

APPROACHES TO IMPROVE SANITATION ACCESS IN PASTORALIST AREAS WITHIN THE ARID AND SEMI-ARID LANDS OF KENYA

RESEARCH BRIEF

Introduction

Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) has been widely used and adapted as an approach for reducing open defecation. The Government of Kenya has adopted CLTS as a core element of its national sanitation strategy, but conventional CLTS approaches have been difficult to implement successfully among pastoralist groups in Kenya's Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs, Figure 1). The USAID Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Partnerships and Learning for Sustainability (USAID/WASHPaLS) project investigated the distinctive characteristics of pastoral communities to inform how rural sanitation programs can be adapted in the ASALs to improve outcomes. We studied 17 pastoral communities in three ASAL counties (Samburu, Turkana, Kitui), conducting 34 focus group discussions and 154 interviews with households, community leaders, national and local government officials, and implementing partners.

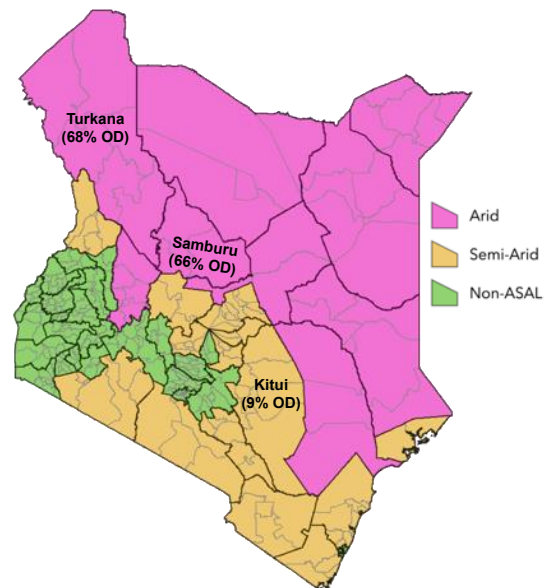


Figure 1. Counties in Kenya classified as arid, semi-arid, and non-ASAL. Field work was conducted in Turkana, Samburu, and Kitui; open defecation (OD) rates for these counties are from Kenya's 2019 Census.

Research questions

1. *What are the underlying factors and constraints affecting sanitation adoption in the ASALs?*
2. *What are acceptable standards for sanitation in pastoralist communities, with regard to both user experience and public health?*
3. *What potential adaptations to CLTS will address the challenges associated with sanitation among pastoral communities in the ASALs?*

Constraints and barriers to latrine adoption among pastoralists

Pastoralists in Kenya face a number of distinct and substantial barriers to latrine adoption. A challenge to any overarching approach for these populations is that they exhibit varying levels of mobility, from highly-nomadic groups, which move frequently and see open defecation as their best option, to settled agro-pastoralists who grow crops and raise small livestock herds on clearly demarcated plots. Partially mobile groups often split responsibilities, such that men move seasonally with livestock while women and children remain at home. Additionally, pastoralists often live and move throughout remote, difficult-to-reach areas, resulting in conditions that can reduce the effectiveness of conventional CLTS approaches to promote latrine use. Generally, in pastoral communities:

- **Water scarcity, poverty, and insecurity** contribute to movement of pastoral groups, while also reducing the degree to which sanitation is seen as a high priority. The provision of basic needs (e.g., food, water) tend to override other considerations among more nomadic communities.
- **Latrine structures are prone to collapse because of environmental conditions, such as unstable soils and high winds, as well as a lack of durable materials.** Repeated collapse becomes demoralizing, and rocky soils in some areas make pit excavation difficult.
- **Higher-quality sanitation facilities are largely unaffordable,** while access to more durable materials and skilled labor is particularly limited in more remote areas far from urban centers.



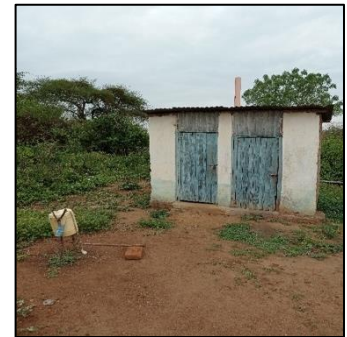
- Especially among partially mobile communities, **women tend to encourage latrine adoption and are often responsible for building the facilities** themselves using locally available materials, but men are the final household decision-makers and see less need for latrines, as they are accustomed to open defecation while moving with livestock.
- **Settlements are often changing in composition** due to migration, seasonal movement, and insecurity, which can reduce social cohesion and set back any previous sanitation progress.

In particular, existing latrines in at least partially mobile study villages (in Samburu and Turkana) **do not meet cultural requirements related to latrine sharing** (e.g., among men and women, or a husband sharing with his in-laws) and the defecation behaviors of certain groups (e.g., *morans*, young men with traditional warrior roles who now often move with livestock). In these settings, CLTS implementation and reporting structures can be complex and inefficient, leading to inconsistencies and unclear standards for programming. CLTS has been more successful in Kitui, which is home to primarily settled, agro-pastoral communities; however, challenges still exist in **harder-to-reach areas containing newly-formed or relocated communities**, with low household density and difficult environmental conditions.

Acceptable standards and opportunities in pastoral communities

Despite these constraints, **pastoralists are interested in using latrines if they conform to certain standards**. However, there is a stark distinction between settled and nomadic populations.

- Households in **settled and semi-settled communities want durable latrines that do not collapse** in the face of challenging environmental conditions (e.g., unstable soils, flooding).
- **Privacy, safety, and pride** are key concerns among these communities, and latrine designs should maximize privacy. People also emphasize the value of latrines that do not put their livestock at risk (for example, from falling into the pit) and the pride they feel in being able to offer visitors a latrine to use.
- **Nomadic communities see open defecation as the best option** for their mobile lifestyles and are resistant to latrine use, as it is difficult to carry latrine materials with them. However, they are open to latrine use if they were to transition to a more settled way of life.



We identified several opportunities for improved sanitation adoption, often related to the ways in which **pastoral lifestyles, beliefs, and values are evolving**. In particular:

- **Nomadic lifestyles are changing**, with pastoralists tending to become more settled. These trends reduce barriers associated with high mobility and introduce new ideas about land ownership and the value of latrines.
- While still present, **cultural beliefs constraining latrine adoption are becoming less prevalent**. Many pastoralists feel that sanitation interventions can conform to remaining beliefs on sharing and use by *morans*.
- **Education is highly valued**, offering opportunities to promote sanitation in schools and involve schools in community-wide interventions.

Recommendations for improving sanitation programming

Capitalizing on these opportunities requires a strong enabling environment and implementation strategies tailored to specific communities. **To cultivate stronger enabling environments, local and national governments can:**

- **Strengthen implementation and reporting structures** by consolidating and increasing coordination across technical areas currently acting in parallel, and by clearly defining roles and responsibilities. Kenya's Public Service Commission has developed guidance on crafting effective structures.¹
- **Identify committed sanitation champions** at both the county and community levels to coordinate activities, disseminate success stories, and create healthy competition among champions to promote use of latrines.
- **Dedicate funding to sanitation** in county budgets, with detailed items to ensure funds are allocated appropriately and are sufficient to cover complete implementation of CLTS. In particular, these **budgets should include stipends for CHVs** and other promoters who play critical roles in initiating, monitoring, and following up on sanitation interventions.
- **Provide nuanced guidance on initiatives to leave no one behind**, including pro-poor programs in challenging contexts. The national government may assist in developing policies or guidelines related to strategies such as cash transfers, vouchers, or rebates, based on experiences from other countries or from programs

beyond sanitation in Kenya (e.g., the Hunger Safety Net Programme, which has been operating in four ASAL counties, with a planned nationwide expansion).

Implementers can tailor interventions to specific pastoral communities. We propose **incorporating a simple questionnaire into pre-triggering** to help implementers identify characteristics related to key constraints and opportunities common in pastoral communities (Figure 2 offers an initial concept, which focuses on mobility level as a key factor). Using such a questionnaire to **guide tailored implementation strategies** can lead to interventions that are more sensitive to the specific needs of pastoralists.

Based on the results of a contextual analysis, the following implementation recommendations may be appropriate:

- **Tailor latrine designs and messaging** to pastoralists' values and contextual challenges, focusing on privacy, livestock protection, pride in offering a latrine to visitors, and preventing pit collapse.
- **Conduct institutional triggering to engage schools and community leaders** prior to community triggering, to increase buy-in, create champions, and increase community involvement in CLTS activities.
- **Prior to community triggering, target specific groups for education** when those groups may be especially resistant to latrine adoption due to cultural or other factors (e.g., peer-to-peer education among *morans*), or when those groups may provide particular opportunities for improving sanitation (e.g., village savings and loan associations).
- **To leave no one behind, consider pro-poor initiatives especially in challenging contexts**, where some assistance may be needed to ensure that poorer households can install durable latrines. These approaches should align with any government guidance, policies, and systems related to subsidies or cash transfers.
- **Complement CLTS with other relevant interventions** (e.g., related to food and water security) to address other household priorities that may override sanitation and build trust within the community.
- **Institute exchange programs**, especially in remote contexts. Beginning sanitation programming with exchange visits, in which households with limited latrine exposure travel to areas where latrines have been installed successfully, can give households the opportunity to see and experience these facilities.
- **Among highly nomadic groups, focus on sensitization** rather than full CLTS implementation, as these communities continue to perceive open defecation as the best option. Implementers should meet communities where they are, and sensitization efforts will be particularly valuable as existing trends toward more permanent settlement progress, and people begin to consider latrine adoption.

Moving forward, this knowledge on constraints, opportunities, and strategies for tailored implementation can inform rural sanitation programs that are equitable, sensitive to local considerations, and effective in reducing open defecation among pastoral populations.

1. Republic of Kenya. *Guidelines on Design of Organization Structures in the Public Service*; 2015.

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About USAID/WASHPaLS

The USAID Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Partnerships and Learning for Sustainability Project (USAID/WASHPaLS) is a five-year project that identifies and shares best practices for achieving sustainability, scale, and impact of evidence-based environmental health and WASH interventions. Through extensive desk reviews, key informant interviews, and field-based implementation research, USAID/WASHPaLS works with implementing partners to broaden the evidence base on the use and effectiveness of sanitation interventions, including Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS), market-based sanitation (MBS), and the promotion of safe hygiene environments for infants and young children. For further information about this and other aspects of the project, as well as to access our knowledge products, please visit globalwaters.org/washpals.

A. Establish level of mobility:

- Time spent at a settled/permanent location

B1. For more mobile communities:

- Cultural beliefs and norms
- Ability to meet basic needs
- Existence of non-sanitation programs

B2. For more settled communities:

- Recent disease outbreaks
- Institutions available in or near the community
- Soil conditions
- Household members most likely to continue open defecation
- Exposure to outside contexts and/or markets

Figure 2. A concept for a simple decision support tool that can be incorporated into pre-triggering to guide sanitation implementation for pastoral communities with differing levels of mobility.