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LOCAL ACTION WITH INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO IMPROVE AND
SUSTAIN WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE SERVICES

**Sustaining open defecation free status:
the vital role of validation exercise**

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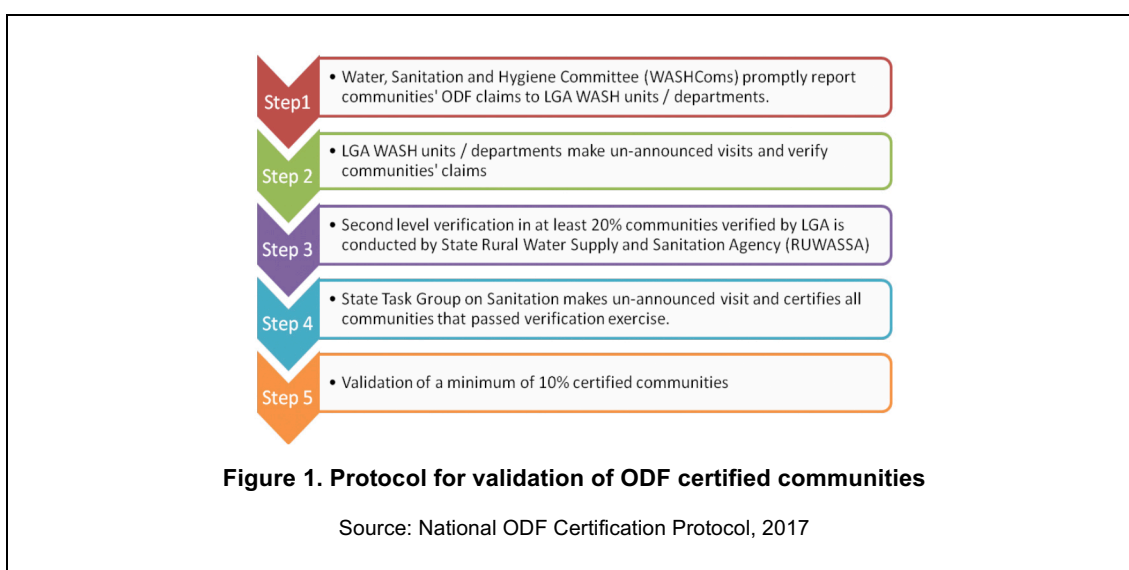
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UNICEF-Nigeria in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Water Resources (FMWR) and key stakeholders is implementing Community-Led Total sanitation (CLTS) to accelerate sanitation coverage in rural areas with good success. Over 8,400 communities have been certified Open Defecation Free (ODF) across 21 States. Sustaining ODF status has never been so important to consolidate the initial success and moving up the sanitation ladder. 10% of randomly selected ODF certified communities are considered for the validation exercise. This exercise has reduced ODF relapse rates from 44% in 2014 to 11% in 2016. This has further improved the quality of CLTS facilitation and an increase in improved latrines. The resources spent on the validation exercise (US\$ 6.4 per community) is much less than the funds (US\$ 197) required to get the relapsed communities back to ODF.

Background

There are 774 Local Government Area (LGA)s in the thirty-six states of Nigeria. Some 124 million Nigerians lack access to improved sanitation. To address the low coverage, various states have been implementing a variety of sanitation promotion approaches prior to the introduction of CLTS in 2008. Such efforts included awareness creation, hygiene education and promotion of latrine construction through demonstration toilets and subsidies. Analysis of historic data suggest that these efforts did not lead to any significant increase in the sanitation coverage. However with the introduction of CLTS in 2008, there has been steady increase in the number of ODF communities. Currently there are 8,405 communities certified ODF.

At the national level, the Federal Ministry for Water Resources (FMWR) in partnership with key partners constituted the National Task Group on Sanitation (NTGS). The NTGS comprises FMWR, Federal Ministries (of Health, Environment, Power, Works & Housing, Information, Budget and National Planning, and Women Affairs), National Orientation Agency, National Primary Health Care Development Agency, National Water Resources Institute, Environmental Health Officers Registration Council of Nigeria, UNICEF, EU, DFID, WaterAid, United Purpose, Youth WASH Initiative Africa and Society for Water and Sanitation (NEWSAN). NTGS is mandated to periodically review the progress, challenges and agree on standardized approaches and protocols to ensure scaling-up of CLTS with quality. As part of the process of ensuring quality control and credibility of CLTS processes, a minimum of 10% randomly selected ODF certified communities have to be periodically validated. The State Task Group on Sanitation (STGS) mirrors NTGS at the State level.



Evolution of the validation process

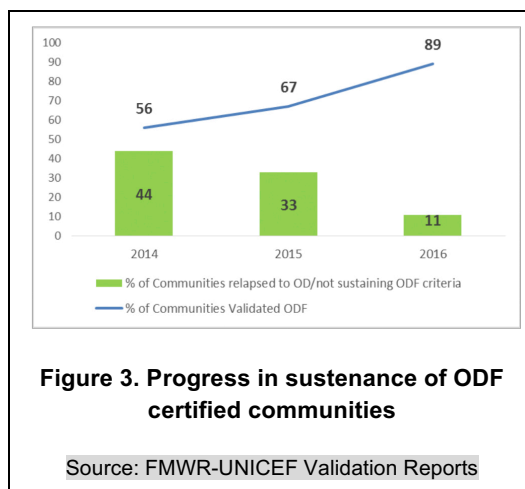
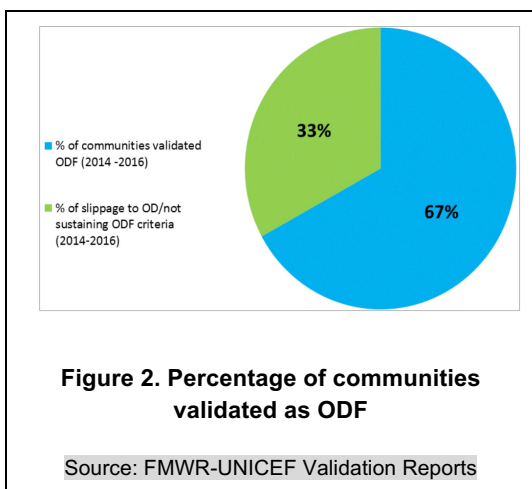
Third Party validation of ODF certified communities was initiated by UNICEF in collaboration with NTGS in 2014. The objective of the validation protocol was to ensure compliance with the national ODF certification protocol and maintain a high degree of credibility and transparency in the certification process. It was aimed at further strengthening the capacities of STGS, State Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agencies (RUWASSAs), LGA WASH departments/units and empowering the community to sustain its ODF status. The validation had to be carried out by third party and independent organizations that are members of NTGS but are not directly involved in CLTS implementation in the State. Some of these members are Society for Water and Sanitation (NEWSAN), National Water Resources Institute (NWRI), Environmental Health Officers Registration Council of Nigeria (EHORECON) and Youth WASH Initiative Africa.

Methodology / process of validation

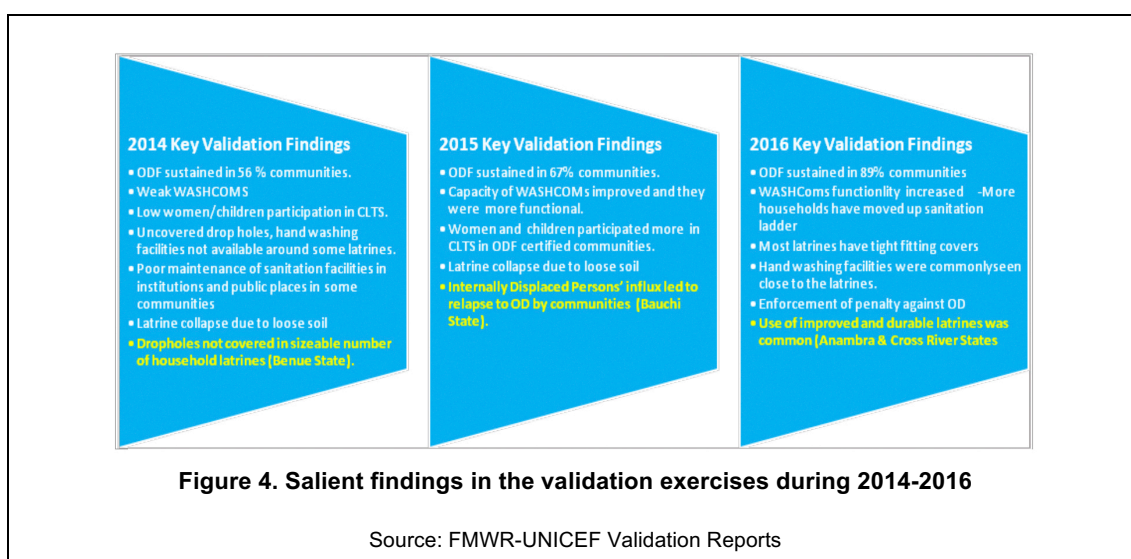
Before embarking on the validation process, the capacities of NTGS members were developed on the validation process. Once on-ground for the validation process, the validation teams had planning meetings with the respective State RUWASSAs, LGA WASH departments/Units and other stakeholders. Un-announced visits were made to randomly selected communities from the list generated from the WASH Information Management System (WASHIMS) or Community Data Sheet (CDS). The relevant data were gathered through consultations, key informant interviews, transect walk, Focus Group Discussions; and observations on availability and use of sanitation facilities at households, institutions and public places and presence of faeces in the environment. The validation checklists were filled and decision on ODF status of the community was jointly taken by the team members. The findings of the exercise were shared with communities, LGAs and States and discussed at NTGS meetings. While sharing the key findings of validation exercise with the community, the team first appreciated the progress made by communities on ODF attainment. Thereafter participatory actions were facilitated to address the shortcomings or challenges that led to the relapse back to Open Defecation (OD) in some of these communities.

Major achievements / findings from the validation exercises

Validation of ODF certified communities were carried out in the states of Bauchi, Jigawa, Katsina and Benue in the year 2014; Jigawa, Osun and Bauchi (2015); and Anambra, Cross-River, Jigawa, Adamawa and Bauchi in 2016. Of the six hundred and forty four randomly selected ODF certified communities that were validated in 29 LGAs during 2014-2016, 67% sustained their ODF status, while 33% of the ODF certified communities relapsed to OD (Figure 2). As a result of regular identification of issues, delivery of appropriate responses and continuous improvements in the facilitation process there has been a consistent reduction in the relapse rate over the years. Sustainability of ODF certified communities over time (Figure 3) has been improving every year. It has increased from 56% in the year 2014 to 89% in 2016.



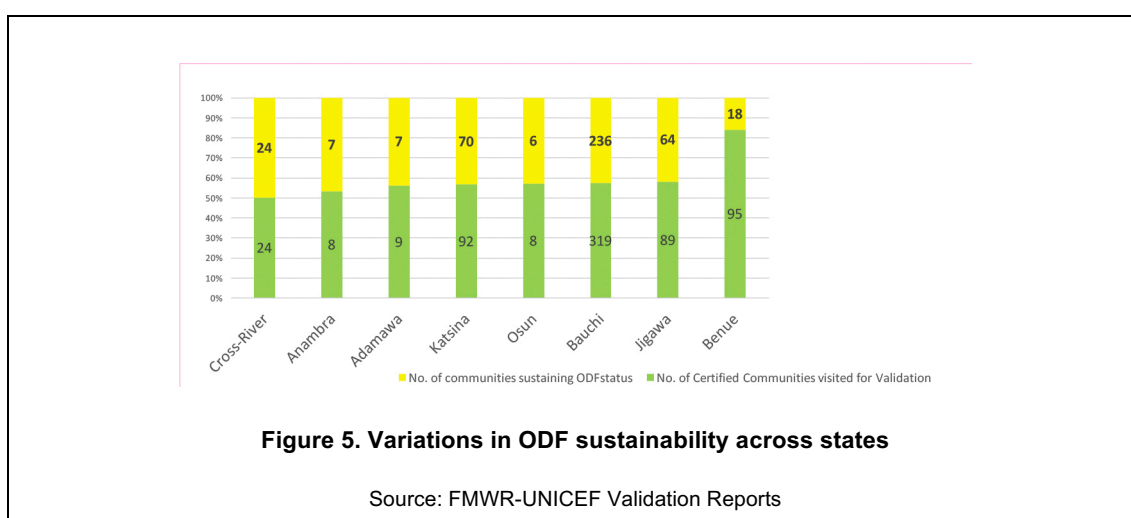
An in-house review of the validation experience overtime establishes that validation practice has enhanced community ownership of the behaviour change process and resulted in greater sustenance of the ODF status in the certified communities. The in-house review further revealed that the reason for high slippage in 2014 were inadequate training, weak capacities of the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Committees (WASHCOMs), and inadequate participation and engagement of women & children in the CLTS and ODF certification process. In terms of hardware deficiencies, the key shortcomings included missing drop-hole cover and hand washing facilities around some latrines and poor maintenance of sanitation facilities in institutions, and public places in some communities. In 2015, it was observed that the capacity of WASHCOMs was no longer the key reason for relapse, and women & children were more actively engaged in the CLTS and ODF certification process. The review of 2016 validation data revealed more functional WASHCOMs; more households with improved toilets and moving up the sanitation ladder; most latrines with tight fitting covers and hand washing facilities in vast majority of the latrines constructed in the validated communities, leading to significant drop in the relapse rate. Nevertheless there were some relapse mainly due to latrine pit collapse caused by loose soil formations. Concerted efforts were then made towards addressing the problem through dissemination and adoption of indigenous innovative solutions through a variety of channels such as organizing visits for the CLTS facilitators to see some of the local innovations in other parts of the country. In addition, specific session on latrine collapses were included in the CLTS training manual, and routine inspection and provision of technical advice during community monitoring and follow up visits were undertaken. Figure 4 illustrates the progressive improvements in the validation exercises conducted during 2014 to 2016.



Variation across states

Detailed observation of the validation findings revealed differing rates of ODF sustainability across the States (Figure 5). In Benue State, only 19 % of the ODF certified communities were found to retain the ODF status. By contrast, another state (Cross-River State) had retained 100% ODF status during validation. The validation exercise established that high relapse rate in Benue State was mainly due to absence of drop-hole covers in majority of the households inspected in the erstwhile ODF communities during the validation process. Hence, the validation process isolated a major shortcoming in the CLTS facilitation and ODF certification process leading to re-orientation of the state CLTS facilitators and the STGS ODF certification teams.

Most households in Cross-River and Anambra states, the two more affluent southern states preferred construction of improved and durable latrines along with more durable hand washing arrangements at the outset after triggering that led to sustenance of ODF status in the subsequent period. Such durable latrines were easier to maintain, did not collapse during the rainy season and provided much better user experience leading to more sustained behaviour change and latrine use.



Learning from validation experiences in 2014, it was evident to the key CLTS players that assisting communities moving up the ladder at the onset of the CLTS triggering was a major determinant of more sustained ODF status amongst the certified communities. A more nuanced sanitation marketing approach incorporating elements of sanitation financing through community saving and revolving fund, training of entrepreneurs and assisting communities in making informed decisions on choice of toilet to construct, was formally introduced in 2016. Basic sanitation marketing was incorporated in 2015 into the post triggering follow up community dialogue leading to higher numbers of improved latrine constructed in the ODF certified villages. The data on improved latrines gathered in 2015 and 2016 reveals 6,357 (67.02%) of the total 9,401 latrines that were inspected were improved (Figure 6). The yearly comparison shows a significant increase in the construction of improved toilets from 25.4% (of the constructed toilets) in 2015 to 74.0% in 2016.

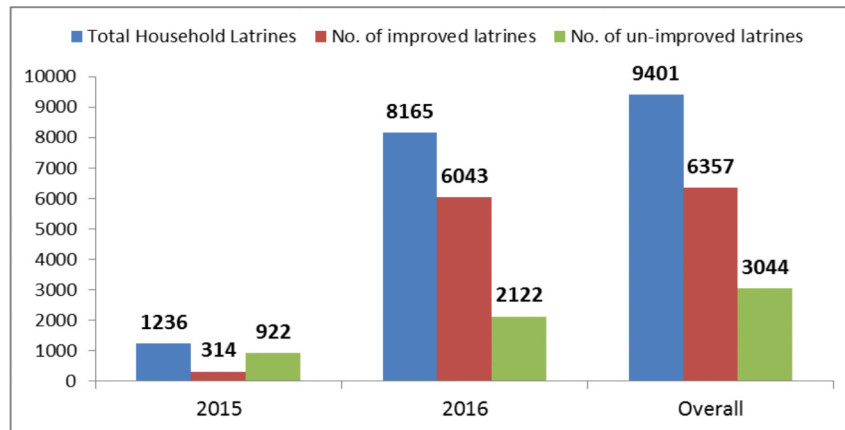


Figure 6. Variations in improved latrines over time

Source: FMWR-UNICEF Validation Reports

Disparities were observed in the proportion of improved latrines between the States in Northern and Southern parts of the country (Figure 7). The percentages of improved latrines in the two Northern states (Jigawa-52.68% and Bauchi-32.22%) were significantly less compared to improved latrines in the two southern states (Anambra-99.78% and Cross-River- 97.11%). Poverty was a major deterrent for rural dwellers in the Northern states to rapidly advance up the sanitation ladder. NDHS 2013 (p-16) indicates that the wealth quintile distribution varies greatly among the regions of Nigeria; a significant proportion of households in the North are in the lower wealth quintiles compared to households in the South. UNICEF and government partners have intensified sanitation marketing and financing strategies to address this challenge.

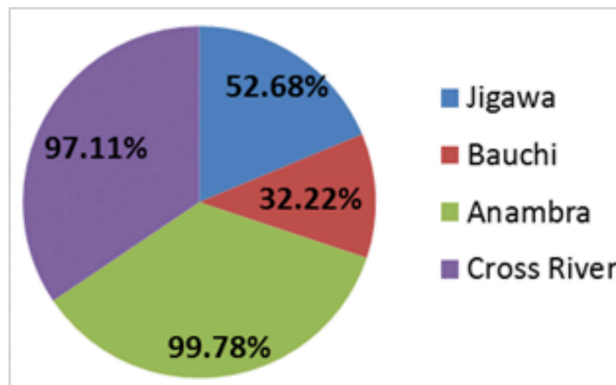


Figure 7. Improved latrines- North Vs South

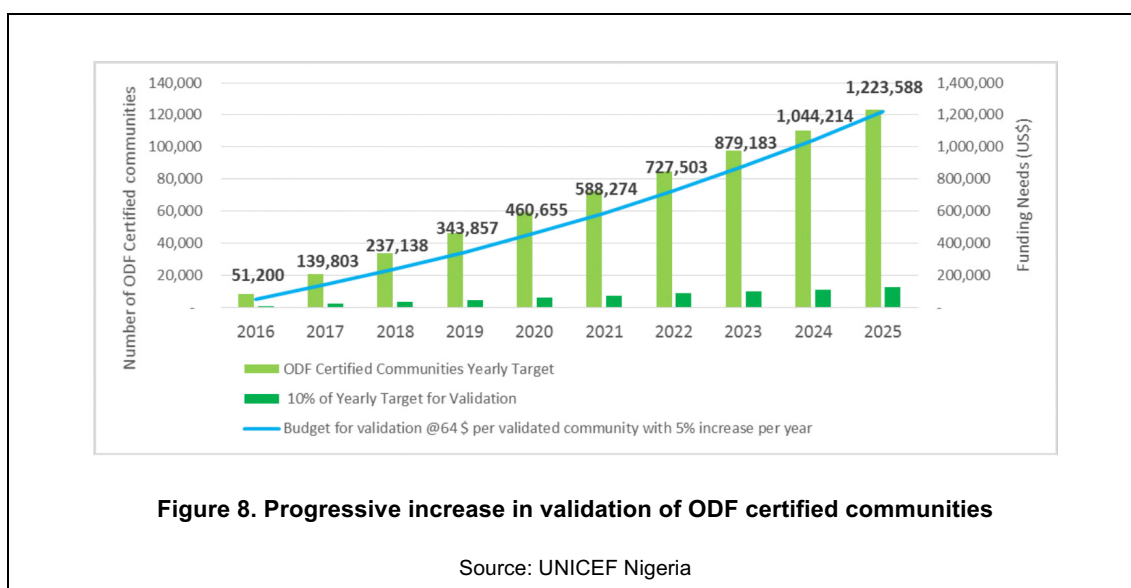
Source: FMWR-UNICEF Validation Reports

Validation at scale: Is this affordable?

Nigeria failed to achieve its MDG target on sanitation. A key reason was the lack of a clear vision and roadmap at the National level to achieve those targets. Taking cognizance of this major lacuna, the Federal government of Nigeria with the technical support of UNICEF, African Development Bank, EU, UK Aid and other development partners formulated the “Partnership for Expanded WASH (PEWASH)” program in Nigeria that was formally launched by the Vice President on 7th November 2016. PEWASH is a multi-stakeholder collaboration aimed at promoting sector coordination to achieve 100% access to basic water and sanitation in rural areas by 2030. PEWASH offers a good opportunity for states to avail funds for improving

access to WASH in their rural areas by putting in their own share (50%) of funds and seeking the remaining from the Federal Government. As a distinct component of PEWASH, the Federal government also launched the National ODF Roadmap towards making Nigeria open defecation free by 2025.

Figure-8 provides an indication of the ODF certified communities that would need to be validated (at 10% as per the current protocol) per year. An estimate of the funding needs for the exercise is also worked out based on the year 2016 rate of US\$ 64 (US\$ 1 = Naira 315 considered in the document) per validated community with a gradual increase of 5% per year over the years. The total cost for validation of all ODF certified communities (at 10% of all ODF certified communities) during 2017 to 2025 is estimated to cost US\$ 5.7 million (representing 3.2% of the ODF costs). Since this will be mainly driven nationally, it is important that the needed funds are allocated by the Federal Government. Development Partners could complement the gap in funds needed for the exercise. Given the importance of validation exercise to long-term ODF sustainability and in moving up the sanitation ladder, the costs incurred in the validation exercise is highly justified and critical to Nigeria’s progress towards the SDG-6.2 target on sanitation.



The increased number of certified communities to be validated every year would also mean reinforcing the human resource capacity to undertake the massive exercise year-after-year. This would require the Ministry to beef up its human resource capacity, get additional partners including NGOs/ CSOs and consider revisiting the composition of the Validation Team possibly after 2018 (with one representative from the national and others from the State/LGA). Revising the team composition to include more representatives from the states/LGAs would also bring down the overall costs of the validation exercise and foster cost sharing and greater accountability between the national and state levels. Data generated from the validation exercises need to be analyzed and disseminated as quickly as possible with key stake holders including the NTGS to better inform CLTS processes.

Conclusions and way forward

- Conduct of validation exercises has proven to be a cost-effective and veritable tool in improving the quality of CLTS facilitation and the subsequent sustenance of ODF certified communities in Nigeria.
- Setting-up of a Quality Assurance (QA) Team within the Department of Water Quality Control & Sanitation (the department currently dealing with sanitation) with a mandate to be fully responsible for the quality assurance of all aspects related to sanitation. The QA Team should be equipped with trained staff and needed operational resources.
- The WASHIMS database with current data on over 37,000 communities will be increasingly used to sample ODF certified communities for the validation exercise as well as to systematically track the relapsed communities as well as monitor sustainability of ODF certified communities over time.
- Smart Phone is increasingly being deployed for baseline surveys under the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN)-UNICEF WASH programme in Nigeria and has brought about significant reduction in

time and financial resources. In the 2017 validation exercise, there is a plan to introduce Smart phone for real-time data gathering and will be eventually linked to the WASH Performance Management portal for display of results and findings on a real-time basis.

Acknowledgments

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