

EVALUATION REPORT

**EVALUATION OF THE WASH
SECTOR STRATEGY “COMMUNITY
APPROACHES TO TOTAL
SANITATION” (CATS)**

Executive Summary

**EVALUATION OFFICE
JUNE 2014**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background and rationale

UNICEF has been implementing water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) activities since the 1960s, with special focus on rural areas, health institutions and schools. Traditionally, sanitation programmes were based on supply-driven approaches that put subsidies at the centre of the process and placed behaviour change and social norms in the background. A major shift occurred 10-15 years ago with an increased focus on demand, a trend from which emerged a growing interest in community-based approaches. Community Approaches to Total Sanitation (CATS), which was officially adopted by UNICEF in 2008, is an umbrella term used by sanitation practitioners to encompass a wide range of community-based sanitation programming. All CATS programmes share the goal of eliminating open defecation (OD); 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:

- CATS aims to achieve 100 per cent open defecation free (ODF) communities (Principle 1).
- CATS is a community-led change process that fosters participation and community engagement (Principles 2 and 3).
- CATS does not include direct household subsidies for building latrines (Principle 4).
- CATS encourages the construction of latrines with locally available materials, using the skills of local technicians (Principle 5).
- CATS includes capacity building for community facilitators and local artisans as well as hygiene promotion (Principles 6 and 8).
- CATS promotes the participation of local and national governments from the outset (Principle 7).
- CATS is an entry point for wider social change (Principle 9).

Since the initial development of CATS, a growing understanding of social norms theory has developed, reinforcing the importance of programmes that support community (and even society) level behaviour change and that leverage the crucial role that social pressure and social expectations can play in sustaining new sanitation behaviours. At the time of evaluation (2013), the development and roll out of CATS was at a crucial point. In South Asia, where CATS programmes are most mature, some CATS-like initiatives had been operating for more than ten years. While scale up is more recent in sub-Saharan Africa, programmes there have been spreading quickly. Over the last five years, many stakeholders have been engaging with, or are aware of, the 'total sanitation' approach and some countries have adopted CATS as a key component of their sanitation strategy.

This evaluation was commissioned by UNICEF in order to take stock of CATS achievements globally and to enable evidence-based decision making on further scaling up of CATS. The evaluation reviewed the efforts undertaken from 2008 to 2012 and assessed the results around four areas:

- Outcome objective: What are the results achieved by CATS (output and outcome levels) and what is the quality of evidence validating these results?
- Effectiveness objective: What are the key social and technical factors that can explain the success or failure of CATS in a given country/community context?
- Efficiency objective: What are the key financial and managerial factors that maximize the efficiency/value-for-money of CATS? How can they be optimized?
- Sustainability objective: What are the key factors required at country/community levels to improve the adherence to new ODF behaviours created by CATS?

The primary audiences for the evaluation are UNICEF staff and CATS programme partners, donors and the wider sanitation sector.

Methodology

The evaluation followed a mixed methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative methods. During a thorough inception phase, existing literature was reviewed, a theory of change developed and evaluation instruments designed. The data collection phase focused on three complementary tools:

First, an online survey was developed for UNICEF staff and others directly involved in CATS implementation. More than 200 respondents completed the survey, representing 45 countries across all six of UNICEF's main intervention regions.

Second, two webinars were conducted with participation from UNICEF staff involved in CATS implementation. The webinars enabled time-bound and structured virtual meetings on selected topics. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten non-UNICEF sanitation specialists (see Annex 3 of the full report).

Third, five countries (India, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nepal and Sierra Leone) were selected as broadly representative of global CATS roll out and served as case studies for a more in-depth assessment of CATS implementation at country level. Each country was visited for two weeks by two members of the evaluation team and involved key informant interviews at national and sub-national level, community field visits, workshops/focus groups and a document review.

The methodological limitations of the evaluation include lack of baseline and monitoring data in some settings, data gaps within the secondary literature, including on programme costs, unbalanced geographic participation in the survey and difficulties attributing observed changes to the UNICEF-supported CATS efforts as many actors are active in the sanitation arena. These issues were discussed and mitigation measures were taken where possible. However, some findings are more certain than others.

In terms of data analysis, the evaluation team applied a theory of change (ToC) lens to CATS programme results, tracking progress from programme inputs through to the achievement of a new social norm (no open defecation). According to this logic, if the nine core principles of CATS are correctly applied, risks are managed sufficiently and a sound enabling environment is established, the new social norm will result. Evaluative conclusions were drawn based on triangulation of findings derived from different settings, different data collection methods and different sources.

Findings & Conclusions

Outcomes

CATS contributed to the rapid reduction of open defecation

In the more than 50 countries where CATS is currently being implemented, CATS contributed to the rapid reduction of open defecation and encouraged the large-scale construction of latrines. As of June 2013, some 37,000 communities, almost exclusively in rural areas, had reached ODF status through CATS, representing an estimated population of 24 million (most of which are in Africa and South Asia).

The rapidity of CATS in achieving a reduction in open defecation and the construction of latrines was confirmed by key stakeholders during the evaluation and constitutes a major achievement, providing an important source of motivation for UNICEF and its partners.

CATS contributed to the re-orientation of the sanitation sector towards demand-led approaches

One of the main features of the pre-CATS situation in most countries was the predominance of supply-oriented, largely centralized and heavily subsidized approaches. Behaviour change was largely ignored and open defecation was not a priority. Most sanitation programmes focused on providing free (or highly subsidized) latrines which ultimately reached a limited number of households.

The introduction of CATS has led to a significant policy shift towards demand-led approaches, including prioritizing the reduction of open defecation. The CATS principles are now shared by most of the countries where CATS has been deployed, with a relatively high degree of ownership at all levels of government.

To a large extent, UNICEF has been a major contributor in aligning development partners towards programmes that adhere to most of the CATS principles, including the focus on reduction of open defecation. This alignment typically involved both a policy/strategy dimension (partners supporting and adopting CLTS or CATS policies) and an operational dimension (partners adapting sanitation interventions accordingly).

CATS impacts are constrained in certain circumstances

While CATS have been able to deliver rapid results, the evaluation identified a number of constraints that can affect CATS programmes, including:

- CATS is an approach best suited to rural contexts: Feedback suggest that social cohesion and local strong engagement of local leaders are critical factors for success, and these are generally more challenging in urban and peri-urban contexts. There are very few cases of CATS interventions implemented in urban and peri-urban areas.
- The limits of the policy on subsidies: The implementation of CATS in the presence of other subsidized sanitation programmes (either in neighbouring communities or within the same community) has proven to be a major challenge for UNICEF and its partners. This is especially true in countries where UNICEF's policy/advocacy work has not led to a clear alignment of partners behind CATS and where direct subsidies remain available.
- Availability and affordability of materials: In order to meet the ODF certification criteria, it is necessary for targeted communities to build latrines. The availability and affordability of materials required to construct durable latrines can sometimes be a major constraint. Despite the use of solidarity mechanisms, in many communities there are some households who simply cannot afford to build a latrine.
- Lack of capacity and resources: CATS represents a new approach in many countries, requiring a substantial amount of trained human capacity and other resources. In general, national and local governments in target countries do not have the resources or capacity necessary for implementation.

The evaluation found that UNICEF and its partners have been ad hoc but largely successful in overcoming these challenges. For instance, where other subsidy-based programmes exist, UNICEF's strategy is to be as flexible as possible, and to intensify work on the enabling environment and/or to target areas where communities have not been recently exposed to subsidized approaches.

Efficiency

UNICEF has been successful in creating an enabling environment for CATS scale up

The evaluation team found that UNICEF has been remarkably successful in almost all countries at creating an enabling environment for potential scale up. Key areas of success in this regard include:

- Policy, strategy and direction: The substantial advocacy work conducted by UNICEF has led to the re-orientation of policies and strategies at local and national levels. CATS principles (mostly in the form of CLTS) have been included in a majority of the sanitation policies and programmes that have been developed and adopted since 2008.
- Institutional arrangements and partnerships: Institutional arrangements and partnerships have been crucial in the developmental of an enabling environment for CATS. An important feature in this regard is the focus on local authorities and partnerships at the level closest to the target communities. This focus has profoundly changed the status quo in the sanitation sector. UNICEF has also emphasized partnerships with non-state entities such as NGOs and religious associations.
- Implementation capacity: With regard to implementation capacity, the evaluation team found that UNICEF has significantly contributed to capacity building activities (such as the training of facilitators and trainers), beyond what was needed to implement the specific UNICEF-financed CATS programmes. This reflects an approach to national capacity development rather than just project delivery. The rapid development of critical capacity in the sector and facilitated the adoption of CATS principles by governments and other partners.

While UNICEF has taken steps towards addressing policy, institutional arrangements and implementation capacity in most countries, other enabling environment dimensions have been given less consideration in contrast. This is especially the case with regard to private sector participation, financing mechanisms and supply-related issues.

CATS programmes are relatively cost effective

While the full cost of CATS interventions are difficult to measure, the evaluation found that cost effectiveness is relatively strong. Compared to previous approaches, CATS shifts the cost of implementing sanitation programmes from latrine construction towards a variety of other costs, including training, capacity building and monitoring. As the cost of constructing latrines under CATS are borne by households, one of the most important outcomes of the approach is to mobilize local resources for sanitation. Ultimately, far more latrines are built and used for much less government and external investment.

Financial incentives are an important dimension, without which programmes would not work

In all countries where CATS is being implemented, UNICEF follows the principle of not directly subsidizing the construction of latrines. Financial incentives, however, are used in many countries. For instance, CATS programmes usually cover all costs related to capacity building, creating an incentive for government officials, local leaders and other partners to participate. In most countries, UNICEF covers a substantial portion of the costs borne by the government agencies involved in implementation or follow-up, especially at the local and regional level. In this regard, CATS is typical of UNICEF's collaborative partnership with governments, as without the financial support the programmes would not work.

Planned and spontaneous 'diffusion' can increase the efficiency of CATS

CATS can often spread (or 'diffuse') outside the geographic area initially targeted via a number of diffusion mechanisms. Many UNICEF staff and partners mentioned the key role played by certification ceremonies in the spontaneous diffusion of CATS, along with the key role played by schools and children. While diffusion can strongly contribute to the efficiency of CATS programmes, it is not always formally integrated in programme strategies.

Effectiveness

The use of social norms theory is variable

While a change in social norms is implicit to the CATS approach, not all of UNICEF's CATS country programmes explicitly refer to a social norms approach. Integration of social norms theory in CATS is an ongoing process. While UNICEF staff recognize the importance of addressing behaviours within CATS, the language of 'social norms' is not widely used. The most commonly used vocabulary is still 'behaviour change', which refers to individual behaviour change, as opposed to collective behaviour change, which is inherent in the 'social norms' theory.

Few UNICEF staff have been trained in social norms theory, which may lead to misconceptions or misunderstandings about what influence it has, or can have, on programmes. There is a sense that changing social norms is still not at the forefront of thinking among most of UNICEF's WASH staff (and as a result it is also not reflected in the thinking of UNICEF's government partners).

Evidence of social norms change after CATS interventions

Evidence of behaviour change around open defecation can often be observed as soon as triggering activities have taken place, even before the first latrines have been built. In many countries, the strongest evidence of a change in social norms is the genuine adoption and enforcement of community-level rules that are accepted by all community members and cannot be transgressed without consequences. Other indications of the adoption of social norms found by the evaluation include:

- Support to women's groups to ensure a permanent supply of hygiene products;
- Establishment of other community-based hygiene initiatives (e.g. sweeping of streets, garbage collection, cooking-related hygiene); and
- Organization of community monitoring of latrines and other hygiene facilities.

The CATS triggering process is generally effective

The effectiveness of the triggering process and the capability of CATS to quickly bring most communities to (or close to) ODF status is widely recognized. However, while the triggering process is seen as very efficient by most stakeholders, there are limitations to its overall effectiveness. For example, while CATS addresses open defecation within and around villages, it generally does not consider practices in surrounding fields or in family farms, where people spend significant amounts of time during the planting and harvesting seasons.

Key drivers of change include disgust and shock as well as active and interested leaders

In the triggering phase, the drivers of change are consistent across countries and rely mainly on disgust and shock as communities came to understand the oral-faecal transmission route of infection and the fact that people are basically 'eating each other's faeces'. Disgust is most important during the early stages of the process; the community 'energy' released by the original shock is quickly converted into the pride of having taken action to solve the problem, and this pride fuels the continuing process of change after triggering. The strength of community leaders (including, in some countries, religious leaders) in mobilizing, supporting and enforcing action by all members of the community is the second main driver of change.

Sustainability

The long-term sustainability of CATS is a key concern

The long-term sustainability of the results catalysed by CATS emerged as an important concern during the evaluation. However, evaluating to what extent communities and households adhere to ODF status and long-lasting hygiene behaviours presents a number of methodological challenges. There is currently a gap between the monitoring systems in place in most countries (which focus on outputs and rely on proxy indicators such as hand washing) and the effective measurement of social norms evolution and long-term sustainability.

Households are not progressing up the sanitation ladder

According to CATS implementers and key informants, the main challenge that CATS is facing in terms of sustainability is its exclusive focus on the 'bottom' of the sanitation ladder. The evaluation found very little evidence that households targeted by CATS programmes are progressing up the 'sanitation ladder' by adopting more sophisticated sanitation facilities after the certification process. As CATS programmes are not prescriptive in terms of the technologies used, facilities constructed by households reflect their investment capacity at the time of the triggering. The effect of CATS programmes is therefore to shorten the process of adopting sanitation at the household level, a development which has previously been considered as a long, multi-step and complex process. Communities rarely if ever make a collective decision to ask households to move further up the sanitation ladder (in terms of latrine facilities). Having met the new norm with a basic latrine, households often find that their ability to invest in better sanitation facilities remains constrained by a number of issues.

Follow-up activities are currently scarce

The evaluation confirmed that there is a 'natural erosion' of ODF status within a community in the period after certification (the status being measured, for instance, by the per cent of households having latrines and consistently using them). This natural erosion is not due to a general lack of adherence to the new social norm created by CATS, but is caused by other circumstances such as newcomers in the community or a deterioration of latrines. This natural erosion can be considered acceptable if the effort necessary to maintain ODF status over time originates within the community itself (or with very light external support).

The monitoring and evaluation of CATS programmes remains a 'work in progress' for UNICEF

The monitoring of CATS implementation and the integration of CATS into national M&E frameworks is strong and adds support to the development of the enabling environment. However national M&E systems lack additional indicators that are needed to develop more global lessons and make adjustments (including information on costs and human resources). There is also concern related to data capture in the post-certification phase. For instance, in a majority of countries it was not possible to assess the extent of slippage due to the lack of systematic monitoring of continued adherence to ODF.

Recommendations and Management Response

Recommendation 1: Continue What Works

As a general recommendation, UNICEF is urged to maintain and scale up the aspects of CATS programming that are working well. Worth special mention are the aspects where CATS has innovated and advanced the practice of rural sanitation programming. Examples include implementing CATS through government channels where it is feasible, engaging at policy level to build a sound enabling environment, integrating social norms concepts into CATS design and implementation and using non-monetary, pride-based community awards as positive motivation.

Recommendation 2: Refine and Expand the Strategic Model

UNICEF and CATS stakeholders need to review their strategic model to address some of the identified weaknesses. As practiced at present, CATS programmes have demonstrated good progress on establishing a supportive enabling environment and to achieving rapid adoption of new sanitation behaviours where conditions for the approach are favourable. Subsequent attention to sustainability has been incomplete in many cases. In a modified approach, the strategic model would therefore continue the strong emphasis on the enabling environment, but would broaden the efforts to more diverse and challenging contexts, and would place significant new emphasis on ensuring that the changed behaviours are sustained.

Recommendation 3: Fill Technical Gaps

UNICEF and CATS stakeholders need to revisit certain approaches that have resulted in technical gaps, especially where there are equity concerns. The major technical concerns are (a) developing community-based approaches suited for peri-urban and urban environments and (b) addressing the set of issues hindering sustainability of sanitation facilities and the move up the sanitation ladder, especially in the poorer rural zones that have been the main CATS setting.

Recommendation 4: Deepen Understanding of the Underlying Social Dynamics

UNICEF and CATS stakeholders need to further refine understanding of applying a social norms approach to sanitation and hygiene behaviours. Topics needing further investigation include how to capitalize on spontaneous diffusion opportunities; how to reinforce new social norms with broad communications campaigns; and how to monitor the stability of social norms. It may be necessary to make changes in operational aspects of CATS programmes and ensure that staff are more thoroughly trained on the social norms approach once the additional understanding has been gained.

Recommendation 5: Improve Monitoring, Research and Evaluation

UNICEF and CATS stakeholders need to thoroughly review the monitoring and evaluation approach across the entire cycle of CATS programming. Areas requiring special attention include further developing M&E systems to capture and demonstrate sustainability of results (especially in the post-certification period) and developing a learning initiative to document and highlight good practices.

The management response to the evaluation recommendations will be publicly available as of January 2015 (see Annex 2 for details).

