

SANITATION SUSTAINABILITY IN COMMUNITIES WITH CULTURAL DIVERSITIES TO IMPROVE HEALTH IN KAMPALA SLUM ENVIRONMENTS

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Sanitation and hygiene in most slum communities in the developing countries remains a complex issue. Urbanization and industrialization has seen influx of people of all cultures move from rural to urban areas on regular basis. In Kampala, Uganda's capital city, over 60% of the populations live in slums. Sanitation in slums is inadequate, responsible for the continued disease incidence and prevalence that is putting an impasse not only to development due to morbidity but also increasing mortality. The mixture of belief systems has made promotion of sanitation a challenge at times. Some households without toilet facilities resort to 'flying toilets' and dispose to the environment. Some with latrines are emptied in drainages and flowing water during rain seasons. These practices lead to pollution and contamination of water resources mainly used by slum dwellers. Bad practices have also often led to severe flooding during heavy rains due to solid waste littering and dumping waste in water drains. SSWARS working alongside other development partners through its social marketing approach of technological options, waste recycling and public health sensitizations to reverse the trend and enhance scaling up of sanitation and reduce environmental pollution and increase productivity.

Introduction

Sanitation and hygiene in most slum communities in the developing countries remains a complex issue. Urbanization and industrialization has seen influx of people of all cultures move from rural to urban areas on regular basis. In Kampala, Uganda's capital city, over 60% of the populations live in slums (UBOS, 2007). Sanitation in slums is inadequate with close to 80 lacking access to toilet facilities (Sanitation updates, 2008), responsible for the continued disease incidence and prevalence that is putting an impasse not only to development due to morbidity but also increasing mortality. The mixture of belief systems has made promotion of sanitation a challenge at times. Some households without toilet facilities resort to 'flying toilets' (faeces in polyethylene bags, locally known as 'buvera' and throw it to the environment, existing solid waste dumps or in drainage channels). Some with latrines are emptied in drainages and flowing water during rain seasons. These practices lead to pollution and contamination of water resources mainly used by slum dwellers. Bad practices have also often led to severe flooding during heavy rains due to solid waste littering and dumping waste in water drains.

SSWARS working alongside other development partners through its social marketing approach (Niwagaba et al., 2008) of technological options, waste recycling and public health sensitizations is contributing to reverse the trend and enhance scaling up of sanitation and reduce environmental pollution and increase productivity (SSWARS Annual Report, 2008).

Materials and Methodology

Through collaboration with Kawempe division (government local division authorities), parishes in dire need of sanitation and hygiene improvement and often prone to cholera outbreak were identified.

Various toilet options suitable for different topography and costs were developed for the communities and sensitized about them. Masons identified by area residents were trained in these options to ease community accessibility to skilled personnel to construct the desired toilet facilities. Demonstration facilities were constructed in each of the parishes using trained masons. Community members were given practical trainings in waste recycling as part of garbage management and income generation skills. Community sanitation and waste recycling centers were constructed in two of the parishes to ease knowledge dissemination, community trainings and learning. Continuous community sensitization and community members were organized into groups too to boost toilet construction and promotion of other sanitation and hygiene practices.

Results and Discussion

From the needs assessments, it was affirmed that sanitation coverage in the areas lagged below 50%, with some zones (villages) having toilet coverage below 35% and less than 10% of community members washed their hands with soap at critical times. Most people live in informal highly populated settlements with filthy surroundings due to polluted sanitary environment. This explained the regular disease outbreaks such as cholera, diarrhoea, dysentery, intestinal worms and malaria among other infections. For the few existing toilet facilities, most of them were full, poorly constructed and some insecure as they were at the point of collapse. Consequently increase in poverty levels since time and then a lot of money was spent in treatment of diseases yet majority is low income earners or unemployed. During needs assessments, most common toilet options envisaged were pit latrines. Most slums being located in wetlands, most water sources were contaminated with excreta from these toilet facilities. These findings influenced SSWARS to come up with an intervention based on integrated sanitation social marketing approach to influence communities prioritize sanitation, engage in its improvement and hygiene practices as well as getting employed in it to earn a living.

Community sensitizations

Communities are regularly sensitized about the variety of toilet options to solve their problem of gap in knowledge of convenient and cost effective sanitation facilities suitable for their environments. Sensitization trainings also include their functionality, advantages and disadvantages of each option, costs entailed suitable areas and construction materials involved. The trained masons are accessed by the community members who wish to construct their desired toilet options. A toilet catalogue containing this information was developed and copies given to local leaders and trained masons and demo- toilets constructed.

Since then, more than 100 toilet facilities have been built up in these communities by the masons on the demand and initiative by the communities and this has and is helping in scaling up sanitation in the slum areas.

In addition, Over 100 community members were given training in waste management/recycling. This included; organic composting to produce natural fertilizer, Briquette making from sawdust, charcoal dust, paper, sugarcane waste/bagasse, coffee and

rice husks, weaving in which polythene papers were used to make shopping bags, sandals, belts and mats and Plastic products (roofing tiles and fencing poles) made from melting the waste plastics which are then placed in moulds to produce the required products.

The skills acquired have been put to use and are already being replicated in some communities. The skills acquired are being used to earn a living through making and selling products thus being a remedy to poverty reduction. Photos 1 and 2 show some of the community members who have taken up the initiative.



Photograph 1. SSWARS - Mrs. Scott Kiwanuwa of Bwaise II parish illustrating her skills in waste recycling

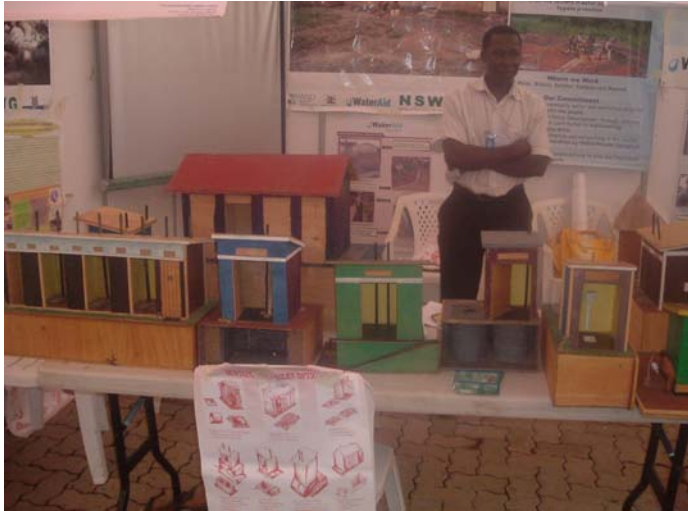


Photograph 2. SSWARS – Mr. Salongo Ssenkubuge of Kyebando parish working on his made organic manure (Source: SSWARS photo shop)

Regular sanitation and hygiene promotions are conducted in communities to keep them embraced with the need for improved sanitation and hygiene practices, central to reinforcing behavioral changes. There is an increase in latrine constructions and demand, usage and hygiene practices like washing hands with soap after visiting a toilet, before eating or feeding babies, before preparing food and after cleaning babies among others. These sensitizations have been aided by development of posters with captive sanitary messages, dramatization of sanitation and hygiene practices in drama scenes portraying worst and best practices and their associated consequences, participatory hygiene and sanitation transformation (PHAST) tools and use of sanitation groups.

Involvement of local community leaders have also helped to monitor progress as well as acting as reinforcing agents to always to sanitation messages during community meetings.

A community sanitation centre was constructed in one of the parishes (Mulago III) and equipped with sanitary materials which are accessible to the communities. It's also a learning centre to the communities, government, NGOs and other development partners of interest to the sector.



Photograph 1. SSWARS - Some of SSWARS community toilet models;
Photo by I.Kamara

Source: SSWARS photo bank

Conclusion

Integrated sanitation social marketing approach is salient in scaling up sanitation and hygiene in cultural dynamic slum communities. Combinations of different but attractive approaches for the communities to fully engage in health improving behaviors are essential.

Integrating sanitation and hygiene practices in other economic development aspects of the community is vital to its success and increased community participation.

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Key words: Culture, Sanitation, Toilet options, Uganda, Waste recycling.

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