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SLH LEARNING BRIEF

Learning from ODF Districts in Mozambique

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Introduction

Mozambique has committed to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6.2 to achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation by 2030. Much progress is still needed, with recent data indicating that 36 per cent of the population (11.6 million people) still use unimproved facilities which are not designed to hygienically separate excreta from human contact. In addition, Mozambique has a high rate of open defecation at 23 per cent (7.1 million people). The prevalence of unsafe sanitation practices, regarded as the use of either unimproved sanitation facilities or open defecation, is particularly high in rural areas, with an alarming 75 per cent of the rural population lacking access to safe sanitation facilities. Based on these trends, it is projected that Mozambique will not achieve an open defecation free (ODF) status until 2068.

To accelerate results, the Government of Mozambique (GoM) recently approved the Rural Sanitation Strategy (2021-2030) which aims at eliminating open defecation and achieving universal access to basic sanitation by 2030 using Community-led Total Sanitation (CLTS) as the core approach.

As a key partner of the GoM in the rural sanitation subsector, UNICEF has been supporting large scale sanitation programmes in several provinces. More than 3,500 communities have been certified ODF over the past five years through UNICEF supported programmes. The mandate for ensuring sanitation services sits at the district level¹ and, despite several challenges, some districts have made significant progress. Success stories include Guro, Macossa and Manica districts in Manica province and Tsangano, Marara and Angónia districts in Tete province, all of which were declared ODF in 2021 and 2022. UNICEF conducted a review of five of these districts (shown in Figure 1)² to identify levers and blockages of success and provide evidence on how to achieve area-wide total sanitation coverage, contributing to acceleration towards the achievement of SDG 6.2.

¹ The sub-national administrative set up in Mozambique (in descending order) is: Province, District, Administrative Post, Locality. The mandate for ensuring rural sanitation services sits at the district level.

² Angónia was certified ODF in November 2022, after this study was conducted.

Figure 1. Map of study districts

Marara (Tete province)

Elevated to the status of district in 2013, Marara used to be an Administrative Post of Changara district. With a projected population of 82,500 inhabitants in 2022, Marara is the smallest district in terms of population in Tete. It is completely rural and its economy relies on livestock and coal mining. Agriculture is carried out in the lowlands of the few existing streams throughout the district. Sanitation activities in this district started in 2008 under UNICEF's One Million Initiative (OMI) when it was still part of Changara district. With its elevation to the category of district, there was an interruption of about six years, until PEC consultants were hired to implement PEC Zonal activities in 2019.

Guro (Manica province)

Guro was the first district to be certified ODF in the country in 2021. Guro is a district in the north of the province and a significant part of its territory is in a semi-arid area. It has a projected population of around 112,200 inhabitants in 2022. Sanitation activities in Guro began in 2007 under OMI, with the contracting of an NGO (APRODES). For many years Guro was considered a model district in terms of sanitation, mainly due to the commitment of the local administrative leadership, particularly its Administrator, who raised sanitation to the top of its governance agenda. After OMI ended in 2013, there was a gap in funding from 2013-14 during which many ODF communities regressed. Since then, there have been smaller, less structured sanitation initiatives but nothing on the scale of OMI.

Manica (Manica province)

Manica is the largest district in the province in terms of population, with about 265,600 inhabitants projected for 2022. It is a district with a relative strategic importance in the province in economic terms. It has enormous agricultural and mining potential and is home to the country's second most important border post, the Machipanda border (between Mozambique and Zimbabwe). Sanitation activities started in 2008 under OMI, with the hiring of a local NGO (PAMBERY) and it had its first ODF Administrative Post in 2012. After OMI ended in 2013, there was a gap in funding from 2013-14 during which many ODF communities regressed. Since then, there have been smaller, less structured sanitation initiatives but nothing on the scale of OMI.

Tsangano (Tete province)

In the northern part of the province, Tsangano was isolated from the country during the civil war and relied heavily on neighboring Malawi for its economic and social survival. Although three decades have passed since the end of the war, Tsangano is still linked to Malawi, though is steadily being reintegrated in the national social and economic fabric. With a projected population of 242,200 inhabitants (INE 2021)*, Tsangano is a completely rural district with scattered settlements, many of them nomads moving in search of better agricultural and livestock conditions. Sanitation activities started in 2008 in this district, with the hiring of an NGO (KULIMA) under OMI. After OMI ended in 2013, there was a gap in funding from 2013-14 during which many ODF communities regressed. Since then, there have been smaller, less structured sanitation initiatives but nothing on the scale of OMI.

Macossa (Manica province)

Macossa is the second largest district in the province of Manica in terms of territory, but the least inhabited, with a projected population of around 53,300 in 2022. The district is mostly an animal and forest reserve, with game reserves representing around 90 per cent of the territory. Communities are dispersed from each other, as are the households within communities, and the main activity of the population is agriculture, mainly subsistence although there are also cash crops. It is the only district of these five where OMI was not implemented. Sanitation activities in the district began in a structured way in 2014 with the hiring of an NGO (APRODES), funded by UNICEF.

* INE (2021) Inquérito sobre o Orçamento Familiar 2019/2020, Relatório Final, Maputo, Moçambique

Methodology

This rapid study involved a desk review to understand the approaches, implementation mechanisms, challenges, and opportunities for accelerating progress to and sustainability of district-wide ODF in provinces across Mozambique. To build on this, over 70 key informants were engaged through semi-

structured interviews and focus group discussions, and field visits to the five districts. In each district, a reflection workshop was also held at the end of the visit with key stakeholders to feedback, validate and add to initial reflections.

Levers for change

The review identified seven aspects that seem to have been instrumental to success, namely:

1. Commitment of local government authorities at district level in particular, District Administrators. This commitment is characterised by making sanitation a priority in governance processes, mobilising all government sectors and stakeholders at district level (including Heads of Administrative Posts and Localities, community leaders at different levels, and technicians from various district government institutions) to play a role in improving sanitation conditions in communities.

2. Community leaders' structured involvement. Using their influence, the leaders were instrumental in sensitising families (especially the most reluctant) to (re)build their latrines and in creating local mechanisms for vulnerable families to receive community support so they were not left behind. Through heads of blocks and heads of ten houses, leaders monitored the sanitation situation and established and enforced mechanisms and sanctions to support progress.

3. Sanitation forums at all levels (District, Administrative Post and Locality) created important spaces for regular and structured planning and monitoring of sanitation activities in the district. Led by the head of local administration at each level (Administrator, Heads of the Administrative Post and Locality), the forums brought together key stakeholders to discuss sanitation progress, challenges, and opportunities for continual improvement. Forum meetings also triggered increased commitment to sanitation as leaders were keen to present positive progress and plans to their peers.

4. Commitment of District Services of Planning and Infrastructure

(SDPI) technicians. The continuity and knowledge of field realities provided by SDPI technicians proved very important for success. The technicians coordinate all district level stakeholders, have a strong connection with stakeholders from Heads of Administrative Post to community leaders, and know the sanitation situation in almost every community. Longstanding technicians in districts appears to be particularly effective.

5. Access to building material and favourable soils. In all five districts, materials to build latrines are relatively easy to access, including adobe bricks, stakes and grass. Additionally, the soils are particularly favourable for the construction of latrines of all types, without the need for large investments in pit reinforcement.

6. Territorial targeting. After years of scattered implementation without noticeable and comprehensive results, triggering began to be concentrated in a given Administrative Post, focusing efforts there until it became ODF before moving on to another Administrative Post until the whole district became ODF. This approach appears to have yielded better results in terms of achieving ODF status at district level.

7. Funding availability over a long period of time. The five districts received funding of varying amounts over many years to carry out sanitation activities and institutional capacity building (technical and material). Although the level of funding varied between years and districts, all had some level of ongoing financial commitment by UNICEF. This played an important role in strengthening and supporting continuity of implementation structures and processes at the local level, which contributed substantially to the success achieved.

Recommendations moving forward

To support districts to achieve ODF status and move towards safely managed sanitation, the main aspects to be considered by UNICEF and other sanitation partners in the country are:

1. Focus on the levers of change above to accelerate progress towards ODF in other districts, particularly by:

- Building district leaders' commitment to and capacity to lead the delivery of improved sanitation.
- Supporting continuity across political transitions and staff rotations.
- Ensuring sanitation forums are in place where they do not exist, and remain active where they are.
- Encouraging the commitment and longevity of SDPI technicians.
- Targeting activities to cover the entire povoado³ (to align with the national statistics bureau (INE) territorial setting), and building from there to cover an entire posto administrativo concurrently.
- Providing consistent funding for specific activities over defined time periods to ensure continuity.

2. Support communities to build affordable, climate-resilient latrines from the outset, for example by providing technical support on appropriate designs, materials, construction techniques and latrine sites, and establishing accessible, pro-poor financing mechanisms.

3. Continue to build the capacity of key sanitation stakeholders to increase the quality of implementation, focusing particularly on district authorities and local level service providers.

4. Conduct a study to assess the relative cost-effectiveness of Community Participation and Education (PEC) and District Driven Team (DDT) approaches to identify the most efficient implementation approach to scale-up.

To support districts to achieve ODF status and move towards safely managed sanitation, the main aspects to be considered by UNICEF and other sanitation partners in the country are:

5. Review and update the national ODF protocol to add a post-ODF component to support sustainability.

6. Continue support for districts until effective post-ODF support has been established and institutionalised.

7. Ensure regular meetings between District Administrators and Provincial Governors continue to sustain motivation and momentum.

8. Continue briefing and advocating to new District Administrators to champion sanitation.

9. Encourage outgoing District Administrators to document and publicise commitments to sanitation.

10. Support Sanitation Forums to remain active while advocating for district resources to be allocated to them in the longer-term.

11. Ensure SDPI Technicians have resources to continue sanitation work while advocating for district resources to be allocated to them in the longer-term.

³ Povoado is an administrative level in Mozambique sitting below the locality comprising 10-20 hamlets.

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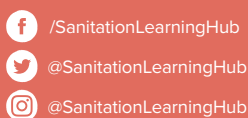
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