found in Mauritania, (van Maanen) and Kenya (Quayle, 2012). It was also a problem in Hambryt but there, this was solved by having individual household superstructures feeding into shared pits (UNICEF Eritrea, 2013). This solution will only be viable in the right conditions. More commonly when there is a severe lack of space, community toilets will have to be used, for example in Plan's project in Delhi (Plan, 2015). However, designing the right community toilets and making sure they stay clean, hygienic and safe for all to access, challenges not just for UCLTS but for urban sanitation more generally, will be vital in these circumstances.

### **Costs**

Costs of latrines are higher in urban environments and often beyond the means of the poor (Lüthi et al., 2010; Mwanzia and Misati, 2013; McGranahan, 2013). Urban areas are more likely to have laws requiring a minimum latrine standard, thus increasing costs. Therefore additional financing and support are required. In addition, there is more of a need for infrastructural investments rather than just behavioural change (McGranahan, 2015). Yet many projects still use a no subsidy approach for toilets. In Nakuru, Kenya, access to finance was made easier for landlords by providing a guarantee fund in collaboration with a bank. It provided a cushion for potential defaulters. Loans are being given for new, additional and improved facilities in line with approved designs. However, uptake has been lower than anticipated (Pasteur and Prabhakaran, 2015).

### **Faecal sludge management**

Open defecation must be considered as more than just shitting in open spaces- it also entails the unsafe and unhygienic management of faeces (Pasteur and Prabhakaran, 2015). Effluent is often being released into the environment in other ways, eg through the use of 'flying toilets' or households releasing sludge from pits. For example, in parts of Dar es Salaam 'flooding' or 'vomiting' is used to partially empty pits during periods of heavy rain (Jenkins et al., 2014). Unlike rural sanitation any urban sanitation project has to tackle faecal sludge management head on. Communities may have a better understanding of the problems they face, however they are not in a position to deal with faecal sludge (McGranahan, 2015). Any CLTS programme in densely populated urban area must be included in the city or town environmental sanitation management strategy (WaterAid, 2011).

### **The 'Community'**

There is a need to involve stakeholders beyond just the residents of a particular neighbourhood or area. Consequently, partnerships and relationships between multiple actors becomes essential. In Mathare, Nairobi, partnerships between landlords, tenants, faecal sludge management companies, governments and NGOs have been extremely important (Musyoki, 2011). In Nakuru, partnerships were made with the Municipal Council, Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation, and Nakuru Water and Sanitation services, all of which had staff trained in the CLTS approach (Mwanzia and Misati, 2013). Bringing together different stakeholders has also been beneficial in sanitation projects in India (Gupta 2012; McGranahan, 2013), Pakistan (McGranahan, 2013), Ghana (Cowater, 2012) and Nigeria (UNICEF Nigeria, 2014).

The relationships with government agencies are extremely important. In Ugep Town, Nigeria, UCLTS required logistical, funding and legislative support from both local and state governments (UNICEF Nigeria, 2014). In Ghana they found visible and decisive leadership by District Assemblies and other government agencies critical for the successful promotion of CLTS (Cowater, 2012). While in Nanded, India, the municipal government played a decisive role. Himbrty managed to overcome challenges thanks to strong political leadership. There were extensive pre-triggering activities with key town leaders. Workshops were organised for health staff, community groups and religious leaders. Project staff also conducted one-to-one sessions with the Administrator and other leaders (UNICEF Eritrea, 2013). Changes in leadership can have a detrimental effect if champions are replaced.

### **Heterogeneity**

A large challenge in the urban environment is the fact that urban communities are more heterogeneous (Lüthi et al., 2010; Kar and Scott, 2012) and consequently usually harder to trigger (McGranahan, 2013). There are many space-specific divisions and conflicts relating to local politics, cultures and geographies which pose a serious threat to collective action (McGranahana, 2015). Transient populations have also been

noted as problem for sanitation projects in Indonesia (Winter et al, 2014) and elsewhere. Creating community-wide agreements may require more organisation than CLTS currently provides in rural areas (McGranhana, 2015). There is the additional problem of the homeless and pavement dwellers.

Rural CLTS still has a lot to learn about different approaches when dealing with heterogeneous and socially divided communities (Cavill et al, 2015). This could be an area for which those working in UCLTS could provide insights. For example, Ugpe Town, Nigeria, have been trying to target church congregations which often cross ethnic and cultural boundaries (UNICEF Nigeria, 2014).

### **Focus**

The successful projects to date have not concentrate purely on ending open defecation. In Nanded, focus was on both littering and OD, linking sanitation with other waste management practices. Plan India's UCLTS in Delhi focused on garbage collection, water purification and bio-gas for food waste (Plan, 2014). The Cairo project focused on solid and human waste as well as the beautification of the area (Plan, 2009). In Nakuru, the project addressed wider issues including faecal sludge management, solid waste management, access to clean water and waste water management (Pasteur and Prabhakaran, 2015).

### **Technologies**

Technologies have been used at different stages of the UCLTS process. In Nakuru GIS mapping was found useful in the pre-triggering and monitoring phase. Community Health Volunteers mapped latrine coverage and incidences of open defecation. These maps were then used to trigger landlords (Pasteur and Prabhakaran, 2015). In Mathare, participatory GIS was used to create sanitation maps to support and monitor the project (Lundine et al., 2012). Clean Kumasi, in Ghana hoped to recruit leaders digitally using SMS. After signing up via SMS residents would receive notices of community meetings and get updates on CLTS activities. However, due to a low response rate the initiative was not continued (Georges Mikal, Personal Correspondence). In small towns in northern Ghana screens were set up to show videos and photographs of open defecation in order to substitute for the problem of conducting whole town transect walks. Google Maps projected onto large screens were also tested to conduct community mapping (Wellington, et al, 2011). Although not up and running at the time of writing Project Malio, Fort Dauphin, Madagascar, is planning to use a high profile multimedia campaign to widely publicize messages about open defecation (Azafady, 2014).

### **Under-reporting**

Certain UCLTS projects have been well reported such as Mathare, Nakuru and Nanded. However, many projects have very little written about them or documents are not widely publicised (both projects that have seen success and those that have failed). Often these documents are hidden away and underused by those wanting to start similar projects. Many reports from practitioners are unpublished. Many are simple Microsoft Word documents that the CLTS Knowledge Hub only gained access to due to the ongoing relationships we maintain. Furthermore, reporting that is done does not always share the processes and methods used. There also seems to be a lack of follow-up (however this is also the case for CLTS projects in rural areas). For example, nothing could be found on Kalyani, Kolkata, dated after 2008.

### **Background of project implementers**

Many people working on UCLTS projects have a background in rural CLTS. As mentioned above, as urban sanitation becoming more important and better funded it can be assumed that many people engaged in CLTS will make this transition. It is hoped that this paper will be of use for those people and also start a conversation that we hope to continue.

### **Lessons learnt**

- Due to the complex nature of the urban environment the pre-triggering stage becomes a more important element of the process.
- Maintaining good relationships with a variety of different actors, especially politicians is extremely important.
- All stakeholders should undertake some sort of UCLTS training or sensitisation workshops.
- CLTS practitioners must facilitate discussions between people in the wider urban sanitation community. Often between people in positions of power and those who are not.

- Looking at wider societal challenges appears to be effective. Where there is no community demand for sanitation improvements linking UCLTS to other problems faced by communities can increase interest in the project. This will involve finding out community priorities and working out ways these can be linked with the UCLTS process.
- Exploring different ways to include the CLTS approach as part of a wider programmes that also deal with faecal sludge management will also be important.
- Experimenting with different technologies throughout the programme, pre-triggering, triggering, post-triggering and post-ODF activities could lead to fruitful outcomes. This is also an area that can be explored in rural CLTS.
- More documentation is needed, including more explicit reporting on the tools used, both those adapted from rural CLTS and newly developed ones. Returning to find out the sustainability of programmes is also essential.

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#### Contact details

Jamie Myers  
 Community-Led Total Sanitation Knowledge Hub,  
 Institute of Development Studies,  
 j.myers2@ids.ac.uk

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