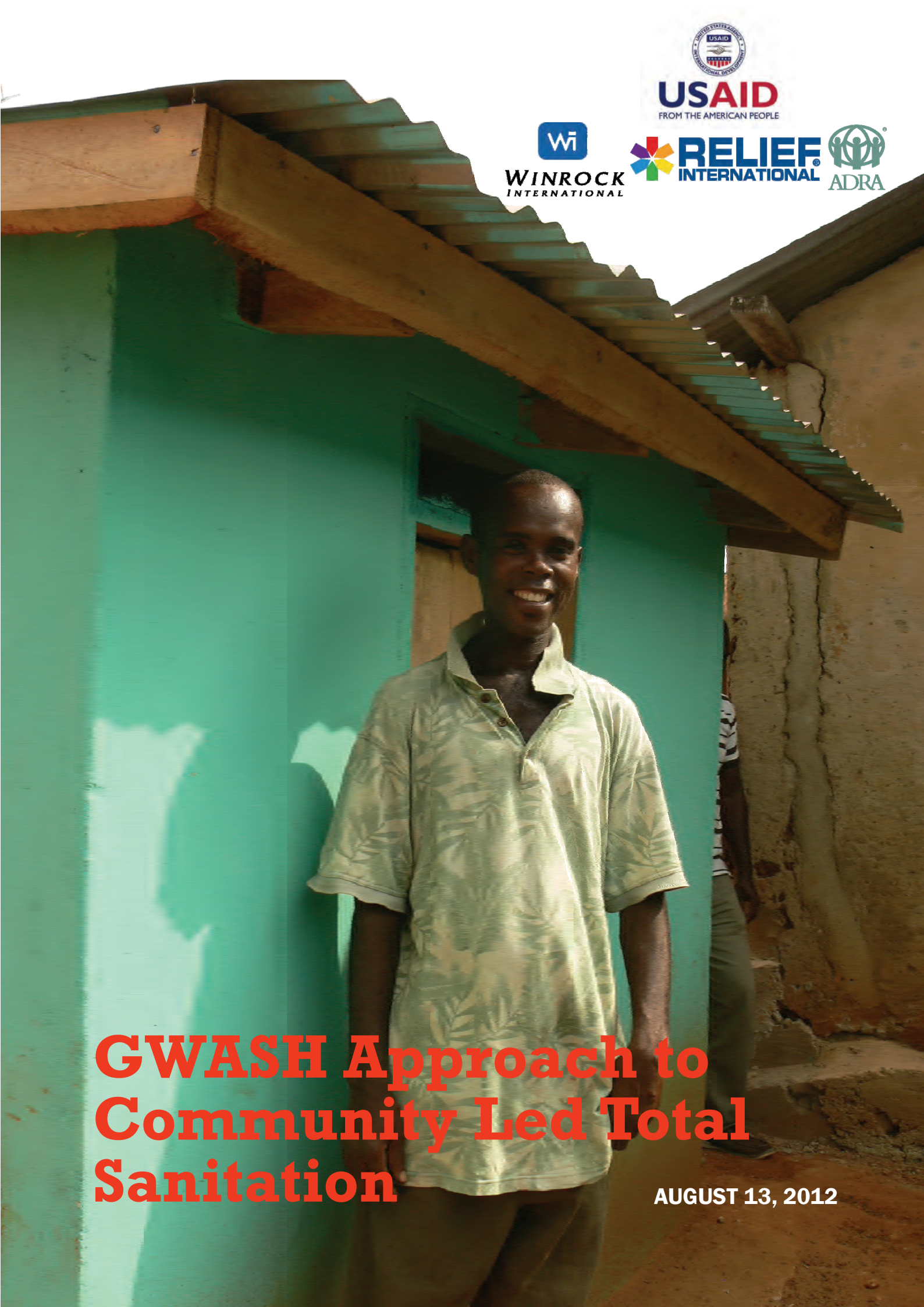

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GWASH Approach to Community Led Total Sanitation

AUGUST 13, 2012

Introduction

The Ghana WASH Project attempts to harness the awareness raising and demand creation techniques of Community Led Total Sanitation, while at the same time supporting beneficiaries with quality household latrine option choices that are tailored to accommodate the modest incomes of the rural communities in which we work. Likewise, we work with trained artisans to assist in the building of the latrines so as to ensure a higher quality, consistent latrine model. This approach benefits beneficiary family members for a longer time horizon than latrines built with no hardware project contribution.

As such, once CLTS triggering takes place, individuals decide to invest in a latrine that suits their ability to contribute. While we have nine options available (see poster), due to the success of the triggering in creating a desire to invest in their own sanitation solutions, most beneficiaries decide on more long-lasting brick or block superstructures and then invest more of their resources accordingly. Once they select their latrine, the beneficiaries are responsible for digging their own pit and gathering their portion of the materials before we begin providing them with a substructure.

At the same time, the GWASH Project works with District Environmental Health Officers for the siting of the household latrines in question. As the sanitation experts in the districts, it's critical that the project collaborates closely with these civil servants so as to ensure that groundwater will not become polluted as well as to reduce the likelihood of land tenure or nuisance complaints between neighbors who perceive that they might be affected by the building of a latrine.

If one was to gauge the breakdown of materials costs and all associated labor for our most popular latrine models (rectangular VIP and Mozambique, both with brick or block superstructures, iron roofs) the project contributes approximately 40% and the beneficiary contributes 60% during the construction process.

Ghana WASH Project CLTS Coordinator Dominic Dapaah collects GPS coordinates of pit for household latrine construction.

If one were to list the benefits and drawbacks of pure CLTS and high subsidy latrine provision projects, it may look something like this:

Pure CLTS: Strengths

- With a dynamic facilitator, and significant monitoring, it has been demonstrated that CLTS triggering can create a groundswell of support for improving sanitation in united, small, rural communities.

- With no subsidy, the evolution from open defecation to ODF status can correctly be attributed to the demand that had been created using CLTS demand creation triggering techniques.

- Since the objective is ODF status, as opposed to the number of latrines built, even very poor communities can reach their ODF objective by modifying their defecation practices (such as using dig and bury as an approach) while attempting to save resources for the eventual building of a household latrine and thus moving up the sanitation ladder.

- CLTS requires frequent follow up by project implementers (or ideally by district health workers in case ODF monitoring is embedded in the district health system) who can create more long-lasting ties between a project implementer and a community due to the high frequency of return visits required to check up on beneficiaries building their own latrines.

Pure CLTS: Weaknesses

- Scale up is challenging, as the techniques work best when community pressure can be used to make most families conform to the new norm of improving sanitation. That can typically only occur in homogenous, unified, small rural communities.

- A poor triggering session can lead to failure in a particular community. Too much pressure can be on the facilitator to be respectful while at the same time pushing the boundaries of what is determined educational and acceptable.

- With no trained artisans present, and no subsidy to ensure a higher quality latrine building process, latrines built in CLTS triggered communities can often be classified as temporary pit latrines that are often built of questionable quality and duration. Likewise, during heavy tropical rains, these less durable structures can be compromised, leaving the community with effluent run-off (and the diarrheal disease that accompany the run-off) issues during the rainy season. Likewise, If inferior materials are used for the construction and the facilities are destroyed by rain or wind storms, it is less likely beneficiaries will embrace going through the rebuilding process in constructing another latrine.

- As many bilateral projects have a hard target on the number of HHLs constructed during a given time frame, using a pure CLTS approach does not necessarily lead to the building of high quality latrines during the life cycle of a project. Rather, it creates the knowledge that open defecation is harmful to a family member's health and that one of the better solutions for dealing with open defecation is building a latrine that is then kept hygienic. However, since a pure CLTS project (with no hardware subsidy whatsoever) does not push the latrine building along (except in terms of encouragement and monitoring) there is a much longer timeframe between a family realizing that open defecation is a harmful and having them build their own latrine to reduce the likelihood of diarrheal disease within their family.

- The ODF certification process can be easily manipulated to obtain the desired result without necessarily encouraging that the communities in question move towards hardware solutions to sanitation issues.

Pure Latrine Building Projects: Strengths

- Latrines built can be of an extremely high quality and can be used for a long period of time.
- Under normal circumstances, a high subsidy latrine project can be organized in a consistent fashion and are more likely to hit targets such as the number of latrines built in a given time frame.
- Supplies can be bought in bulk and solid estimates can be made in advance for the amount of supplies needed in a given community.
- Artisan training to build standardized, high quality latrines almost always precedes a high subsidy latrine building intervention. As such, this leads to more individuals in the community possessing skills that can help them to earn a living once the project has been concluded.

Pure Latrine Building Projects: Weaknesses

- A latrine which is provided without sufficient demand creation leads to the facility often being used for unintended purposes (such as for grain storage).
- The cost of the highly subsidized latrines can often be higher than the rural family's own housing, creating a disconnect between what has been built for defecation and what has been built for living.
- High subsidy latrine building projects, with only marginal beneficiary contributions, often lead to local district authorities or local opinion leaders assigning a significant number of the latrines to their associates, families and colleagues, thereby not reaching the intended target audience in a particular community.
- High demand in a particular community is almost never exhausted by a high subsidy latrine project leading to fewer latrines being provided than the amount demanded in any particular community. As such, this divides the community between the 'haves' and the 'have nots', which can lead to other repercussions, particularly at the rural community level, where a high degree of community cohesion can exist.

Household latrine beneficiary: Baba Ibrahim, Fahiakabo, Bibiani District, Western Region

CLTS Hybrid Approach and Our Attempt to Benefit from the Strengths of Both Approaches

During our first six months of implementation of the hybrid CLTS approach, early signs indicate that we have been able to thread the needle between the relative strengths of a pure CLTS approach and the strengths of a high subsidy latrine provision approach.

The demand creation techniques, which are essential to CLTS, are employed in order to raise awareness of the dangers of open defecation. Effectively this created a call-to-action of community digging a number of pits and gathering their associated materials as part of the latrine building process.

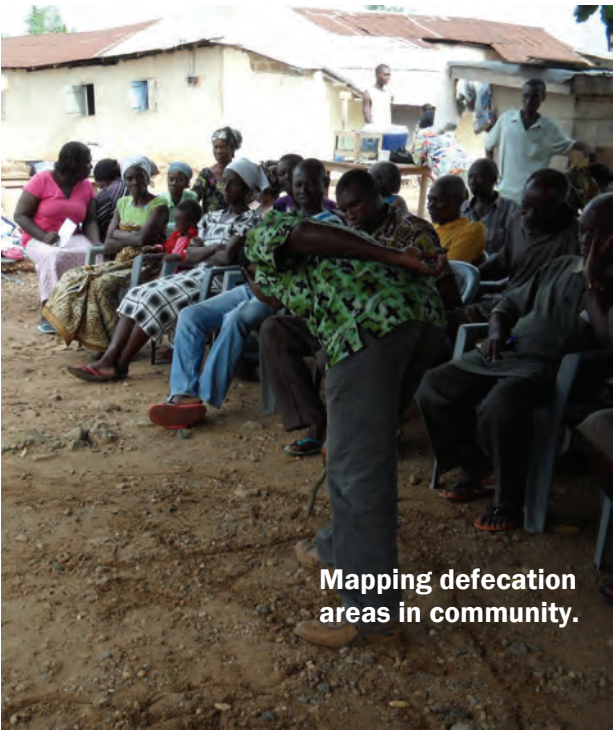
- The project only supports individuals who take action to own their own latrines. They are responsible for digging their own pit, gathering and purchasing their own material (prior to project construction commencing) and are responsible for feeding the trained artisans for the duration of time that they are working on their latrine.

- At the same time, we are still able to provide a high-quality latrine that is built by trained artisans who have been taught proper techniques in latrine building. Likewise, this approach leads to the added benefit of buying materials in bulk and helps the project to stay on target and on budget as we attempt to reach our fixed household latrine building target for the life of project.

- Thanks to the relatively high commitment of time, effort, materials and funds, we believe the low subsidy CLTS latrines are looked upon as a more as a collaborative endeavor than a high subsidy giveaway. As such, we've experienced fewer abusive situations than we experienced in high subsidy latrine communities during the first phase of our project.

- Thanks to a decentralized field staff structure and collaboration with local NGOs and the US Peace Corps, the GWASH Project provides continuous hygiene and behavior change communication support to targeted communities throughout the CLTS process.

- With the low subsidy approach, we have not had to limit the supply of household latrines in a particular community, thereby remaining flexible to meet the demand in each community in question. This leads to much less dissention in the host communities between groups that have benefited and those that have not. More importantly, a more complete latrine sanitation coverage leads to a higher likelihood of a community obtaining Open Defecation Free status.



Mapping defecation areas in community.

Community members discuss the nine available household latrine models.

We anticipate completing our first phase of latrine building in 53 communities in Aowin Suaman (WR), East Akim (ER), Agona East (CR), Awutu Senya (CR) and Ho Municipality (VR) by November 2012. At that point we should have a better sense of what has been accomplished in creating a hybrid approach to respond to the great need for improved rural sanitation by adopting techniques from both approaches.

To summarize, the Ghana WASH Project uses the following approach to provide solutions for rural sanitation needs:

- Triggering communities with CLTS techniques to create demand for rural sanitation household facilities;
- Ensuring that beneficiary families commit themselves to the latrine building process by monitoring their pit digging and gathering of necessary building supplies;
- Promoting hygiene and ensuring follow up with direct hire project staff, local NGOs and Peace Corps;
- Engaging with district environmental and health engineers for correct siting of HHLs (in terms of avoiding contamination of groundwater and avoiding land tenure and legal disputes in villages);
- Building support and local capacity for the production of sanitation facilities by training latrine artisans in different latrine building techniques;
- Contracting with local suppliers of raw building material in bulk for latrine parts (concrete for rings/slab construction, building blocks for super structure, blocks or plastic pipes for ventilation pipes, fly mesh);
- Engaging in a detailed monitoring and evaluation process which uses branding and marking, photographs and GPS technology to map and make available to project stakeholders details of all facilities built by the project.

RIGHT: Household latrine beneficiary: Kweku Mensah, Adaa, Gomoa West, Central Region

TOP LEFT: Previous household latrine.