

# "Small Towns Sanitation" Episode 3: Reaching viable services for all?

Tu. 27<sup>th</sup> August 2019, 9am-10:30 am, World Water Week in Stockholm

This report provides brief minutes from the session "Small Towns Sanitation" Episode 3: Reaching viable services for all" which took place on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> August during the World Water Week 2019, in Stockholm.

The session was organised by Eawag-Sandec, GIZ, i-San Consulting, pS-Eau, SuSanA, WaterAid and the World Bank. This event followed several other "sanitation in small towns" sessions held in 2017 and 2018 during the same conference. The report of the 2018 session is available to [download here](#).

The objectives of this session were to further the discussions on sanitation challenges and the solutions to develop viable sanitation services in the specific context of small towns in developing countries, through the sharing of concrete experiences and by building on the lessons share during previous "Small-town sanitation" sessions. In order to encourage the sharing of honest experiences of good and bad work, this session started with a dynamic gameshow, adapted from the FSM Fail project.

## Programme

09:00-09:30	Part 1: "Blunders, bloopers and foul-ups: a failure gameshow", special edition on sanitation in small town
09:30-09:40	Transition
09:40-10:20	Part 2: World Café on sanitation in small towns
10:20-10:30	Wrap-up and conclusion

### Part 1. "Blunders, bloopers and foul-ups: a failure gameshow", special edition on sanitation in small town

This gameshow aimed to highlight the importance of sharing failure stories, to ensure better outcomes in future sanitation in small towns' projects. Its objectives were to foster a culture of sharing and learning that allows people to talk openly when things go wrong, by discussing real and fake failures in a playful gameshow setting. This was adapted from the "Blunders, bloopers and foul-ups: a WASH game show" session developed by the [WASH Failures project](#).

In this session, the game was hosted by Esther Shaylor (FSM Fail) with support from Rémi Kaupp (WaterAid). The contestants of the game were Antje Heyer (BORDA), Mubiana Muyangwa (WaterAid Zambia), Mwansa Nachula (Lusaka Water and Sewerage Corporation), Abishek Narayan (Eawag-Sandec), Mingma Sherpa (500B Solutions Nepal) and Maria Angelica Sotomayor (WB).

### **Game rules & run of show**

The game is made of two rounds, separated by a lightning round.

One round is played as follow: one team reads to the other three examples of failures. In a limited time, the other team discusses which of the three cards comes from a real failure (the other examples being invented). The audience is asked to vote on which is the real failure with a quick show of hands before the result is announced. After this, the process is reversed: the team who just voted reads the cards and the other team must discuss to identify the true failure.

In the lightning round, several examples are read out by the game host; all contestants and the public have to vote after each example if they think the failure really happened or was invented. There is no discussion time.

For each vote, the points are scored for each team. During the lightning round, each team gets a point if the majority of their players is correct.

### **Failure cards**

#### *Round 1 – read by team 1*

Card 1	We designed a faecal sludge treatment plant based on the town’s population. It appeared after the construction that the demand for emptying services was lower than estimated. Two years after, one of the waste stabilization ponds had never filled up.
Card 2	Once we were implementing urine-diverting dry toilets in one small town. We prepared beautiful posters, with instructions on how to use the toilet. A couple of weeks back, we found that one toilet was stinking more than expected. We figured out that men have been peeing on the poster with instructions.
Card 3	Our small town sanitation project was abandoned because the national urban utility and the district local government didn’t agree on who should be responsible for it.

#### True failure: card 1)

Background story: w observed this in East Africa, from a large sanitation in small towns programme. There is the assumption that if a faecal sludge treatment plant (FSPT) is built, the emptying business will increase and this is proving to be wrong. The design of the FSTP should instead consider the effective demand (toilets that can be emptied - lined pits), which drastically reduces the size (and thus the cost) of the FSTP. This is often true for small towns, where emptying services are often non-functional.

#### *Round 1 – read by team 2*

Card 1	Our project that aimed to increase faecal sludge collection and treatment actually resulted in more raw sewage being dumped into the nearby fields because farmers were paying for it.
Card 2	We tried to fund a sanitation project in a small town but failed. Urban donors indicated

	answered that the scale of the project was too small. When we asked donors that were funding rural projects, they said they only focused on the poorest and most isolated areas.
Card 3	Our sanitation project which supported the construction of the FSTP in a small town provided the municipal service with two desludging trucks. However, as emptying demand appeared too low, one truck was finally used as a water truck, to supply households with drinking water.

True failure: card 3)

Background story: We also observed this in East Africa. Sanitation programmes in small towns should consider the effective demand and plan to develop a market for it to support the project. Providing equipment should come with business models to build demand.

*Lightning round – read by the game host*

Card 1	Three years after a WASH project that aimed to reduce open defecation in a small town by increasing access to toilets, most latrines pits are filled since the town only relies on a vacuum truck coming once a year, and people tend to go back to open defecation.
Card 2	A project had built household and public latrines, aiming at eliminating open defecation. However, every week there were a shortage of public latrines with people open defecating, due to a huge inflow of people coming from rural areas for the market day
Card 3	During a programme visit, we found a desludging truck abandoned, blocking the road. It happened that the truck had been stuck there for a month because of the narrowness of the street.
Card 4	A programme equipped all satellite villages of a small town with improved EcoSan toilets, successively bringing access to basic sanitation to 200 households at a cost of USD 400. However, nothing was planned for the town, despite its 20,000 inhabitants and high rate of open defecation.

True failures: card 1 & 2; fake failures: card 3 & 4

*Round 2 – read by team 1*

Card 1	A well-known NGO implemented CLTS activities in a small town as part of a larger WASH programme. As the project started, it appeared that 98% of the population had already access to unimproved toilets
Card 2	We visited a small-scale DEWATS treatment plant, one year after it had been built but found out that it wasn't functioning anymore, due to the absence of technical assistance and because the staff wasn't trained to perform the maintenance.
Card 3	Our project to increase water supply access in a town led to overloading of the wastewater treatment plant beyond its designed capacity.

True failure: card 2)

Background story: as we all know, operation and maintenance are crucial for the sustainability of

service. In small towns, there is a lack of capacity and resources that often threatens the viability of service.

### Round 2 – read by team 2

Card 1	Our project in a market town focused on household toilets. However, we then discovered that the main sources of pollution and inconvenience were the lack of toilets at the schools, the prison and the health centre.
Card 2	A project constructed a faecal sludge treatment plant (FSTP) for a cluster of 5 towns. But the FSTP never worked because there were no desludging services around.
Card 3	A sanitation promotion campaign heavily subsidized the construction of VIP latrines. Some month later, a research study demonstrated that the willingness and capacity of households to pay for latrines was actually sufficient and that a better motivation factor could have been the perception of improved social status and of modernity linked to latrine ownership.

True failure: card 1)

Background story: in Malawi, we neglected institutional sanitation even though small and medium towns are often “hubs” such institutions.

## Part 2. World Café

### Café table 1) Sustainable operation and maintenance of sanitation services

*Facilitators: Christoph Lüthi (Eawag-Sandec), Christophe Le Jallé (pS-Eau) - Rapporteur: Mingma Sherpa (500B Solutions Nepal)*

#### Context:

- Erode city, Tamil Nadu (India)
- Resettlement in 1987: 650 households = 3000 people moved by the slum resettlement board
- Peri-urban project 2006-2008 that provided 6 DEWATS (anaerobic baffled reactors with sewers unit)
- In 2014, Eawag visited the systems as part of an observation field visit: household disconnected to the system, open-drain, etc.

#### Challenges and failures :

- Lack of clear policies
- Lack of clear O&M plan (responsibilities of actors - who does what)
- Lack of capacity: the project hired a local O&M person, but the person wasn't able to perform up to standard
- Few operators who build and operate (small towns) systems. E.g. Bangalore – how do we get that technical support in place to manage around 4 000 DEWATS systems?
- A government-owned housing scheme with a certain amount of operational funds but no dedicated fund + cities may not be interested in such private housing schemes
- Recording and documenting failures is not easy: more ex-post evaluation (within 2 years) is required to document success and failures

### Levers to ensure sustainability :

- Good construction quality (well-designed technology)
- Sufficient O&M funds available
- Technical support by skilled (specialized) operator
- Community partnership in planning (and fostering community engagement in projects)
- Address community sanitation priorities

### Levers to build local capacity

- Encourage peer learning between operators
- Solution for O&M: twinning partnership and decentralized cooperation between local authorities in France, that provides free support from French staff to local actors
- Improve monitoring system to improve key performance (with a need to define who does this monitoring)
- Awareness-raising should not be forgotten to ensure the guarantee the support of communities to the projects and bring sanitation to higher priorities, in particular for low-income people
- How to develop career opportunities in the sector?

## Café table 2) Funding/finance mechanisms for small towns

*Facilitator: Chola Mbilima (National Water Supply and Sanitation Council - NWASCO) - Rapporteur: Rémi Kaupp (WaterAid UK)*

### Examples from participants

- **Freetown** (Concern): Good project but we didn't pay attention to who should run the services. The perception was that, as it was only about “cleaning”, the community was responsible for it.
- **Kenya** (Water Services Trust Fund): only now are we trying to know how to fund projects in small towns.
- **Uganda** (GIZ + economist): we started to work with institutional services in small towns and did a lot of planning. Now we are also working out the funding mechanisms, and we've recognized that there is a need for some form of subsidy to structure the service. We had a debate on subsidies, with the acknowledgement that social enterprises cannot break even given the income levels, so we needed to bridge a significant gap. Finance mechanisms have to take into account issues of bureaucracy. We also debated about having “gazetted small towns” that would be targeted the most. There is however a disincentive to declare an area “urban” as whole urban services have then to be provided.
- **Zambia** (NWASCO): Loans help capital injection. When looking at subsidising process, it is important to consider different sources of subsidy (grant, sector funding...).
- **Other examples**: Bangladesh regulatory framework differentiating different geographies; Nigeria pooling donor funds around a common plan.

### Summary of debates

- Subsidies: how to structure them, how to take into contextual preferences, and favour the use of cross-subsidies
- Lending for short-term and long-term needs / blended financing
- Regulation on different levels - allows national plan
- Use large cities to subsidise smaller ones

### Café table 3) Having better regulations and standards for small-town sanitation

Facilitator: Awa Diagne (World Bank) - Rapporteur: Yaver Abidi (WSUP Advisory CIC)

What should be the enabling environment for regulation for small towns?

- Legislation normally exists at national level eg. in Sierra Leone and Zambia. So the issue is one of enforcement and clarification of stakeholders' roles.
- In Colombia, the structures exist and there are clear responsibilities of actors, with a regulator in each town or clusters of towns.

Should there be progressive standards so that we can see some achievement and then plan the improvement ladder?

- Small towns may not have the technical capacity to phase the development.
- The legal framework may not be strong on onsite sanitation. Eg. in Zambia, where onsite sanitation is common in rural areas, the responsibilities are split between the local government (under the Ministry of Local Government) and another Ministry responsible for sanitation.
- Small towns are also varied (established towns, new towns and peri-urban) and sanitation access differs. In urban areas, Nigeria has more small towns than cities.

Should regulation should be adapted to each context (and how)?

- Could a "hub and spoke approach" work, to overcome the capacity constraints of small towns?
- Example from Zambia: NWASCO tried and set different standards for different types of towns. The local authority is given the role of the regulator to oversee the activities of the commercial utility in small towns, and to be a bridge between the communities and the commercial utility in Zambia. The objective is to get information into the hands of the consumer - getting them to understand their rights and have a citizens charter.

### Café table 4) Scaling-up approaches in small towns

Facilitator: Nora Chansa Idonije (GIZ)

#### **Case study: the pilot project for low-cost sanitation (P-LOCSAN) Project in Zambia**

- ➔ What was the model for the pilot project for low-cost sanitation (P-LOCSAN) Project in Zambia? What lessons can be learnt from the project?

#### Context:

Zambia has lagged behind in sanitation services especially in small towns and rural areas, not forgetting rural growth centres. The pilot project was undertaken in two cities and two small towns.

In this café table, the discussions focused on Solwezi, a small mining town in Northwestern Zambia (~ 130,000 inhabitants in 2011). The town is characterized by underdevelopment, with the majority of residents using pit latrines in outlying areas of the town (initially illegal settlements that were later legalized, and have the status of "peri-urban areas"). Legalisation of these areas calls therefore for infrastructure and town development, e.g. water and sanitation service provision.

#### Financing and Technical Model

An urban basket fund, the Devolution Trust Fund (DTF) was created for financing water utilities across the nation. The water and sanitation projects were restricted to the urban poor who reside in peri-urban areas. The DTF made Calls for Proposals which were open to all utilities. They were free to apply by sending proposals for the financing of water and sanitation projects. Once a proposal was selected after technical and social evaluation and verifications, funds were disbursed in phases as per

agreement. Social and technical consultants were engaged to supervise the utility staff on behalf of the DTF, which had a very lean structure.

#### What was the CHALLENGES OF Sanitation project in Kandundu peri-urban area of Solwezi?

- A new approach and concept from Asia, DEWATS, was tested. It required adaptation to the different local context, with both the implementers and beneficiaries learning from it. As a result, cultural and technical limitations often stalled or delayed the process until a solution around them could be devised;
- Ability of the utilities to sustain the service after the basket funding ended, versus the low revenue earned from the users ( low user fees from poor people vs operational maintenance);
- Willingness to pay was an issue as opposed to the ability to pay, as people were used to a history of free services for communal sanitation facilities;
- Maintenance of the facilities was also not the responsibility of the users;
- Usage of biogas was also not in line with cultural context;
- Beneficiaries wanted a good technology, which demanded high-cost maintenance: i.e. in Zambia southern African people are not washers and therefore prefer sitting toilets with cisterns as opposed to squatting toilets which cost less.

#### Achievements

- It enhanced technical and social capacities of utility staff to manage donor financed projects
- Strengthened the unit within the utilities that worked directly with the DTF
- Forced the utilities to work closely together with the local authorities unlike in the past where they worked in silos. In addition, brought all WASHE sectors in a locality together as they were all consulted and engaged in one way or another
- Improved the utility capacities to acquire available donor financing and exposed them to regional and international platforms and exchanges

#### Lessons

- Sanitation approaches are bound to be successful if they are demand-driven
- Informed choices for technological options should take local cultural, technical and feasibility contexts into consideration
- Engagement and participation of all stakeholders yield desirable results
- Higher governance reshuffle is often need
- We find good examples where the utilities worked with local authorities to create proposals

#### Café table 5) Inclusion aspects in small towns

*Facilitator: Astrid Michels (GIZ Bolivia) - Rapporteur: Cecilia Rodrigues (GIZ)*

The discussion was kicked-off by an example from Bolivia, which briefly addressed differences between rural and urban contexts regarding people's participation and inclusion. After a short introduction round, participants addressed key aspects of inclusion regarding different levels of capacity within members of communities, which need to be considered while planning inclusive interventions. In its turns, it requires appropriate methods, to ensure that limiting factors do not end up excluding even more marginalized and vulnerable groups. The discussion continued with inputs from participants, which were clustered in three main categories and summarized in the table below:

- a) Who are we leaving behind, which tried to identify the groups that are often overlooked and require a targeted approach to ensure inclusion
- b) Key factors that lead to the exclusion of marginalized groups, focusing on the context of small towns
- c) Examples and solutions from ongoing practices

Additional points raised in the discussions were:

- The need to identify the marginalized groups and generate baselines, so proper monitoring can take place
- The need to create safe spaces for addressing the needs of marginalized groups, as measures aiming at inclusion should not put people at risk of further abuse; e.g. through separate group discussions
- The need to engage with communities to understand the patterns of exclusion, which might be rooted in social norms that are not grasped by the establishment's views of the World
- The need to challenge the trap of blaming the victim, by rethinking the practices of governments, NGOs and donors

Key questions that arrived from the discussions are:

- Who are we targeting in our programs and interventions and who is benefitting?
- How to scale up inclusive approaches, knowing that the first level of inclusion takes place in the community level?

<b>Who are we leaving behind?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Women and girls</li> <li>- People with disabilities</li> <li>- Elderly and children</li> <li>- Marginalized groups due to occupation, i.e. blacksmith</li> <li>- Marginalized groups due to social norms</li> <li>- Nomads</li> <li>- Orphans and vulnerable children</li> <li>- Trans* people and third gender</li> <li>- School teachers (are often not considered in WinS / MHM programs)</li> </ul>
<b>Issues/factors of exclusion (small-town specifics)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not enough time dedicated to consultation</li> <li>- Language barriers for participation</li> <li>- Poor operation and maintenance of existing infrastructure (access)</li> <li>- Less likely to have organized right-based / advocacy groups</li> <li>- Peri-urban / small town sanitation is seen as not cost-efficient, therefore the lack of interest in investing in these areas (economy of scale)</li> </ul>
<b>Examples / solutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify sanitation needs in close consultation with users</li> <li>- Searching for entry points, e.g. community leaders who might have access to marginalized groups</li> <li>- Work with communities and local leaders (e.g. floods in Senegal)</li> <li>- Organizing communities, empower, include</li> <li>- Female friendly shared toilets (public/community)</li> <li>- Container-based sanitation</li> </ul>

## Café table 6) Specific strategies and approaches for small towns

Facilitator: Prit Salian (i-San), Dame Ndiaye (pS-Eau), Colette Génevaux (pS-Eau) – Rapporteur: Peter Hawkins

Example from Uganda



- Cluster approach focused on faecal sludge management (FSM) for institutional toilets district-wide, and a single faecal sludge treatment plant (FSTP) with 30km radius service area. At the beginning the project started with 6 towns but ended up with 3 towns;
- It was important to start working with public institution first (schools, health centre, markets, etc.) – looking at the whole district and ensuring demand creation for FSM services;
- Small, localised low-tech solutions were considered, but could not serve more dispersed institutions such as rural schools and health posts;
- Phased construction of FSTP to match actual demand (and avoid huge initial over-capacity). The final phases should be for the projected population in 25 years;
- 70% of the population are tenants, so the effort to upgrade domestic facilities should be focused on landlords, as they are the only ones who can decide to change the facilities.
- There was a need to develop appropriate by-laws and address the problems of governance.
- Extended 2-year planning period to get stakeholders on board and integrate sanitation into officially audited town development plans; need to monitor the performance.

### Example from Senegal

Various models tried successively since the 1980 – top-down, bottom-up, but it led to failing to have viable sanitation service chains, in particular in small towns. These findings led the Senegalese government to develop a specific strategy for small-town sanitation. The “Stratégie nationale d’assainissement des gros centres ruraux » (SACGR) strategy was validated in April 2019.

The strategy has clarified the roles and responsibilities of sanitation actors:

- The national operator ONAS provides guidance and technical assistance from the national level, and channels capital funding;
- Local authorities (communes) are legally responsible for service delivery, ie. works (e.g. FSTP construction) and operations, but they can choose to delegate it to the private sector;
- Monitoring at the national level is done by the CPCSP (ex-PEPAM) ;
- The strategy supports approaches such as sanitation marketing, subsidies and micro-credit;