



Evaluation of the WASH Sector Strategy “Community Approaches to Total Sanitation”

UNICEF has been implementing water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) activities since the 1960s, with special focus on rural areas, health institutions and schools. Community Approaches to Total Sanitation (CATS) are a major shift away from supply-driven, facility-orientated programmes towards a demand-driven, community-led approach. In 2013, a global evaluation was carried out to take stock of CATS achievements globally and to enable evidence-based decision making on future CATS programming and investments.

“Community Approaches to Total Sanitation” is an umbrella term used by UNICEF sanitation practitioners to encompass a wide range of community-based sanitation programming. All CATS programmes share the goal of eliminating open defecation; they are rooted in community demand and leadership, focused on behaviour and social change, and committed to local innovation. CATS can be applied through a wide range of methods, such as Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS), School-Led Total Sanitation (SLTS) and Total Sanitation Campaigns (TSC). Nine key principles guide UNICEF’s CATS programmes. These are:

- CATS aim to achieve 100% open defecation free (ODF) communities (Principle 1).
- CATS apply a community led change process that fosters participation and community engagement (Principles 2 and 3).
- CATS do not include direct household subsidies for building toilets (Principle 4).
- CATS encourage the construction of toilets with locally available materials, and includes capacity building for community facilitators and local artisans (Principles 5 and 6).
- CATS promote government participation from the outset (Principle 7).
- CATS integrate hygiene promotion, particularly handwashing with soap after defecation, and are an entry point for addressing wider social challenges (Principles 8 and 9).

CATS have spread quickly since their adoption by UNICEF in 2008. CATS programmes are now being implemented in 53 of the 90 countries where UNICEF WASH programming is taking place. At the time of the evaluation (June 2013), some 37,000 communities, almost exclusively in rural areas, had reached open defecation free (ODF) status through CATS.

The “Evaluation of the WASH Sector Strategy ‘Community Approaches to Total Sanitation’” (hereafter, referred to as the CATS Evaluation) was commissioned in order to inform further scale-up of CATS, both within the countries already implementing CATS programmes and globally, in expanding the rollout to more UNICEF-supported country programmes. The evaluation acknowledged and documented the efforts made over the 2008-2012 period and assessed results achieved as well as key social and technical factors that explained success or failure in a given context. It investigated key financial and managerial factors that maximize the efficiency of CATS programmes and assessed factors required at the community and higher levels to improve the adherence to new ODF behaviours spurred by the CATS programmes. It also contributed to global learning by drawing lessons and suggesting possible adjustments in the way CATS programmes are designed and implemented.

Key Conclusion 1: CATS programmes have been effective and efficient in achieving results. CATS successfully contributed to shifting the sanitation sector towards demand-driven approaches.

The evaluation demonstrates that CATS programmes have been fast performers in achieving results, i.e. reducing open defecation and encouraging the construction of latrines. Using “open defecation free” (ODF) declarations as the measure of success, the evaluation concludes that CATS interventions triggered behaviour change in 24 million people globally since 2008, mostly living in Africa and South Asia. While CATS programmes perform best in rural, socially cohesive contexts, the evaluation shows that they were robust even in social environments with many potential cleavages (e.g. caste, class, gender). CATS programmes have gone to scale effectively and efficiently in most countries and this rapid scaling up has been an important source of motivation for partners, including Governments.

The evaluation found that the costs to achieve the results were consistently low, due to the principle of “no subsidies”, an efficient division of labour among partners, and the willingness of community members to invest their own labour, money and materials. Hence, value-for-money of CATS was assessed as strong.

All in all, the evaluation concludes that the CATS strategy has given new momentum to rural sanitation in most of the 50+ countries supported by UNICEF in terms of how rural communities regard sanitation, invest into it, commit to new behaviours around ending open defecation and eventually improve their living conditions.

Table 1: Old approaches vs. new approaches to sanitation

Old Approaches	New Approaches
Building Toilets	Changing Social Norms
Individual/Family	Social/Community
Health Message Focused	Economic, Social, Health, Disgust
Top – Down & Externally Driven	Community Led – Internal, Demand Driven
Didactic	Participatory – Natural & Traditional Leaders
Technologies Predetermined	Local Technologies – Community Capacity
Subsidized	Rewards – Pride – Celebration
Don't Mention the S*** Word	Talk Shit – Feces, Poo, Kaka, Toilets, Latrines

Key Conclusion 2: The factors that promote and constrain CATS programme success have been identified and can be planned for when going to scale or innovating in other countries

The evaluation applied a Theory of Change (ToC) lens to CATS programming, tracking progress from programme inputs through to the achievement of a new open defecation free social norm. The ToC posits that if the nine core principles of CATS are correctly applied, risks are managed sufficiently and a sound enabling environment is in place, the new social norm will be established. This new social norm will bring about and be reinforced by a change in individual and collective preferences, actions, behaviours and enforced formal or informal regulations/sanctions in the community. The adoption of this

new social norm can be measured through a ‘proxy indicator’ of ODF status both achieved and sustained through family and individual action in a given community. If ODF status is sustained after a given period of time the social norm can be considered ‘stabilized’.

The evaluation tested the ToC against the facts on the ground. According to the evaluation report, the following factors were predictors for success in scaling up CATS in the countries examined:

- policy, strategy and leadership;
- institutional arrangements and partnerships;
- capacity at all levels;
- a functional supply side of the market;
- adequate financing;
- involvement of the sub-national (local) authorities;
- private sector participation and financing mechanisms (although these have not yet been exploited to their full potential).

Constraints to successful scaling up of CATS identified by the evaluation include:

- subsidized latrine programmes (as they hamper harmonization of approaches across the sector);
- low population density and dispersed/remote communities;
- poor hydro-geological conditions;
- lack of political will at the national and sub-national levels;
- weak social cohesion at community level.

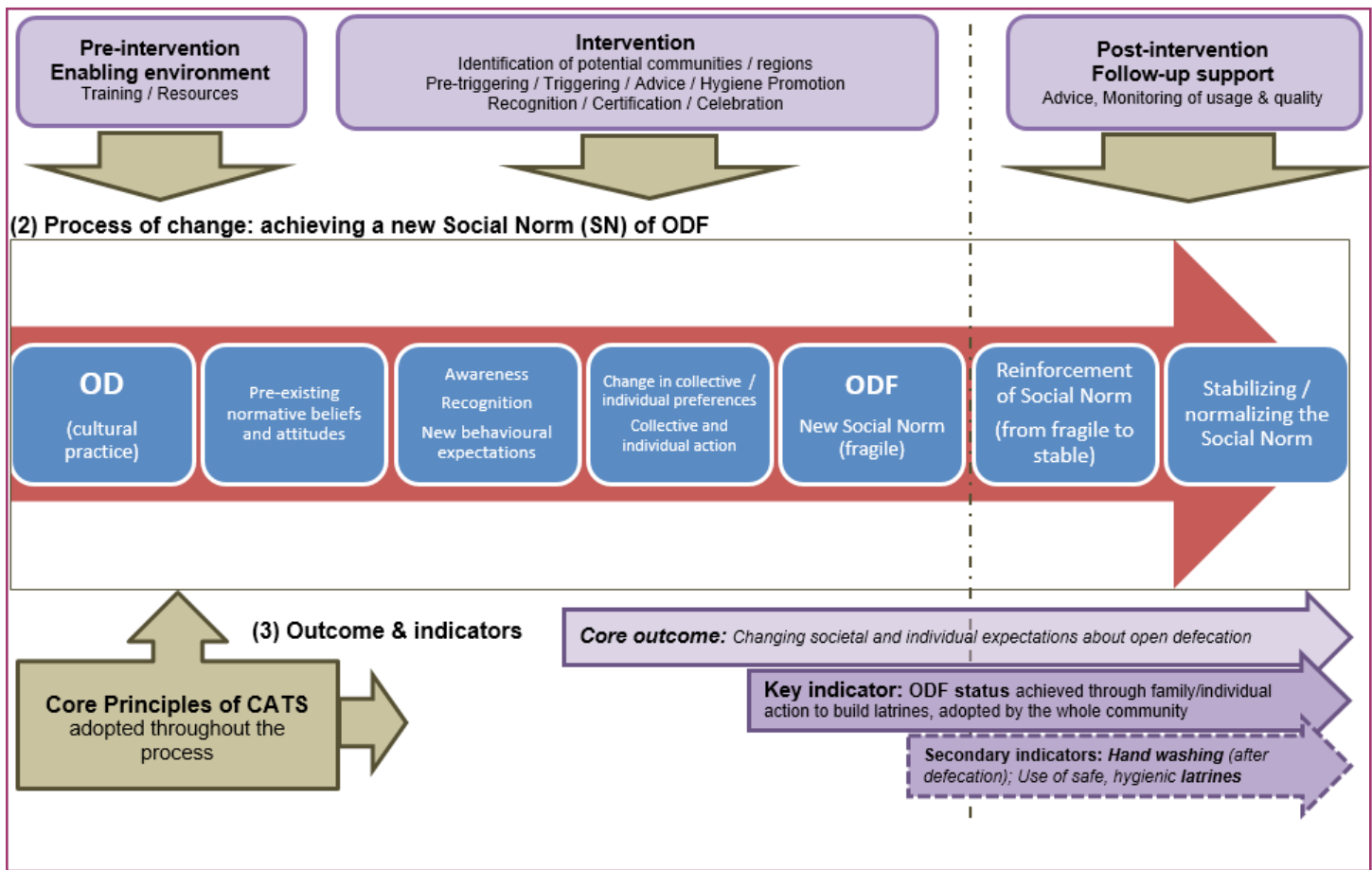
In most places, the evaluation found UNICEF and partners to have been flexible and ultimately effective in overcoming challenges, e.g. when modifying the ‘no-subsidy’ principle with respect to school facilities or when integrating major CATS principles into a national subsidized approach. The evaluation concluded that movement toward the new norm occurred rapidly, especially when a good triggering phase was undertaken.

Although CATS programmes aim to create a new social norm where open defecation is no longer acceptable, the evaluation showed a broad variability in the extent to which CATS programmes explicitly employ the social norms approach in the planning, implementation and M&E aspects. The strongest evidence of social norms change uncovered by the evaluation was the enforcement of formal and informal rules and bylaws that are accepted by all community members. The evaluation concludes that further training for UNICEF and partner staff on social norms theory, approaches and application is needed to strengthen CATS programming.

Key Conclusion 3: The sustainability of gains made through CATS programmes is a concern. There are conceptual, programmatic and data gaps in the post-ODF certification phase

The evaluation found that CATS programme design and national WASH sector policies and strategies were well aligned in most countries and that UNICEF often played a prominent and pro-active role in policy development. As a result, CATS principles were found to be shared, with a relatively high degree of ownership, by Governments and other partners at the central to local levels in most of the countries assessed. The likelihood of sustained engagement and support throughout the public sector is high.

Figure 1: How change comes about through CATS (Theory of Change)¹



¹ Figure 1 shows an abridged version of the Theory of Change developed by the independent evaluators. The complete version can be found in the final evaluation report.

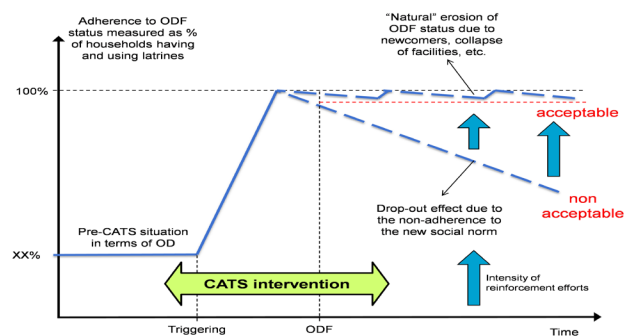
The evaluation voices particular concern in relation to the post ODF certification phase: according to the report, insufficient attention has been given to date to securing, consolidating and sustaining CATS achievements in the longer-term. Contrary to expectations, little evidence was found of households moving up the sanitation ladder from their initial latrine and set of behaviours. Also, in a majority of countries it was not possible to assess the extent of slippage back into open defecation due to the lack of systematic monitoring of new behaviours (continued adherence to ODF, sustained practice of new behaviours such as hand washing, and the extent to which communities and households adopt additional positive sanitation behaviours). The achievement of sustainable sanitation through CATS and the stabilization of a new social norm (ODF and hand washing after toilet use) was therefore found to be incomplete.

The evaluation report posed that defining a threshold for community capacity to deal with defaulters (see Figure 2) could provide an indicator for the sustainability of the new social norm and long-lasting adherence to ODF status. Similarly, monitoring of sanctions and enforcement rules would put equity, human rights and gender considerations squarely on the agenda and provide the evidence necessary to decide if changes to the programme need to be made on those grounds.

The report also emphasized a number of good practices that are being introduced to address these sustainability issues. Among them is the development of sanitation marketing approaches

to expand the availability of affordable and desirable sanitation products and services for low-income households. These programmes aim to strengthen the supply side of sanitation by researching market demand, the viability of supply chains and existing mechanisms and motivations for private sector engagement, and by building the capacity of local sanitation entrepreneurs and masons.

Figure 2: Dealing with defaulters to open defecation free status



Another good practice are “CATS+” approaches that engage communities in further improving their sanitation and hygiene conditions, by encouraging them to adopt additional good hygiene practices and to improve the quality of latrines constructed. Some “CATS+” programmes are also beginning to be used as an opportunity to address broader health and social issues.

The way forward

On World Water Day (21 March) 2013, the Deputy Secretary General urged the development community to sharpen its focus on sanitation and declared: “Ending open defecation is key to fighting poverty and disease while pursuing attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. The call to action aims to focus on improving hygiene, changing social norms, better managing human waste and wastewater, and completely eliminating, by 2025, open defecation, which perpetuates the vicious cycle of disease and poverty.”

As the WASH sector celebrates the large number of communities that have reached open defecation free status over a very short time span, much remains to be done. It is critical that while CATS programmes continue to focus on the goal of eliminating open defecation, they ensure that efforts capitalize on and sustain these gains for children and their families. The evaluation has demonstrated that CATS need to be not only rolled out (breadth) but also sharpened, especially with regards to post-certification durability of gains and social norms changes (depth).

Recommendations

- ✓ Continue to build on what is working well:
 - ✓ implement CATS through government channels whenever it is feasible;
 - ✓ engage at policy level to build a sound enabling environment;
 - ✓ integrate social norms concepts into CATS design and implementation;
 - ✓ use non-monetary, pride-based community awards as positive motivation;
 - ✓ integrate the CATS M&E system into the overall M&E framework of the WASH sector.
- ✓ Reinforce capacity building for staff and implementing partners, including on social norms concepts and indicators.
- ✓ Refine sustainability considerations within CATS programmes, especially in terms of (a) durability of infrastructure and supply mechanisms as part of the enabling environment and (b) planning and making resources available for the post-certification period.
- ✓ Take stock of “CATS+” or “ODF+” programmes that combine CATS with sanitation marketing and social policy approaches, document lessons and provide guidance for staff and implementing partners on how to build these into ongoing programmes.
- ✓ Further develop current M&E systems to capture (and demonstrate) sustainability of results, focusing on the post-certification period, by building on the Sustainability Check tool and social norms indicators.
- ✓ Design and commission an impact evaluation to research the relationships between social norm adoption and the level of post-ODF support required in order to stabilize social norm adoption.
- ✓ Develop a learning initiative to document and highlight good practices, share local innovations and tools and disseminate them at global level.



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This brief is based on the comprehensive Evaluation of the WASH Sector Strategy “Community Approaches to Total Sanitation” (CATS) which can be downloaded from www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_CATS.html. The purpose of this brief is to facilitate the exchange of knowledge between UNICEF and its partners. The contents of the evaluation report, and consequently of this brief, do not necessarily reflect the policies or views of UNICEF. For more information, please contact the UNICEF Evaluation Office.