



A MICRO SANITATION CONTRACTOR BUILDS A PREFABRICATED LATRINE © MUNIWASH/ - CÔTE D'IVOIRE

BOOSTING THE ON-SITE SANITATION MARKET IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE

SUMMARY

Located in West Africa, Côte d'Ivoire has a population of over twenty-four million, of which it is estimated that about thirteen million¹ people have universal access to basic sanitation. Immense challenges remain to

¹ <https://washdata.org/data/household#!/table?geo0=country&geo1=CIV>

increase access, due to a combination of low-quality sanitation products, limited technical capacity, and coordination challenges between different actors involved in the local regulation and delivery of sanitation products and services. With its partner municipalities, the USAID-funded Municipal Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (MuniWASH), an Activity implemented in partnership with the African Water Association (AfWA), has developed a combined approach to create the conditions to promote a strong and sustainable market for sanitation products and services in Côte d'Ivoire.

INTRODUCTION

According to the Joint Monitoring Program-UNICEF 2020 report, only 48%² of the urban population in Côte d'Ivoire has an improved toilet, and 10% of the population still practices open defecation. Many households, especially the poorest, live without toilets or share a single latrine with multiple households.

To improve access to sanitation for households, particularly the poorest and most underserved living in urban areas, USAID MuniWASH uses a market-based approach to optimize the design of innovative, low-cost sanitation solutions through mobilization of the private sector, including micro, small, and medium Enterprises (MSME). Building on the USAID Sanitation Service Delivery project, which closed in 2021, MuniWASH aims to sustain and expand the delivery of sanitation products and services in urban areas. The MuniWASH Activity will significantly improve the operational reliability of these sanitation enterprises through a performance improvement plan and an operational sales mechanism. This learning note presents the lessons learned from the organizational approach implemented to develop an on-site sanitation market in the intervention areas of the MuniWASH Activity in Côte d'Ivoire.

INTERVENTION

MuniWASH works in Benin and Côte d'Ivoire to improve urban access to on-site sanitation. The Activity focuses on improving financial viability and sustainability of private sanitation providers with a focus on their technical and operational performance. In addition, the Activity promotes a positive enabling environment through improvements in governance and management control. MuniWASH' s main objective is to help stakeholders in Benin and Côte d'Ivoire maintain and develop WASH services at the urban level to meet the basic needs of poor and underserved communities in the eight partner municipalities: Abengourou, Abobo, Bouaké, Gagnoa, Soubré, San Pedro, Yamoussoukro, and Yopougon.

The Activity conducted three diagnostic studies (the Organizational and Financial Performance Study, the Sanitation Market Study, and the Costed Needs Assessment), which revealed the sanitation service delivery in Côte d'Ivoire is mainly managed by private MSMEs. These MSMEs often had technical, organizational, and financial shortcomings; non-diversified technical service offerings; and an unattractive market approach. Because of these challenges, households have been reluctant to use these MSMEs to meet their needs for sanitation products and services.

1. Performance Improvement Plan

MuniWASH developed a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) to sustainably strengthen the capacity of private sanitation service providers and improve their organizational and financial performance. This plan is structured around three areas:

² <https://washdata.org/data/household#!/table?geo0=country&geo1=CIV>

1. **Training:** Raise awareness and inform all operators of the steps and procedures for creating a formal, profitable business.
2. **Professionalization:** Train operators on the regulatory framework of the private sector, organizational management (human resources, marketing, accounting, estimating sales costs, inventory management and purchasing processes, and keeping sales records), and monitoring and evaluation.
3. **Performance improvement:** Build commercial and financial capacity to improve business performance and increase access to commercial finance.

2. Organizational structure and coordination of actors

Concurrently with the creation of the PIP, MuniWASH developed and implemented a sanitation market strategy aimed at increasing sales and market share for these MSMEs. The Activity started with the creation of the Network of On-site Sanitation Entrepreneurs of Côte d'Ivoire (*Réseau des Entrepreneurs de l'Assainissement Autonome de Côte d'Ivoire - REAACI*) in December 2021 to connect all sanitation MSMEs. This network, which aims to be a federating structure, has fifty-four members. In addition to the MuniWASH partner municipalities, this national network includes other major cities in Côte d'Ivoire. Its objective is to contribute to the development of a quality on-site sanitation market and to defend the interests of its members. Below is a summary of the role of the actors of the sanitation strategy:

- **Micro, small, and medium sanitation enterprises (MSME):** Provide sanitation products and services and ensure quality of service (construction of latrines and emptying of septic tanks); sell their products and services through door-to-door promotion techniques and sales exhibitions; and build sanitation facilities while ensuring that they meet the needs of their clients by regularly measuring their level of satisfaction.
- **Community business providers:** With or without commercial skills, promote sanitation products by affiliating themselves to a microenterprise that can motivate their interest by paying them a commission per sale. These providers are community leaders functioning as market enablers who recommend MSMEs to potential customers in the community.
- **Association of on-site sanitation entrepreneurs:** Safeguards and promotes the interests of its members and aims to be an initiative-taking source of proposals. The organization leads dialogue to mobilize its network members well as engages in discussions with public authorities and territorial communities.
- **Users:** Customers of sanitation products or services.
- **Municipalities and decentralized government services:** Regulate the sector at the decentralized level, promote good practices, regulate the activities of MSMEs, and refer customers to MSMEs when there is demand. They create a favorable environment for the development of a local sanitation market by managing conflicts between customers and MSMEs.
- **Microfinance institutions:** Enable MSMEs and customers to access credit for the procurement and construction of sanitation products and services.

3. Product and services

MuniWASH, with the support of MSMEs, continues to build off the successful range of sanitation products under the brand name "Sani Plus" of the USAID Sanitation Service Delivery (SSD) project. These include defecation pots generally installed on a circular concrete slab with a central hole for defecation. The

improvement made by MuniWASH contractors with this additional defecation pot is the *Sato Pan*. The *Sato Pan* is a fecal containment system that eliminates the presence of odors and the presence of insects with a flap device that closes off the latrine pit from the latrine superstructure. In addition to the *Sato Pan*, MuniWASH continues to supply double-pit latrines with a concrete slab and private superstructure. The pits of these double pit latrines are constructed with concrete rings. This type of pit does not require mechanical emptying and is suitable for peri-urban areas. These pits can be manually emptied after at least one year to allow the fecal matter to degrade, which reduces odors and health risks. In areas where the road network is still limited, it may not be possible for them to be serviced by emptying trucks. In other contexts, MuniWASH' s micro, small and medium sized partners also provide septic tanks of 3 to 6 m³ that meet the quality standards and norms for the safe storage of fecal sludge.

Some MSME partners operate vacuum tank trucks for fecal sludge emptying. This emptying service is performed by private operators, or vacuum tank operators (VTOs), who have diverse types of trucks (small trucks and larger, high-performance trucks) that are applicable in different contexts. Emptying services are carried out based on requests from households for evacuation and transport of fecal sludge to a regulated dumping site or a fecal sludge treatment plant if the municipality has one. If the municipality is not equipped with a fecal sludge treatment plant, a designated dump site is identified for the VTOs by the local authorities. Violators responsible of illegal dumping outside of the dedicated sites face high fines. The municipality collects fees from the VTOs to operate the dump site.

These treatment plants are managed by the *Office National de l'Assainissement et du Drainage (ONAD)*. There are currently three operational fecal sludge treatment plants in the municipalities in Korhogo, Bouaké, and San Pedro. Two additional plants are under construction in Anyama, a district of Abidjan, and in Yamoussoukro.

4. The market-based approach

MuniWASH uses a market-based approach to increase access to on-site sanitation products and services in urban areas. This includes identifying and supporting private sector actors to produce prefabricated latrines and install them in households. Through technical support that focuses primarily on operational, managerial, business, and financial capacity building, MuniWASH is improving the operational reliability of the private sector to deliver cost-effective and sustainable services to provide toilets to households, including the poorest and underserved populations living in urban areas.

LESSONS LEARNED

Expanding the MuniWASH Activity's technical offering

While MSMEs receive strong technical support from MuniWASH in implementing their performance improvement plans (PIP), there are three additional areas of support that would provide significant value.

First, standardization, along with a continuous quality control mechanism, should be established from the outset for all work done by MSMEs. Failure to ensure quality from the outset compromises the value proposition of a new product and may discourage potential future customers. One important facet of this is providing contractors and masons with access to standardized molds. A number of contractors at the end of the SSD project did not receive molds, which impeded service delivery and lowered product quality. Molds are indispensable elements for the realization of defecation pots and nozzles because they allow the provider to rapidly produce high-quality products. Micro-entrepreneurs who do not have molds cannot meet the demands of their customers and are forced to borrow their molds from colleagues. To address

this, MuniWASH is planning to donate equipment to pre-selected entrepreneurs who show commitment and demonstrated potential to improve their production.

Second, entrepreneurs would benefit from technical support in designing, printing, and distributing point-of-sale marketing materials. These include promotional flyers, posters, and signs that can be strategically posted to create demand and give the enterprise more credibility.

Finally, contractors and masons need practical tools, such as installation guides detailing all construction steps, to ensure quality delivery of work and to limit the production of work that does not meet aesthetic and visual presentation standards.

Cultural Barriers

While the market and feasibility studies revealed a promising level of willingness and ability of households to pay for access to sanitation products and services, there are still challenges in scaling up latrine sales. When asked in surveys, households state that they do not have the financial resources to improve their sanitation conditions. This barrier suggests that households do not consider sanitation to be a high priority for investment. This attitude presents a critical impediment on the development of the market. To combat this, it is important to conduct awareness campaigns involving community, religious, and political figures to bring about behavioral changes in households and break down these cultural barriers.

Focusing TA on motivated MSMEs

MuniWASH developed a list of microenterprises from both a roster of contacts left by SSD and from on-site recruitment. However, despite the technical support provided by the Activity, some MSMEs are struggling to make sales and provide services. Some of these challenges are attributed to the lack of equipment and promotional materials, but there are also differences in the motivation and level of dedication between different MSMEs. Establishment of an internal evaluation mechanism can help segregate entrepreneurs who have a real motivation to perform from those who do not. Such a selection would allow the MuniWASH Activity to focus its support to the MSMEs who are dedicated to becoming on-site sanitation champions.

Establishing and sustaining a local collaboration framework

The participation of the municipal administration and representatives of the deconcentrated state services (*Direction Régionale de l'Assainissement and Direction Régionale de la Construction et de l'Urbanisme*) has helped strengthen household confidence in the MSMEs and strengthen MSME confidence in the MuniWASH Activity. However, this collaborative dynamic is most visible during a visit by the MuniWASH team and is rarely sustained over longer periods. There is no regulatory framework in place to establish and operate a unified framework of interventions to encourage all actors to collaborate. This is why MuniWASH instigated the issuing of a prefectural by-law to institute this unified framework of interventions and allow all actors (municipalities, decentralized state services and sanitation operators) to work collaboratively for the benefit of all.

Establishing an advocacy mechanism at the central level to strengthen this local collaboration framework is important for the market to function properly. The involvement of all parties helps stimulate collaboration and performance of each actor, especially the MSMEs. The participation of these authorities in routine quality control activities is a promising approach to encourage municipalities to engage in this responsibility. This is especially true since the sanitation sector policy gives the mayor's office the role of regulator of the sanitation sector within the municipality.

Creation of healthy competition

The creation of a prize for the municipality that has best supported the development of the sanitation market or a prize for the best local sanitation company could contribute to the creation of healthy competition between local actors. Through this approach, the communes will have an interest in mobilizing to support high-quality MSMEs in order to obtain a better ranking.

CONCLUSION

Sanitation marketing makes use of best practices in social and commercial marketing to change behavior and increase the demand for and supply of improved sanitation. This approach builds on the notion that activities such as human-centered product design, supply chain strengthening, and technical and organizational capacity building have a strong impact on the sanitation sector. However, business development and a local collaboration framework are also required to support the above-mentioned actions. These approaches combined can contribute to a well-functioning local market that reliably supplies sanitation products and services. An enabling environment coupled with the local availability of affordable and attractive products is a significant factor in achieving and sustaining market development.

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