Global Communities’ Approach to CLTS:
Enhancing a Proven Methodology for Liberia

Global Communities
May 2015
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Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) is an effective, affordable and adaptable approach to eliminate open defecation. It promotes universal sanitation access while reducing community dependence on donor subsidy and fosters community buy-in and demand for safe sanitation and improved hygiene.

Global Communities (formerly CHF International), a U.S.-based international development non-profit active in water, sanitation and hygiene implementation around the world, has adapted the CLTS model to more specifically suit the Liberian WASH context – what we call CLTS+.

As part of the $10 million USAID-funded Improved Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (IWASH) program, which was implemented between 2010 and 2015, Global Communities worked with communities and the Government of Liberia to develop this approach. Through IWASH, 284 of 351 partner communities became open defecation-free (ODF) in Bong, Lofa and Nimba counties. Since then, Global Communities has guided an additional 29 communities to ODF status through ongoing programs, and plans to trigger more than 700 more communities by early 2016.

There are three key components to the CLTS+ approach:

1) Establishment of Natural Leader Networks (NLNs).

2) Integration of the CLTS process into government and traditional leadership structures.

3) Development of local technologies that are affordable and accessible for rural and peri-urban Liberian communities.

In addition, Global Communities capitalized on human capacity developed through its CLTS work to respond to the 2014-2015 Ebola crisis. Nearly 600 natural leaders trained and engaged through IWASH were activated to deliver essential Ebola prevention and health messaging in some of Liberia’s hardest-hit counties.

Notably, all 284 communities that achieved ODF status through IWASH reported zero cases of Ebola. Global Communities is currently conducting an external evaluation to investigate the potential connection between ODF achievement and Ebola resistance, and

With the close of the IWASH program, Global Communities is continuing to adapt this model in Liberia through current Ebola recovery and health system strengthening programming. In Ghana, we are preparing to launch CLTS+ as part of a new WASH initiative and will work with local communities to further tailor this approach to needs specific to rural Ghana. The following case study outlines Global Communities’ CLTS+ approach employed in Liberia.
1. Context

Since its inception in Bangladesh, CLTS has proven to be an effective methodology to support community-driven sanitation and hygiene gains with a particular emphasis on eliminating open defecation. While the Millennium Development Goal to halve by 2015 the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water was achieved, the sanitation goal remains significantly behind target. Today, 2.5 billion people still lack access to improved sanitation.

In Liberia, 25% of the population does not have access to safe water, and a staggering 82% do not have safe sanitation. In rural counties, lack of access increases to 37% and 94% respectively. Eighty-eight percent of the country’s diarrheal disease burden is due to contaminated water supply and inadequate sanitation and hygiene, and the Water and Sanitation Program estimates that Liberia loses $17.5 million (2% of its GDP) annually as a result of poor sanitation.

While CLTS has been implemented in Liberia since 2009, the practice lost national momentum due to high implementation costs and slow sanitation gains. To better oversee nationwide implementation, the Government of Liberia established the National Technical Coordinating Unit charged with overall coordination of and technical support to CLTS efforts nationwide. Global Communities worked with the Government of Liberia to develop Guidelines for Community-Led Total Sanitation Implementation in Liberia, published in 2012.

This shift put greater emphasis on multi-level government engagement to foster a stronger enabling environment for rural sanitation. Global Communities remains committed to the CLTS methodology, which recognizes that not all CLTS practices are appropriate for every community and calls for programs to be locally contextualized and responsive to the resources available. With this, lessons learned in the early stages of IWASH implementation indicated that more targeted innovations to the CLTS methodology could yield substantial benefits.

2. The CLTS+ Approach

Global Communities thus developed the CLTS+ methodology, which reduces costs, increases WASH impact, and can be used not only to bring communities to ODF status but also to develop an infrastructure for further health interventions. This is possible through three key components: Natural Leader Networks (NLNs), local institution integration, and localized WASH technologies. In addition to these three CLTS+ components, IWASH also fostered the development of WASH entrepreneurs and conducted significant sanitation marketing.

As of May 1, 2015, the CLTS+ methodology, has brought 313 Liberian communities to ODF status. Global Communities

has worked with the Government of Liberia to enhance this methodology and integrate it further into national policy; it has been adopted by UNICEF and the Liberia WASH Consortium.

2.1 Natural Leader Networks: Mobilizing communities to eliminate open defecation

In standard CLTS, natural leaders are activists and enthusiasts who emerge from community ranks and take the lead during CLTS processes; they can include men, women, youth and children. Kar and Chambers (2008) note that as part of the scaling-up of CLTS, natural leaders from CLTS triggered communities can be identified and supported to become facilitators themselves, and given the needed training, encouragement and support to trigger and follow-up with other communities.

NLNs – district-level groups of natural leaders from ODF communities who are trained to be facilitators and trigger neighboring communities – bring CLTS facilitation to a local, sustainable level. Many programs rely on government or NGO staff to act as facilitators, which is expensive, time-consuming, and logistically challenging. In its initial model, IWASH staff transported district-level Ministry of Health Environmental Health Technicians (EHTs) by car or motorbike to visit triggered communities.

Given the poor road infrastructure in Liberia and remoteness of villages, this system resulted in significant travel time and a four-to-seven-month lapse between triggering and achievement of ODF status due to insufficient monitoring. CLTS+ shifts primary responsibility for implementation from NGO or government staff to the community through local natural leaders organized in networks.
Global Communities developed NLNs to reduce logistical barriers and ensure increased trust. To become networked natural leaders, individuals must successfully bring their communities to sustained ODF status. They are then eligible to be trained in facilitation and go on to trigger other nearby communities. Natural leaders walk to communities and already live in program areas, significantly reducing transportation costs. They are from the same clan, speak the same language, understand the social dynamics of the community, and can draw on clan leadership to support them in influencing the target community to attain ODF status.

**Natural Growth Process**

1. **Networked Natural Leaders trained in CLTS triggering**
2. **Natural Leaders trigger neighboring communities**
3. **Each community produces two new Leaders. If successful in leading their communities to ODF status, they can join the network and trigger neighboring communities.**

**Benefits:**
- Low implementation cost
- Implementation in community’s hands
- Community trust

As networked natural leaders trigger neighboring communities, additional natural leaders emerge who also can be integrated into the network and go on to trigger communities themselves. This organic growth model encourages rapid scale-up with relatively limited external support.

**EBOLA RESPONSE**

**Self-triggering:** In addition, Global Communities has observed in 2015 at least two communities self-trigger as part of its Ebola response and recovery CLTS+ activities. As communities near CLTS+ participant communities saw the environmental and health benefits of their neighbors working to become ODF, communities initiated their own campaigns to become ODF without any formal triggering. Both of these communities have since been verified ODF.

**Selection, training and development:** NLNs consist of motivated community members from local government, youth and women’s groups, and traditional councils. Global Communities staff provides a three-day training using the Liberia Natural Leader Training Manual including lessons on participatory approaches, effective use of pictures, aids and simulation, and field/exchange visits. Network members are outfitted with training materials, rain boots, identifying T-shirts, etc. EHTs coordinate network members, ensuring effective triggering expansion and provide any necessary follow-up support or troubleshooting assistance. This is important to sustainability, as district officials develop relationships with natural leaders outside of Global Communities-supported programming.

To incentivize networked natural leaders, who usually work in pairs, those who bring at least one other community to ODF status are rewarded through both performance-based financial incentives (typically $65 per natural leader per successful ODF community) and are elevated to the status of community champion.
Points of contact for WASH issues: In addition to being CLTS facilitators, network members serve as primary community representatives for WASH-related issues, providing accountability and oversight for water, sanitation and hygiene in their communities. They work with EHTs to report on health concerns, monitor community health statuses and deliver important WASH and health messages.

It was through these NLN members and EHTs, as part of the County Health Team structure, that Global Communities was able to rapidly disseminate Ebola messaging. Early in Liberia’s Ebola outbreak, some 600 natural leaders were activated to help communities understand that Ebola was a real threat and to help them adopt behaviors to prevent it, such as vigilant handwashing, community-health monitoring, abstention from person-to-person contact, etc. With established trust, communities believed in the urgency of information delivered by natural leaders and were observed by Ministry of Health representatives to have adopted prevention measures more quickly than non-CLTS communities.

2.2 Local Institution Integration: Ensuring sustained management and accountability

Inclusive engagement: Government and traditional leadership inclusion is essential to sustained sanitation gains in the CLTS+ model. First, NLNs play a significant role in linking local communities to government structures. Members work closely with the government at the county and district level to monitor communities and ensure they maintain ODF status, thereby building government engagement and responsibility. Network members also attend district development meetings to report on CLTS activities and to raise issues related to communities’ ODF status attainment and maintenance. EHTs coordinate with natural leaders to conduct ODF verification and certification. In close coordination with the government, Global Communities also taps into Liberia’s National CLTS Management Structure, working closely with EHTs and natural leaders at the community level.

Second, traditional leader engagement is essential for successful CLTS+. Global Communities engaged town, zonal, clan and paramount (district-level) chiefs early in the program to gain their buy-in and oversight support. In Liberian traditional society, chiefs have the authority to oversee and instruct communities in household practices. With this authority, chiefs can support the ODF process and institute enforcement mechanisms. By working within this respected structure, Global Communities has reduced staff-centric oversight and supported the development of pro-WASH community leaders.

During the Ebola crisis, established relationships with these government and traditional leaders allowed Global Communities to more rapidly reach communities with social mobilization and disease-awareness and prevention activities.

Capacity building: The establishment of natural leader networks places a high priority on existing structures, yet Global Communities staff found that several subnational government officials from the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Public Works (key ministries responsible for WASH service delivery) did not have the training or resources to effectively carry out their duties. Most were unaware of the full scope of their job description and the policies, plans, and guidelines that affect them. County and district authorities would benefit from intensive capacity building and resource support to help them effectively manage WASH infrastructure.
Global Communities participated in a review and planning session for County Health Teams and presented its model for CLTS+ and its success to date. As a result, each County Health Team developed a CLTS plan for its county, which includes a budget; these plans inform Liberia’s national CLTS plan and funding allocations. Global Communities is working to systemize the CLTS planning process so that it will continue without donor inputs.

**Logistical support:** In addition to general technical support and advice, staff worked with government officials to coordinate ODF verification and certification. Global Communities provided logistical support in the form of petrol and ride sharing, as well as meals and modest stipends for government officials to travel to remote communities to conduct monitoring visits. While some technical capacity and motivation exists in district health offices, many officials lack logistical resources from the government, inhibiting them from conducting ODF site visits, which are crucial for sustained program success. With logistical support from Global Communities, the participation of district employees has greatly improved the percentage of communities attaining ODF status. This coordinated support for national ministry and district official engagement is essential for ongoing CLTS implementation post-IWASH.

**Opportunities for further development:** Insufficient human and financial capacity at the national government level posed challenges for IWASH. National-level officials are responsible for ODF verification and certification nationally and are instrumental in capacity building at county and district levels. They are also responsible for training and supporting any new implementing partner involved in CLTS, yet they lack any resources for independent mobility. While Global Communities has experienced modest success in influencing national funding allocations for CLTS programming, increased national government commitment to WASH funding is needed to ensure WASH gains can be achieved without partner support.

CLTS would be further embedded into national strategy by continuing to engage the national-level government in all stages of implementation – from initial planning to ODF certification to developing the capacity of subnational government officials.

### 2.3 Localized WASH Technologies: Simple innovations to meet community needs

Working with target communities to customize programming to local conditions, and with private sector actors to innovate and redesign WASH products to be more affordable and tailored to the needs of the communities, two key technologies have become standard throughout targeted counties: slabless ventilated improved pit (VIP) latrines and reed-based handwashing stations. These are made available by locally-trained WASH entrepreneurs.
**Slabless Ventilated Improved Pit latrine design:** The Slabless VIP latrine was developed by a natural leader using only local materials. The pour-flush pit is offset from the superstructure, mitigating safety issues for latrine users by not placing the user over the pit—a dangerous design when a full cement slab is not available or affordable for consumers resulting in the use of wooden planks that rot. A small amount of cement is used to secure the toilet bowl and seal around the bamboo pipe, significantly reducing the amount of cement and steel needed and nearly eliminating transport costs and logistical challenges that had previously prevented affordable latrine construction in these communities. This simple, low-cost design provides the benefits of a VIP latrine without the cost of a concrete slab and it reduces the risk of dangerous floor collapse. The design has become standard in Global Communities-supported ODF communities.

**Reed-based handwashing station:** While handwashing is key for WASH programming success, accessibility is limited by water access and ease of use. Global Communities developed a water-saving device tailored to community needs and available materials. To make a reed-based station, a tall reed is set into the ground and filled with water; a small hole low on the reed plugged with a stick can release water for handwashing.

**Other Technologies:** As part of the CLTS+ model, natural leaders and WASH entrepreneurs also promote a range of well-established tools to improve community access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene, and their use is required for ODF verification. These include:

- **Tippy-tap:** This hand-washing device made from locally-available materials at extremely low cost is an alternative to the reed-based station. Users hang a plastic jug or other container to a rod or rope that can be tipped downward with an improvised pedal to release water for handwashing.

- **Dish rack:** Made with local materials, the kitchen device keeps kitchen utensils from coming into direct contact with the ground, animals and other contaminants.

- **Sand-rock filter:** Households can make this filter with local materials to remove dirt from water. This filter is not reliable for removing bacteria or viruses, so water should be treated with a point-of-use product after filtering. The rock/sand filter is useful in communities that depend on surface water and reduces dirt, discoloration and odor from the water.

- **Clothesline:** The simple device is used to reduce contamination of clothes by better preventing contact with the ground, animals and crawling insects that could leave harmful parasites.

- **Garbage pit:** To reduce solid waste contamination, a hole is dug in the ground at the edge of the community to dispose of garbage.
3. Other Project Components

As part of its WASH model, Global Communities uses other interventions to reinforce CLTS+ outcomes, provide access to WASH materials and increase messaging coverage.

3.1 WASH Entrepreneurs: Addressing supply and demand to improve WASH infrastructure and products

Access to improved water and sanitation and the practice of good hygiene remain limited outside of Monrovia, but the private sector has the potential to increase and sustain WASH gains in Liberia. The supply of products is poorly organized and insufficient, and there are limited options to meet consumers’ specific needs. While entrepreneurs and local traders that supply WASH products exist in higher-density areas, rural communities are often located hours from the nearest road and lack community entrepreneurs to supply available, affordable products.

**Building a network of goods and service providers:** Through deliberate employment of market-led approaches to ensure demand for and supply of products and services, Global Communities has facilitated increased access to WASH infrastructure and products in hard-to-reach communities. The WASH entrepreneur model trains entrepreneurial community members – including natural leaders – and gives them basic tools to provide fee-based WASH services in their communities. Products and services provided by WASH entrepreneurs initially included hand pump installation and repair and soap production and sales, and were later expanded to include latrine construction and maintenance, point-of-use water treatment and new hand pump installation.

**Potential for growth:** Leveraging pre-established natural-leader networks and government support, WASH entrepreneurs can be established effectively and efficiently. WASH entrepreneurs participate in sustainable, market-driven activities to earn wages that contribute to their communities through financial self-reliance while providing accessible, lower-cost options to consumers. As CLTS+ implementers trigger more communities to seek improved WASH infrastructure and behaviors, and as ODF communities continue to climb the sanitation ladder, WASH entrepreneurs will be poised to provide affordable and tailored goods and services.

3.2 Sanitation Marketing: Increasing sanitation demand in communities

In addition to the WASH entrepreneur component, Global Communities worked with partners to promote and track safe sanitation and improved hygiene habits through sanitation marketing.

**CLTS+ social marketing through behavior change communication (BCC):** BCC strategies focus on promoting the social and health benefits of ODF status and improved WASH practices. BCC messaging targets potential CLTS+ communities to spark interest in participating in the process and to encourage existing CLTS+ communities to make progress. This social marketing of CLTS+ and WASH behavior change was accomplished through:

- Billboards promoting “pupu free” communities in target counties encouraging healthy competition among communities;

- The broadcast of radio spots focused on point-of-use water treatment and the airing of local-language WASH-focused radio jingles; and

- The production of live street theatre performances to create buzz and interest about CLTS.

**CLTS champion branding:** CLTS champions received specially-branded uniforms to set them apart from the other members of the natural leader network, making them more identifiable when visiting communities, markets, and other locations. This also added an additional layer of incentive for natural leaders to successfully bring communities to ODF status.

**Global Handwashing Day:** IWASH conducted activities in Bong and Nimba counties through a soap-making workshop conducted with WASH entrepreneurs to promote soap as an essential tool for proper hygiene.
4. Beyond ODF: CLTS+ as a Potential Model for Disease Resistance

We suspect that IWASH’s use of the CLTS+ methodology has achieved two-fold success – communities achieved a high rate of ODF and WASH success while simultaneously becoming more disease-resistant.

CLTS+ established an effective entry point into communities by building rapport and trust. Natural leaders established legitimacy through their facilitation of ODF status, and communities realized the benefits that could be achieved by engaging with natural leaders’ programming. By participating in the NLN, natural leaders remain engaged with IWASH and Ministry of Health County Health Teams, keeping them up-to-date with best practices and health priorities. With this, the network can be rapidly activated to spread other critical messaging. It was through the realization of this framework that natural leader networks successfully shared Ebola messaging in Bong, Lofa and Nimba counties. We are studying how this could have ultimately reduced the impact of the virus in participant communities.

Lessons learned: Global Communities believes effective containment of disease outbreaks such as Ebola need:

- To be based on motivating local communities and recognizing the importance of local leaders;
- Messaging that is delivered by trusted, credible sources;
- Local customs and traditions to be factored into any efforts to stem transmission at the community level; and
- Continuous coordination with district, county, and national government structures.

Next steps: Launched in early 2015, an in-depth, external assessment of IWASH communities is underway to better understand the possible connection between IWASH ODF communities and their low Ebola rates. The study will investigate other factors that may have contributed to low Ebola prevalence in IWASH areas and more critically examine our hypothesized links. This assessment may also inform response to future outbreaks in Liberia and other at-risk countries.

In addition, Global Communities is continuing to implement CLTS+ as part of the USAID-funded Assisting Liberians with Education to Reduce Transmission (ALERT) program. As part of these community-based, disease-surveillance-network-strengthening activities, Global Communities will trigger more than 130 communities on the border of Sierra Leone and Guinea in 2015 to foster improved sanitation and hygiene habits and disease awareness. And as part of the newly-launched USAID-funded Partnership for Advancing Community-Based Services (PACS) International Rescue Committee program, Global Communities will implement comprehensive CLTS programming in an additional 736 communities.

Celebration of an Ebola-free Liberia on May 11, 2015.