

STORIES FROM THE FIELD: Mopti Region, Mali

The success of community-led total sanitation is often told in numbers. What it takes to move a village from traditional open defecation practices to a new paradigm is best captured in the stories of the people who embrace the change and champion it.

CONTACT

Go to: www.washplus.org for more information on the WASHplus program in Mali.

Declaring an End to Open Defecation One Village at a Time

The WASHplus integrated WASH/nutrition initiative in Mali targets 187,000 women of reproductive age and approximately 60,000 of their children, aged 0–59 months in three districts with high rates of stunting in the Mopti Region. One of the project’s objectives is to increase demand for low-cost sanitation among rural households and communities. WASHplus employs the community-led total sanitation (CLTS) approach to ignite villages to collectively abandon open defecation and empowers household investment in environmentally appropriate low cost latrine models.

Overall 180 villages participated in the CLTS process beginning in November 2013. As part of the ignition process, WASHplus facilitators used digital cameras and dictaphones to record testimonials of the natural leaders who emerged spontaneously as well as capture the public commitments made by participants to build latrines and see their villages certified open defecation free (ODF). The testimonials reveal the power of the triggering process to disrupt social norms about what constitutes acceptable sanitation. Excerpts from some of those testimonials are given below:

Daouda Togo, a Young Adopter from KouroukandraHabbé

My name is Daouda Togo. I am 14 years old. I was the spokesman for the children during the triggering in my village. At the beginning of the session, I thought the facilitators were there to entertain us. But when the time came to discuss fecal-oral contamination, I realized that that open defecation is a way to eat my poop and that of others. And this can lead to serious diseases that cause my mother to spend a lot of money. So, I took it upon myself to build one latrine for my mother, my brother, and myself within one month. I urge adults, able-bodied, and fit children in my village to build latrines for all households, so that I do not eat poop. I call on WASHplus to continue to always enlighten us on other things we do not know. I promise that my village will become certified ODF.



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



Mamadou Bamia, Head of Household, Nounou Village

I am a farmer who inherited my parents' land, livelihood, and living area. I never imagined that one day I would have a dedicated place to relieve myself [a latrine] in my household. My wife, my children, and I, like other residents of the village, have always defecated in the open behind the village. We did not know and never imagined that we were consuming our feces. For me, poop became organic fertilizer or feed for animals, but to think that flies follow us everywhere and move between our poop and food, it is very discouraging. The exercise [CLTS triggering] this morning raised my awareness and from now on I, Mamoudou Bamia and my household from the village of Nounou, will no longer defecate in the open, and we will no longer be a source of oral-fecal contamination. I am sure that other parents will do likewise for the health of all.



Drissa Djongo, Mason from Allaye-Daga Village

We have suffered enough from consuming our own feces and that of our children. See for yourself how our village looks today. We are proud when a stranger comes into our village. Previously people didn't use latrines and the village was very unhealthy. Today even our animals feel this change through the absence of plastic waste lying around everywhere. Children collect plastic waste and the sanitation committee buys a bucket of plastic waste for FCFA 25 and destroys it in a place outside of the village. Here we are willing to help households free of charge, even people in neighboring villages, by providing our expertise in the construction of hygienic latrines. Our latrines are built with 100 percent local materials and are affordable.

Parou Village Unites to Build Public Facility

After realizing the usefulness of latrines in households, the community also committed to building two latrines in the bus station where there are a lot of passengers. It is in the interest of the community to provide passengers with a latrine for their needs. For the people, building latrines in these areas is a way to help keep the village cleaner and to control the risk of oral-fecal contamination from passers-by.



ABOUT WASHplus

The WASHplus project supports healthy households and communities by creating and delivering interventions that lead to improvements in water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) and household air pollution (HAP). This multi-year project (2010-2016) was made possible with support from the American people delivered through the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) Bureau for Global Health and led by FHI 360 in partnership with CARE and Winrock International. The project uses at-scale programming approaches to reduce diarrheal diseases and acute respiratory infections, the two top killers of children under age 5 globally.