



*USAID's partnership with LIXIL formalizes work already happening in the sanitation marketplace in half a dozen African countries where women are trained as sales agents and "demand activators" for affordable latrine products, such as the blue plastic SATO Pan. Photo credit: Dorothy Nabatanzi*

## Five Ways USAID Is Supporting Sustainable Sanitation

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**D**espite the demonstrated health, economic, social, and environmental benefits that sanitation improvements provide, governments consistently underfund and place a low priority on sanitation. Though the challenges differ in urban and rural areas, the shortage of sanitation facilities and services is acute, and the solutions are complex.

Ensuring more households have a toilet is not enough. At the current rate of progress, universal access to safely managed sanitation will not become a reality until the 22nd century, well beyond the global goal of 2030. However, with ongoing examination of emerging research, exploration of what has and has not worked in the past, and a commitment to identifying locally relevant and innovative solutions, USAID is working to close the sanitation gap.

USAID focuses on increasing sustainable access and use of safe sanitation services

and promoting key hygiene behaviors through investments that generate the greatest health benefits in poor and underserved communities: improving basic access to sanitation services in households and institutions and management of fecal waste.

Achieving widespread community coverage of basic sanitation and ending open defecation are critical priorities, as fecal contamination affects the community well beyond the household level. Where populations have greater access to basic sanitation, such as in urban areas, USAID emphasizes investing in safely managed sanitation, which focuses not only on containment but also on the emptying, transport, treatment, and safe disposal of waste.

USAID's Water and Development Plan, part of the [U.S. Government Global Water Strategy](#), set a target to help provide 8 million people with sustainable access to sanitation services by 2022 — a goal the Agency has already exceeded by 2.6 million people. As we celebrate World Toilet Day 2020, read about how USAID supports sustainable sanitation around the globe.

## **1. Partnering with the Private Sector**

USAID [announced](#) a new partnership agreement with the global sanitation company [LIXIL](#) on October 14, 2020, to extend market-based solutions for sanitation and hygiene to underserved and vulnerable communities worldwide. This agreement outlines a framework and pathway to leverage the unique expertise, resources, and reach of USAID and LIXIL to advance their joint mission to combat the global sanitation crisis. LIXIL's line of affordable, hygienic, and odor-free latrines for lower-income households includes the [SATO Pan](#). The SATO Pan features a tiny self-closing flap at the bottom to block odors and keep away flies. This sanitation insert gives users peace of mind that their latrine is hygienic. It makes using a latrine a more dignified experience.

The partnership will scale LIXIL's SATO latrine and toilet products in as many as 11 countries across sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, aim to strengthen sanitation supply-chains and markets, and create business opportunities for women entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized enterprises in emerging economies. "We are very excited to team up with LIXIL and their SATO brand to reach more people with the safe and dignified options they deserve," says USAID Global Water Coordinator Jennifer Mack. "At the heart of our new global partnership is a strong commitment to, and prioritization of, sanitation and hygiene."

## **2. Building Capacity of Local Entrepreneurs**

Enabling viable sanitation enterprises is the focal point of making sanitation markets work. Functioning local markets are critical to a household's ability to adopt improved sanitation facilities. Applying a market-based sanitation approach, USAID builds the capacity of entrepreneurs — such as masons, contractors, sales agents, pit emptiers, and manufacturers — to adopt sanitation as a profitable venture that often complements their existing business.

To promote toilet construction in Haiti, for example, the USAID Water and Sanita-

tion Project recruits and trains entrepreneurs to take on sanitation as a business. Through instruction and coaching, budding entrepreneurs learn to create business plans and market household toilets. After completing the training, submitting a business plan, and building at least 15 toilets, a company can receive a performance-based grant and becomes eligible for additional grants once 25 new toilets are sold. One trainee, Elizée Pierre, owner of a small homebuilding company, became the first recipient to hit the microgrant milestone. “The best part of the training was the hands-on exercise,” says Pierre. “I learned that you have to create a market for your product. You can’t just sit back and wait for the customers to come to you.”

USAID evaluated the sanitation landscape in Uganda and found toilet building inconvenient, lengthy, and expensive. The process often led to a product of dubious quality. Designing attractive and affordable products provides a good foundation for market-based delivery. And organizing existing sanitation entrepreneurs to provide information and professional services to households streamlines the process. The Uganda Sanitation and Health Activity (USHA) used data-based, human-centered approaches to design products that strike a good balance between affordability and preferences of target customers. USHA then trained interested masons and linked them to “demand activators” — usually community health workers — that are considered a missing link between demand generation and basic toilet construction. USHA trains these activators to share tailored messages that resonate with potential customers. Once an activator generates a lead, the mason is responsible for meeting the customer and confirming the choice of sanitation product most suited to him or her. USHA encourages sanitation entrepreneurs to pay demand activators a small commission for every successful lead. This aggregated information-sharing is vital to making the construction process more transparent, easier, and cheaper for households.

### **3. Working within Systems of Government**

In August 2020, USAID received special recognition for its work with the Government of India to develop a competitive monitoring framework that currently assesses 4,200 urban local bodies every quarter to measure improved sanitation outcomes as part of the annual cleanliness survey known as Swachh Survekshan. USAID’s involvement dates back to the first year of the cleanliness survey in 2016, when USAID supported the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs’ Program Management Unit to design and implement the survey in 73 cities across India. Every year since, the scope of this work has expanded significantly to become not only a pan-India survey but also one of the largest of its kind in the world. “Swachh Survekshan, or the cleanliness survey, is more than a survey — it has become an effective tool for good governance, helped India achieve the goal of ending open defecation, and transformed the way the Government of India works to achieve other key development goals,” says USAID/India Acting Mission Director Ramona El Hamzaoui. In fact, the survey has become such a success that the Clean India Rural Mission and other government programs have replicated the framework.

## 4. Applying Sanitation Research to Influence Policy and Practice

USAID conducts research and learning activities that expand what is possible in the water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) sector, both globally and locally. In a quest to unpack the drivers of sustainability in its programming, USAID supported a series of six [Ex-Post Evaluations](#), five of which explored sanitation outcomes over the long term. The series identified challenges associated with sustaining reductions in open defecation and enabling people to access higher quality sanitation. Among the takeaways: poor latrine quality is a key factor related to the lack of sustainability, and effective sanitation interventions likely need to apply a combination of smart and targeted subsidies, behavior change, and market-based sanitation approaches in a context-specific way. The series intends to foster learning and improve evidence-based sustainable development assistance at USAID and among other WASH stakeholders.

Through operational research, small grants, and technical support, USAID's [Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Partnerships and Learning for Sustainability \(WASHPaLS\)](#) project collaborates with governments, key sector donors, and implementers to fill evidence gaps related to rural sanitation and behavior change. WASHPaLS' applied research and learning activities influence both policy and practice so that sector stakeholders can more effectively and efficiently invest resources where they are needed most. The project's foundational research on market-based sanitation has led to a widely used conceptual framework centered around creating viable sanitation enterprises. Tools to support policy-level decision-making on sanitation and ensure the viability of sanitation enterprises are already having an impact on USAID programming on the ground.

Finally, the Agency has issued a set of [Water and Development Technical Briefs](#) that provides new guidance on important topics for developing and implementing WASH activities in support of USAID's Water and Development Plan, as well as recommendations for activity design, implementation, and monitoring. Two of these briefs are focused on [rural sanitation](#) and [urban sanitation services](#), respectively.

## 5. Considering the Whole Sanitation Service Chain

Urban sanitation is about more than just toilets. USAID focuses on the entire sanitation service chain, from containment to safe disposal. Technologies and approaches for each step in the service chain are tightly linked, meaning that programs must consider the entire chain before designing interventions.

In Indonesia, most urban residents until recently depended upon informal, unregulated, on-call fecal sludge removal practices that were not only unsafe but also costly and harmful to the environment. To address this problem, USAID's IUWASH PLUS project partnered with local governments to establish an innovative service for scheduled desludging of fecal waste, a process known as the Layanan Lumpur Tinja Terjadwal (LLTT). Endorsed by the Government of Indonesia, the LLTT guidelines now serve as the primary driver in formalizing Indonesia's desludging services across the country. For the first time, 40 cities across Indonesia have instituted regulated, scheduled desludging services using the guidelines to benefit hundreds of thousands

of households. Establishing, regulating, and monitoring scheduled desludging services at national and local levels has been a game changer for Indonesia's urban centers, and demand for these services is expected to grow as the country continues to urbanize rapidly.

In the end, no universal solution can be applied to the world's complex sanitation challenges. But as USAID and its partners look beyond World Toilet Day 2020, the Agency is dedicated to developing and implementing a mix of approaches to create locally relevant, innovative sanitation solutions that put customers first and establish an enabling environment in which these approaches can flourish and be sustained.

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