



PROJECT SUMMARY

Building city-wide sanitation strategies from bottom up

A four country action research project in
Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe

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Introduction

This SHARE-funded project which is currently underway in four southern African countries is a response to the failures of conventional approaches to urban sanitation. Little over a century ago, sanitary improvements were helping to spearhead new and better forms of urban governance. However, progress has not been maintained and urban sanitation is still lagging behind the other MDG targets. The project is being undertaken by six organisations - the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), the secretariat of Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI), and four affiliates of SDI (the Malawi Homeless People's Federation and the Centre for Community Organization and Development in Malawi, the Tanzania Federation of the Urban Poor and the Centre for Community Initiatives in Tanzania, the Zambia Homeless and Poor People's Federation and People's Process on Housing and Poverty in Zambia, and the Zimbabwe Homeless People's Federation and Dialogue on Shelter in Zimbabwe).

This project will test an approach to pro-poor city-wide sanitation strategies that can be adopted and driven by federations and networks of community organizations and residents' associations, and supported by public authorities and private providers. This action research provides the potential for scalability, adaptation and replication across the Global South. It is being undertaken and documented in such a way that we hope the findings are relevant for those pursuing somewhat different approaches to sanitary improvement, but facing similar obstacles.

To address sanitation needs, obstacles to developing and implementing effective city-wide sanitation strategies needed to be identified and overcome. Drawing on existing research, a preliminary list of key obstacles identified is as follows:

- **A lack of community organization:** Most approaches to urban sanitation, that do not rely on state provision, either rely on individual demands to drive sanitary provision or assume that it will be easy for communities to organize around sanitary improvement.
- **An overly sectoral and technical approach:** Conventional approaches to urban sanitation, including those adopted by both privately and publicly operated utilities, typically come out of the water and sanitation sector and do not take sufficient account of other urban poverty-related issues. The failure to take account of these issues contributes to the failure of many of the more conventional approaches to sanitary improvement when they are applied in low-income urban settlements.
- **Unaffordable technologies and payment systems:** Most approaches to sanitation are based on technologies and financing systems that are not replicable at scale given the prevailing politics and economics.
- **Poor community-government relations: To upgrade informal settlements collaborative relations are essential.** However, few approaches to sanitation overcome the typically strained relationships between low-income communities and their local authorities. Community-driven approaches rarely engage seriously with government authorities/utilities, except to make demands, while government/utility-driven approaches typically fail to engage seriously with low-income communities, with the same exception.

These obstacles are discussed in more detail in a SHARE report (see McGranahan, 2013¹). This project attempts to overcome these obstacles in a selection of locations, building on a community-driven model, and adapting approaches that Shack/Slum Dwellers International has applied across a range of shelter-related issues. In the process, it is envisaged that the list of obstacles will be altered, added to and refined, and our understanding of the obstacles will be improved. The resulting approach to sanitary improvement will also be examined within a broader context of shelter poverty and the pragmatic politics of community action. In addition to providing a model for urban sanitary improvement, and a better understanding of what is likely to work where, the project will provide SDI and others developing community-driven approaches with the capacity to adapt and apply this model on a larger scale. SDI has widespread experience in such grounded learning with a network across 37 countries.

Study Aims and Methods

The purpose of this research project is to develop a model for the development and realization of pro-poor citywide sanitation through four scalable examples in cities of Blantyre (Malawi), Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), Kitwe (Zambia), and Chinhoyi (Zimbabwe). The project has the following two specific research aims:

I. Develop a better understanding of the principal obstacles to city-wide sanitary improvement, and how they can be overcome

II. Develop and test an approach to pro-poor city-wide sanitation strategies that can be adopted and driven by federations of community organizations, and supported by public authorities and private providers

The project is using action research to explore various strategies that can be adopted by federations and other networks of the urban poor to scale up sanitation. In addition to exploring sanitation strategies at household level, the research is also investigating aspects of sanitation related to both gender and spatial marginalization.

In addition to these specific research aims, the project has distinct capacity building and communications aims:

III. Build SDI's capacity to support the development of city-wide sanitation strategies in Africa.

IV. Communicate the lessons of the project in alignment with SHARE's overall communications strategy

The four cities were selected by the SDI affiliates following a discussion with national federations. The diverse setting provided by the four countries helps to distinguish local practices that work in particular locations from broad principles that are relevant in a wide range of settings. It also allows the international sharing of experiences not only through formal publications, but also through exchange visits. And significantly, it provides a range of political contexts and allows gains in one city (produced by supportive relations with politicians, officials and/or staff of other agencies) to encourage and catalyse similar or even greater support elsewhere.

¹ McGranahan, G. (2013) Community-driven sanitation improvement in deprived urban neighbourhoods: Meeting the challenges of local collective action, co-production, affordability and a trans-sectoral approach? http://www.sharesearch.org/Resource/details/report_city_wide_challenges

The three-year project which started in January 2012 will be realised in three phases, each approximately 15 months in length (as there are overlaps between these phases).

Phase 1: Involves the mapping and elaboration of sanitation problems in each of the four cities. This includes: a summary of existing documentation; community-led profiling of the sanitation problems in informal settlements, the enumeration of households facing sanitation difficulties and mapping of the existing services; a participative engagement with other stakeholders and particularly the city authorities. Relationships with the city are often long standing with a history of co-operation and partnership across the scope of pro-poor slum upgrading and urban development activities. Some MoU's were already in place between affiliates, the federation and local authorities at the beginning of the project and others have been signed since the inception of the project.

Phase 2: Involves the development of several sanitation precedents in each city designed to be relevant to addressing sanitation needs within settlements across the city. As circumstances in different settlements differ, the selected precedents will be relevant to a variety of situations. Precedents are models or pilots that demonstrate both the improvements that communities wish to make to their neighbourhoods and how these might be accomplished. Precedents are important both because they enable the communities to identify and overcome organizational problems and financial affordability, and because they demonstrate to the government what can be achieved. They are important to the communities as they enable local groups to work out how professional interventions can work in practice, and how models may need to be amended to be relevant across the network.

Phase 3: Involves the planning of a city wide approach to improving sanitation based on the work undertaken in the first two phases and the relations that have been built, strengthened and enhanced with the relevant government agencies, utilities and other stakeholders. The project budget includes funds for other SDI affiliates to contribute specific work that adds value to the development of city-wide sanitation strategies.

Progress to Date

Phase 1

- Project partners have introduced the project to the key agencies in the city and specifically to the organizations of the urban poor themselves (local savings schemes and city federations), the local authorities and any related agencies such as utilities. Considerable efforts have been made to deepen the engagement with the authorities building on existing partnerships and this is vital for the success of this initiative. This has been possible due to the information collected during the profiling, enumeration and mapping (which has a specific focus on sanitation unlike other SDI data collection that covers a range of services). SDI affiliates have drawn on existing practices in the network which have used community-led information gathering to good effect in terms of relationship-building. Local government is aware that it has little precise data on conditions within informal settlements and generally responds positively to community initiatives to address this void.
- The local federation leaders and members were involved in identifying the specific settlements in which the initial project activities (profiling, enumerations and mapping) have taken place.
- The four national SDI support NGOs have been collecting documentation and drafting the situational analyses and currently all the cities have submitted their final draft reports.

IIED staff and SDI Secretariat have reviewed the draft reports which will soon be copy edited and published.

- International meetings of partners have been held to share experiences, review the obstacles encountered or overcome, draw out lessons, and develop and refine the model. The SDI affiliates, SDI secretariat and IIED have met three times so far to support the different affiliates in their activities. The first meeting was held in September 2011 (Harare, Zimbabwe) prior to the beginning of the project to ensure that all affiliates understood the work in hand. The second meeting was held in July 2012 and took place in Blantyre. This meeting focused particularly on the profiling, enumeration and mapping activities, sharing both findings and experiences. At this stage the affiliates were in the process of completing these activities. This meeting also specifically addressed the technical issue of augmenting on the ground data with GIS information. Zimbabwe took the lead in this as the affiliate already has considerable skills in this area. The third meeting took place in February 2013 and provided an opportunity to report on the situational analysis phase and specifically the relationship building with the local authority and others. This meeting also provided an opportunity to review approaches to the identification of sanitation precedents.
- The SDI secretariat has recruited a new staff member whose responsibilities include work on this SHARE initiative. He has interacted regularly with the responsible staff members in the SDI affiliates to help them complete their work. He has also worked with other staff in the secretariat to identify useful support contributions from other SDI affiliates. To date two further precedents have been identified in Kenya and Uganda and these will be supported by SHARE to strengthen the work in the four primary affiliates involved in this project. In Uganda, funds have supported a communal block in Mbale and the documentation focuses on lessons from community management.
- IIED staff have been concerned with supporting the implementation of the project. Their work includes the analysis of the obstacles that have prevented a greater contribution by community led sanitation solutions. This text is now in draft and being reviewed with an anticipated completion date of June 2013. They have also been actively involved in commenting on drafts of the situational analyses and strengthening the arguments presented in these documents. An overview of the situational analyses is being prepared and will be completed by end of August.
- IIED and SDI have participated in a SHARE organised side event in 2011 at the World Water Week.
- This SHARE project has also opened new opportunities for the SDI affiliates in the four cities. For example, before SHARE, the alliance of Dialogue on Shelter and Zimbabwe Homeless People's Federation were only working with the Department of Housing and Community Services but now federation members are also interacting more with the Health and Engineering Department. This has helped to spread the influence of Federation work and more importantly provide an in depth explanation about the existence and needs of the poor to other departments; to improve the quality of decision and organisation work i.e. by interacting directly with the Health and Engineering Department, the community can make follow ups and demand answers more effectively on agreed actions; and in the acceptance of agreed decisions by other departments involved in the provision of sanitation. The involvement of other departments from the initial stage of the project has helped to improve their participation and commitment to the entire process.
- The SHARE project has also been particularly important in developing the capacity of the Tanzania Federation in GIS mapping as they have been able to learn from the other affiliates.
- In Malawi, the situational analysis has also provoked an intense discussion within the Federation about strategic interventions to scale up access to sanitation in the city. The sharing of findings from the situational analysis with the local MP has resulted in the MP

promising to ensure the provision of a health clinic in one of the research neighbourhoods.

- In Zambia, the SHARE project has enabled the Federation to build up their skills in enumeration and mapping. While the Zambia Federation has had relations with both the authorities and the water utility in Kitwe for some years, this project has provided an opportunity for the deepening of discussions and associated strategies. Earlier this year (2013), the city council formally agreed to the establishment of a sub-committee to plan the upgrading of informal settlements which will include representation from both the Federation and People's Process of Housing and Poverty in Zambia. The utility (Nkana Water and Sewerage Company) has secured a grant from the African Development Bank to improve sanitation in informal settlements and is anxious to work with the SDI affiliate in Kitwe to implement this programme.

Phase 2

The current phase (second phase) of the research is to formulate and then test precedents that together develop a set of sanitation interventions suitable to address needs at the city scale. Together these interventions, which will be undertaken in a small number of communities selected for their representative nature, will be able to show how to address sanitation needs in the majority of low-income areas across the city (although 100 per cent coverage is unlikely and will not be attempted).

Precedent development involves action research by communities identified by the city Federation together with NGO affiliate support. Technical advice is being secured locally and supplemented as required by the SDI secretariat. Prior to the commencement of this action research, an assessment framework was established with specific components related to finance, organization, social impacts, and technical adequacy. These precedents will focus on those most likely to be scalable and with widespread relevance. They will include but not be restricted to: shared pit latrines (sometimes adapted for ecological sanitation), pit latrine emptying, and decentralized waste water treatment. Communal toilets will also be provided using multiple technologies for waste water treatment.

The following research methods will continue to be used:

- Community exchanges will be used to stimulate reflective analysis of the processes through which the precedents have emerged and been amended.
- Federation-managed household income assessments (affordability studies) will track and amend financial aspects of the precedents
- The assessment process will be collated by the SDI support NGO and will collect financial information, technical assessments, perspectives of communities and other stakeholders, and will monitor the scale of interest within the city location (press, other media, and community rapid replication). This will include the examination of financial records, documentation of newspaper articles, and semi-structured interviewing.

All the teams in the four cities are currently carrying out the precedent setting activities with the planning for these precedents have reached an advanced stage.

Research activities for the final phase will be undertaken in Year 3 and will involve the planning of a city wide approach to improving sanitation based on the work undertaken in the first two phases.