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LEARNING BRIEF: Apolou Activity in Karamoja



Beyond CLTS: Learnings from Apolou's Community-Led Total Sanitation Plus (CLTS+) Approach

August 2023



SERIES

This learning brief is part of a series bringing together experiences and lessons learned from the Apolou Resilience Food Security Activity (2017—2023). The briefs are designed for practitioners, including local government representatives, civil society organizations, and other actors working on issues related to climate change, water point sustainability and management, and sanitation.

ABSTRACT

This learning brief highlights the lessons learned Apolou's sanitation and hygiene strategies including the use of light and heavy touch activities blending Community-led Total Sanitation (CLTS), Sanitation Marketing (SanMark), and the Clean Household Approach (CHA). Most notably, when communities had a blend of all three approaches the number of days from triggering to open defecation free certification reduced by 55% (from 720 days to 322 days). The learnings highlight the importance of multi-sectoral programming; integration, layering and sequencing; and opportunities to adapt CLTS strategies. Future programs in Karamoja would do well to focus on latrine coverage and use rather than open defecation alone; embed latrine savings schemes into saving groups; and employ holistic market-based approaches.



DISCLAIMER

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PHOTOS

Apolou Resilience Food Security Activity, 2023. All photos reproduced with permission.

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ACRONYMS

ASS	Adolescent Safe Spaces
BHA	Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
CDO	Community Development Officer
CHA	Clean Household Approach
MCA	Male Change Agent
MCG	Mother Care Group
ODF	Open Defecation Free
QSI	Qualitative Sustainability Inquiry
RFSA	Resilience Food Security Activity
SanMark	Sanitation Marketing
SBC	Social and Behaviour Change
SBCC	Social and Behavior Change Communication
SILC	Savings and Internal Lending Communities
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

ACTIVITY BACKGROUND

The Apolou Resilience Food Security Activity (RFSA) was a United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) initiative that worked to boost food and nutrition security for 310,000 people in the Kaabong, Karenga, Kotido, Moroto, and Amudat districts of Karamoja, Uganda (Figure 1). From 2017–2023, Mercy Corps led a consortium of partners—Save the Children, Whave, Karamoja Peace & Development Agency (KAPDA), Riamiriam Civil Society Network–Karamoja, Nakere Rural Women Activist (NARWOA), and Tufts University Feinstein International Center—to implement the activity. Apolou worked with households, community leaders, the Ministry of Karamoja Affairs, the Government of Uganda, the private sector, and others to address underlying causes of chronic food and nutrition insecurity and build community and household resilience.

Apolou adopted four purposes grounded in social and behavioral change to support gender-transformative and resilience outcomes:

- **Purpose 1:** Inclusive and effective governance contributes to food and nutrition security;
- **Purpose 2:** Adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women, and children under 5 are nutritionally secure;
- **Purpose 3:** Reduced incidences of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH)-related diseases; and
- **Purpose 4:** Improved livelihoods and income support household food security.

The Apolou WASH component aims to improve the availability and use of household and community WASH services. Apolou's WASH strategy can be divided into two components: sanitation and hygiene (the topic of this brief) and water point sustainability (covered in a parallel learning brief).

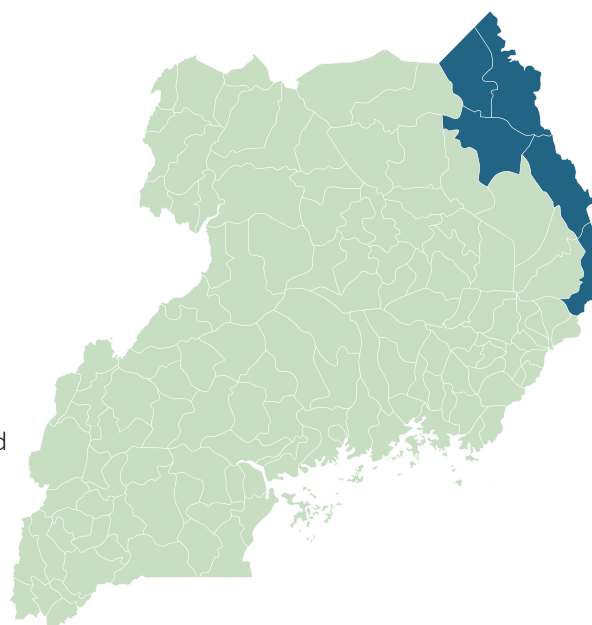


Figure 1. Apolou's five project areas highlighted in blue: Amudat, Kaabong, Karenga, Kotido, and Moroto.

ACTIVITY CONTEXT

Uganda's Karamoja sub-region is a vast 27,200km² in the northeast of the country and includes the districts of Amudat, Kaabong, Karenga, Kotido, and Morot. This arid and semi-arid land is predominantly pastoralist, one of few viable livelihoods in a region averaging only 300-500mm rainfall a year. Women and girls are held back from fully participating in society due to restrictive traditional norms. The region is classified as one of Uganda's poorest areas, with 61% of its people living in absolute poverty. The region is susceptible to flare ups of insecurity characterized by inter-clan armed cattle raiding exacerbated by its long porous border with Turkana County in Kenya and diminishing natural resource base due to the impacts of climate change.

Karamoja is in the midst of a social, political, ecological, and economic transition as it continues to recover from decades of conflict and instability. Despite relative peace, food and nutrition insecurity persist. Karamoja is the most nutritionally vulnerable region in Uganda and the third most vulnerable to stunting in East Africa. The determinants of malnutrition include suboptimal maternal, infant, and young child nutrition, poor timing and spacing of pregnancies, and endemic disease, which are further compounded by poverty, suboptimal WASH conditions, inequitable gender norms, alcohol abuse, and climate change and environmental degradation.

Sanitation in Karamoja

Karamoja has the worst access to improved sanitation in Uganda and 66% of households have no toilet at all. Entrenched

customs of open defecation and high costs to improve sanitation have been challenging to overcome despite strong awareness and promotion of latrine use.¹ In 2017, 58% of households in the Karamoja sub-region did not have any toilet facilities and among those with the facilities, 8% of households used shared latrines. Toilet access was very low in the Apolou working districts of Amudat (16%), Moroto (27%), and Napak (29%); whilst sharing was more common in Moroto and Nakapiripirit districts.¹ In 2018, the USAID baseline of food security activities for Apolou and a parallel project Nuyok² showed that nearly 65% of households in Karamoja reported using unimproved sanitation facilities.³ The unimproved facilities included latrines without slabs or open defecation. Only 10% of surveyed households had access to a basic improved latrine.⁴ Perceived high cost and limited access to materials have been seen as barriers to latrine construction.



Community members using a tippy-tap in front of a row of latrines.

APOLOU'S SANITATION AND HYGIENE APPROACH

To promote WASH behavior adoption and practices within the Karamoja context, Apolou adopted a mix of strategies building on Community-led Total Sanitation (CLTS). CLTS was blended with Sanitation Marketing (SanMark) and the Clean Household Approach (CHA). The mixture of the three approaches is known as “CLTS+”. Each of the three approaches focused on a different level of engagement: the household, the village, and the private sector working across communities (zones). The three approaches were underpinned by the activity’s Gender and Youth Integration strategy and the Social Behavior Change Strategy, as indicated in Figure 2. Details on how the approaches were adapted are outlined in the brief’s next sections.



Figure 2. A visualization of the different components of Apolou's sanitation and hygiene strategy.

Within Apolou's five working districts (Amudat, Kaabong, Karenga, Kotido, and Moroto), sanitation and hygiene programming was layered onto other community-based interventions in 545 villages. To focus and target activities, the project aimed to layer at least three Apolou activities in each village, including WASH activities. The project adopted two different models to improve sanitation and hygiene access and behaviors: a 'heavy touch' model and a 'light touch' model (detailed in Table 1). The 'light' and 'heavy touch' models did not overlap in geography, however villages for the two models were selected to overlap with Apolou's Mother Care Groups (MCGs) villages. Villages for the 'heavy touch' model centered around CLTS and SanMark were

1 Unicef, FAO, WFP (2017). *Karamoja food and nutrition security assessment, June 2017*.

2 CRS. *Nuyok Project Overview*.

3 ICF (2019). *2018 Baseline Study of Food for Peace Development Food Security Activities (DFSAs) in Uganda*. Kampala, Uganda.

4 In the Karamoja context, a basic improved latrine is a pit dug covered by a hygienic slab or floor with a hole through which excreta fall into the pit. This latrine is not shared amongst households.

selected if there was no triggering by other organizations within the last 3 years⁵ and if the village was not covered by the operational area of other development partners. During the program, SanMark entrepreneurs expanded their service offerings to also support ‘light touch’ villages as illustrated in Figure 2.

Table 1. Apolou Sanitation Strategy Mix

PACKAGE 1 (heavy touch) 203 Villages	PACKAGE 2 (light touch) 342 Villages
<p>Adapted CLTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptation of traditional CLTS triggering sessions to avoid shame-based messaging and to add CHA messaging. • Demonstration improved latrine and handwashing systems in collaboration with trained SanMark entrepreneurs. 	<p>Adapted CHA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification and training of a sanitation committee responsible to support households with hygiene improvements. This led to spillover of CHA messaging into Adolescent Safe Spaces through Male Change Agents. • Introduction of CHA messaging as a module with the MCG curriculum.
<p>SanMark</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported the capacity development of at least one zonal entrepreneur for each ‘heavy touch’ village to develop, promote, and sell improved WASH products such as latrine slabs, pans, soap, and water filters. • Supported the capacity development of four masons in each ‘heavy touch’ village. • Encouraged entrepreneurs to support ‘light touch’ communities. 	

Box 1. Adaptive Management in Apolou Sanitation Strategy

Apolou’s adaptive management strategy was critical to its strong results. A midline qualitative sustainability inquiry (QSI) (2021) and sanitation market assessment (2020) helped the team to reformulate the strategy—breaking down silos and strengthening its sequencing, layering, and integration approach. Ultimately, Apolou shifted the implementation approach to a ‘systems-strengthening’ implementation approach and the identification of light touch and heavy touch areas.

The community mobilization and triggering process was not only piecemeal but also slow at the beginning and Apolou triggered 32 villages in the first 2 years of project implementation, reaching only 76 villages in the third year. Following the QSI and review of the implementation strategy, Apolou adapted, moving away from direct delivery to a facilitative approach working through system actors such as health assistants, community development officers (CDOs), and parish chiefs.

Adapted Community-led Total Sanitation

Community-led Total Sanitation (CLTS)⁶ has been a government of Uganda approach since 2011.⁷ The facilitated approach supports communities to analyze their sanitation situation, practices of defecation, and potential consequences. This critical step of ‘community triggering’ aims to foster collective action leading communities towards open defecation free (ODF) status. Most examples of CLTS in the Ugandan contexts have not overlapped with household or market-focused approaches.

Supporting Uganda’s Ministry of Health, Apolou adopted a seven-step CLTS approach (Box 2) because of its effectiveness in addressing open defecation within the Ugandan context.⁸ Within Apolou’s working areas in the Karamoja region, open

5 The number of targeted villages increased throughout the life of the award from 108 to 200 as other projects in the area phased out leaving untriggered villages.

6 Government of Uganda, Ministry of Health (2011). *Community-Led Total Sanitation: Training of Trainers Manual*. WSP and Plan International.

7 Government of Uganda (2017). *2018 - 2030 Integrated Sanitation and Hygiene Financing Strategy*.

8 USAID (2018). *An Examination of CLTS’s Contributions Toward Universal Sanitation*. Washington, DC., USAID Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Partnerships and Sustainability (WASHPaLS) Project.

defecation was very high at baseline at 64% of households. The project estimated that 25% of triggered villages would reach ODF status.

There were several adaptations to the traditional CLTS approach.

- **Benefits-based triggering:** Building on growing concerns around the use of shame, fear, and disgust with the CLTS approach,⁹ the Apolou team adopted a benefits-focused triggering modality using the F-diagram, medical bill calculation, and action planning. This messaging was strengthened by the inclusion of CHA messaging around the four elements of a healthy home (see next section). The project team observed that the benefits-focused modality was effective in helping communities understand the fecal-oral route and the need to stop leaving feces in the open, while avoiding shame and potential harm to community members.
- **Private-sector led demonstrations:** As households often struggled to understand what makes a safe latrine, Apolou demonstrated latrine building in each village. This allowed masons to get experience building basic latrines, incorporated private sector actors in the promotion and information sharing about safe sanitation, and helped households visualize opportunities. A variety of latrines were demonstrated helping households to consider options beyond the basic latrine coverage required ODF.
- **Extended follow-up and cross-visits:** Apolou identified that communities required more frequent and sustained mentorship and monitoring visits to achieve ODF than what was originally estimated due to well-entrenched sanitation and hygiene practices and several social norms that discourage latrine use. As such the project leveraged extended follow-up by private and public sector actors as well as cross-learning visits to high performing villages.

Box 2. Seven Steps of Apolou's CLTS Approach

- **Pre-triggering:** Identify target communities, conduct community assessment for feasibility, and conduct community mobilization with local leaders.
- **Triggering:** Conduct community triggering session which involves a community walk, community mapping, demonstration of improved sanitation and hygiene products including latrines, handwashing stations and water filters, CHA messaging, and discussion groups.
- **Follow-ups:** Involve different local public and private sector actors for routine follow-ups and documentation of the latrine construction process from pit excavation to complete latrines through the use of a progress form. Conduct exchange visits to best-performing villages.
- **ODF Verification:** Conduct community visits to confirm ODF status of the village by local government and Apolou staff. Recommend the village for ODF declaration.
- **ODF Declaration and Certification:** Support community celebration certifying the ODF status of the village with community members, local leaders, local government, and Apolou staff.
- **Post ODF Support:** Support monthly clean up campaigns, bi-law formations-community agreement between parish chief and community that binds them to ensure they continue to sustain their outcomes at the community level. District/sub-county leaders also come and provide support.
- **Long-term Support:** Handover to the local government actors including the CDOs, health assistant, and village health team. In some cases this also includes the adoption of village ODF bylaws.

Supported by:

- Frontline Apolou Staff
- Local Government Staff: Community Development Officer (CDOs), Health Assistants
- Natural Leaders¹
- Village Health Team
- Parish Chiefs

¹ Natural Leaders play similar role as the Sanitation Committee within the light touch communities.

9 WSSCC (2019). [Equality and Non-Discrimination Handbook for CLTS Facilitators](#).

As can be seen in Figure 3, the introduction of the SanMark activities in 2021 led to an increase in the number of villages triggered and a **significant 55% reduction** in the number of days required between triggering and ODF certification. Villages triggered in 2018 required an average of 720 days to reach ODF status, while in 2021 after the SanMark activities were fully operational villages required an average of 322 days to reach ODF status.

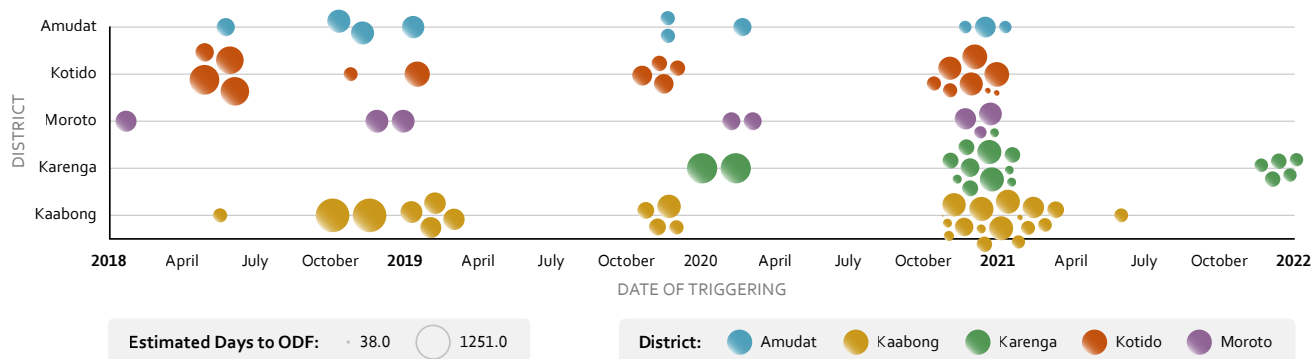


Figure 3. Visualization of the date of triggering and estimated days to ODF certification by district and time. The size of each circle represents the number of days to reach ODF strategy. The market assessment was completed in 2019 and SanMark activities began in 2020.

CLTS Results

- The community exchange visits helped lesser performing communities appreciate the importance of better hygiene and sanitation, visits created competition as those who visited ended up putting up better and durable facilities than what they had seen. The exchange visits also helped promote peace and harmony between rival communities.
- ODF status was achieved much quicker for communities also supported by SanMark (55% less time required).
- Apolou conducted triggering in 202 communities. An additional community self-triggered and was declared ODF due to the spillover effect supported through routine follow-up by the system actors and masons providing latrine construction services.
- Apolou supported 82 communities that verified and achieved ODF. Seventy-eight communities still maintained ODF by the project end while four villages relapsed. The four relapsed communities were due to migration (2) and heavy rain which destroyed latrines (2). Migration was caused due to insecurity and drought. This led to communities leaving their newly constructed WASH sanitary facilities. For communities that were affected with flash floods, Apolou introduced pit lining for circular pits and also supported machinery for pit digging.

“People have adapted and are using latrines and home hygiene has improved, and shelters are in place for bathing. Before Apolu there was poor latrine coverage and hygiene related diseases like diarrhea were rampant.” —Hillary Lokias, Karenga community leader

“I appreciate Apolou Activity for what it is doing to the villages. Now people have a change. They maintain sanitation and hygiene which has reduced diseases like diarrhea compared to before.” —participant in Kotido, Kacheri sub-county

“We didn’t know that when the feces are near the home, we would contract diseases. We got to know that it is hygiene and sanitation that prevents us from getting the diseases. I also didn’t know that if I don’t bathe, I’m prone to getting a disease.” —Female adolescent mother, focus group discussion, Moroto

Clean Household Approach

The **Clean Household Approach (CHA)**,¹⁰ developed by Save the Children, provides an umbrella for a host of household WASH interventions to address child health. Drawing on the Essential WASH Actions, the CHA approach promotes four central elements that allow households to achieve “clean household status”: clean drinking water, appropriate handwashing, clean play spaces, and safe disposal of child feces.¹¹ In other contexts, CHA programming has also included activities to support the supply of WASH products and services, however in Apolou this was covered under the Sanitation Marketing approach.

While Apolou’s CLTS activities focused on communal behavior changes, Apolou’s CHA behavior change communication activities focused on households and ultimately on outcomes for children such as reduction in stunting. The approach encouraged each household to act on four critical parameters that affect child health and growth (Box 3).

The CHA messaging was adapted for the two different project models. Within ‘heavier touch’ CLTS communities, CHA messaging was embedded into the triggering activities. Within ‘lighter touch’ areas Apolou leveraged ongoing activities within Purpose-2 including MCGs, Male Change Agents (MCAs) and Adolescent Safe Spaces (ASS) to communicate and promote the value of clean households and increase demand for low-cost WASH products such as soap and household water filters.

In the 342 villages targeted with the lighter touch model, CHA messaging intensified in 2021 through direct engagement with MCGs and the formation of village sanitation committees. The addition of a new module (Module 4) in MCG materials required approval with line ministries. Sanitation Committees were formed by Apolou and included approximately 10 members. Members were identified from other Apolou structures (ASS, MCAs) in collaboration with government health assistants. Through the CHA messaging activities, households constructed dish racks, handwashing facilities, rubbish pits, clothes drying lines, and poultry houses.



A tippy-tap demonstration



CHA messaging poster showing the key elements of a healthy home.

¹⁰ Save the Children. Clean House Approach.

¹¹ In other contexts, the CHA has included reward and recognition (such as a flag) for households who satisfy the four elements.

Box 3. Four Central Hygiene Elements of the CHA Approach

1. Clean drinking water for children under 5 years old and filtered drinking water for children 6 months to 2 years of age.
2. Handwashing at appropriate times for newborn care, food preparation, and before eating.
3. Clean play spaces around children, especially under 2 years old.
4. Safe disposal of child feces, either through a latrine, garbage pit, or another disposal mechanism.

Supported by:

- Frontline Apolou Staff
- Sanitation Committees
- Mother Care Groups
- Community Groups
- Male Change Agents

CHA Messaging Results

- 79% of participants reported having purchased WASH products within the last year when surveyed in 2022, compared to only 60% in 2018 at baseline.
- As of 2022, 74% of participants reported having the knowledge and skills to practice improved WASH behaviors, a notable decrease from 85% of participants at baseline.¹² However, Apolou's 2022 SBC assessment indicated that participants in all communities and districts were readily able to describe the key principles and practices of WASH illustrating the attitudinal shifts that embrace WASH principles and include wide-ranging pragmatic adoption of WASH-related behaviors as well as construction of various WASH infrastructure.
- Adolescents who completed learning in safe spaces show positive outcomes indicating improvement in latrine use (79.5% from 51%) and handwashing after latrine use (68.7% from 56.0%).
- The percentage of households that have handwashing stations at their premises did not improve significantly, only 11.6% of households (2022 participant survey) have soap and water at a handwashing station compared to 7% at baseline (2018). Households without handwashing stations reported that their tippy tap jerrycans, stationed outside the latrines, were getting stolen by raiders and others were getting destroyed to harsh weather conditions. Community members began using clay pots and gourds for handwashing as these are more resilient to weather conditions in Karamoja than plastic jerrycans.
- The percentage of households reporting that men or boys regularly collect water in their households registered a 61% improvement from targeted baseline figures.

Sanitation Marketing

In the Ugandan context, **Sanitation Marketing (SanMark)**¹³ aims to professionalize the private sector to provide sanitation services as a more formalized market service.¹⁴ The approach focuses on capacity development of local sanitation entrepreneurs and village-based masons (latrine installers). The SanMark entrepreneurs offered latrine slabs, latrine pans, water jugs, and soap to communities focusing on proximity to CLTS villages.

12 This could indicate an increase in understanding of what actual improved WASH behaviors are, highlighting the complexity of asking knowledge and skills questions in baseline surveys. Additionally, skills may have also been interpreted by community members as tools. Future baselines could explore using separate opportunity, ability, and motivation questions to better understand these aspects.

13 Nabembezi, D., & Nabunya, H. (n.d.). *Sanitation Marketing: A Handbook for Sanitation Managers and Private Sector Players*. Government of Uganda and Plan International.

14 In other contexts, SanMark has referred to the use of mass marketing strategies to influence sanitation behaviors as a component of market development approaches. In Uganda, the SanMark approach has closely resembled market-based sanitation activities.

The WASH marketing activities allowed sanitation supply chains to improve in the Karamoja region, with previously non-existing WASH business now available. Apolou implemented SanMark to ensure communities construct more durable latrines with cement latrine slabs, iron sheets roof and sun-baked block walls. The approach ensured communities constructed more sustainable facilities helping households to climb the sanitation ladder. The approach was implemented by selected and trained WASH entrepreneurs and community masons. Entrepreneurs were selected using an *Enterprise Selection Tool* based on proximity to CLTS villages.

The SanMark strategy began with a market assessment in 2019 leading to the development of a market strengthening strategy. The focus of the assessment was sanitation, but also included other WASH needs such as handwashing and household water filtration. Key learnings from the market assessment are included below in Box 4.

Box 4. Learnings from Apolou's WASH Market Assessment

- Half of households preferred latrines with a concrete slab, but the majority of households preferred building latrines by themselves rather than use a trained installer. However, this led to the collapse of some latrines. Latrines constructed by trained masons did not collapse.
- 81% of households were willing to buy WASH products if available.
- The key motivators for constructing latrines were related to the health benefits, and common barriers to accessing WASH products are cost, quality, and accessibility.
- From the supply side, the survey polled 93 market actors and results showed that no actors sold a complete latrine and the chain was fragmented, with most businesses in trading centers. This is a common challenge in weak markets with high levels of subsidy.
- The cost of building a latrine is between \$55.5-\$111 in U.S dollars (USD) and the average cost of a concrete slab is \$11 USD.
- Most households preferred the square concrete slab, and Sanplat with SATO pan because they were the cheapest options.

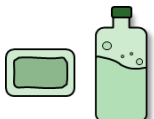

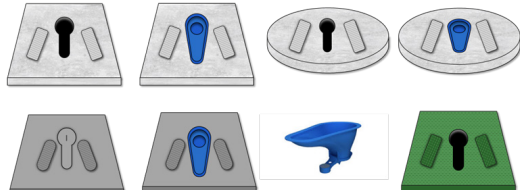
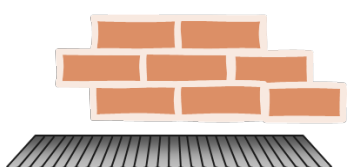
“As health assistant for Sidok, I am very happy that Apolou introduced the concept of sanitation marketing and most communities in my sub-county have constructed improved latrines”

—Mau Moses, health assistant, Sidok sub-county



Entrepreneurs learn how to create concrete latrine slabs during training.

Apolou WASH Product Mix

Soap	Water storage	Slab and Pan Materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liquid soap Hard soap¹⁵ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Narrow neck clay pot Narrow neck clay pot with tap Jerry can 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Square concrete slab Square concrete slab with SATO pan Round concrete slab Round concrete slab with SATO pan Sanplat slab¹⁶ Sanplat slab with SATO pan SATO pan alone Plastic slabs¹⁷ 
Structures		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unburned bricks Iron roofing 		

“Previously I didn’t earn any money through Slabs and liquid soap selling, I am grateful for the Apolou project to have introduced me to this business, right now I have liquid soap and slabs added to my shop and I am making money from sales”

—Reuben, WASH entrepreneur, Moroto

SanMark Results

- Apolou supported 32 (23 men and 9 women) business entrepreneurs and 382 (255 men and 127 women) masons to design, manufacture, promote, and sell WASH products (including concrete slabs, narrow neck pots, and liquid soap). Most entrepreneurs have admitted to receiving dividends through the sale of WASH products and have explored market opportunities not only through Eyok Kiyana¹⁸ platforms but also established markets.
- As of June 2023, Apolou supported households to construct 9,970 latrines, ensuring 61,462 people had access to basic latrines, of these 470 were improved toilets.
- WASH entrepreneurs expanded their reach by using Manyatta wagon shows, demonstrations, and market days as platforms for marketing and selling their products. They also focused on producing more affordable products such as liquid soap that the households could easily buy.
- Apolou-trained masons have continued to work alongside natural leaders to support men and women in Apolou communities to improve latrine quality, with some masons offering to fix latrine doors and using sun-baked blocks to raise latrine walls.

¹⁵ Hard soap was removed from the product mix as it did not sell as well as the liquid soap.

¹⁶ IRC (1991). [The SanPlat System](#).

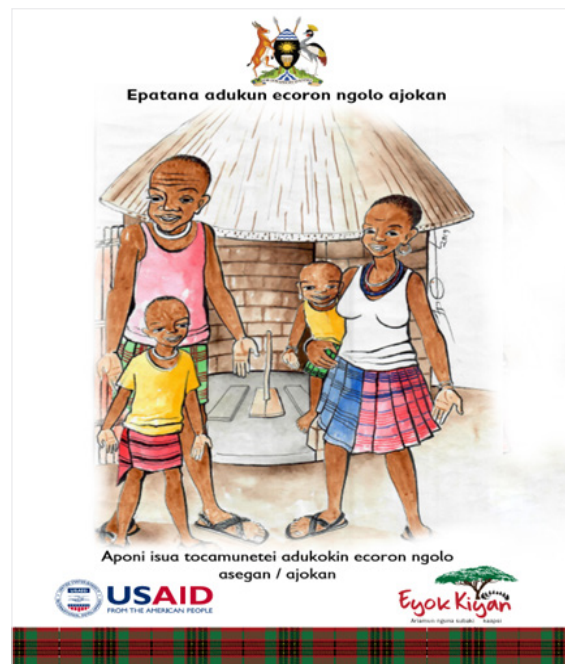
¹⁷ Plastic slabs were removed from the product mix as they did not sell and community members were skeptical of their stability.

¹⁸ The Eyok Kiyana / Kengalanena (“our discussion” in Karimojong) was a behavior change campaign implemented by Apolou.

Integrated Apolou Interventions

Underlying the CLTS, CHA and SanMark strategies was the sequencing and coordination between Apolou interventions. This included aspects of SBCC, governance and livelihood integration.

- **Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC):** Integration of CHA messaging and the promotion of a more equitable division of WASH responsibilities into Adolescent Safe Spaces, Male Change Agent Groups, Mother Care Groups, and the Eyok Kiyán SBCC Campaign.¹⁹ Routine monitoring was conducted to adapt the SBCC messaging to ensure that it was effective. The project developed two WASH trigger videos and four positive deviance stories that were broadcasted on two radio stations in Karamoja and used during community listening groups.
- **Governance:** Connecting CLTS activities to village Resilience Action Communities (RACs) who encouraged latrine construction and the formation of village level ODF bylaws.
- **Livelihoods:** Integration of Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) into SanMark strategies. 20 entrepreneurs and 180 community masons joined SILC groups supported by the Apolou activity. Additionally, SILC groups helped to support community members to construct latrines—a strategy that could be intensified in future programming.



A latrine campaign poster with the Eyok Kiyán SBCC campaign advocating for the construction and use of safe latrines

KEY LEARNINGS

The blended sanitation and hygiene approach in Apolou was successful at increasing community access to and use of improved WASH products and services. The key lessons learned for sustained WASH improvement focus on the value of layering interventions and working multi-sectorally.

- **Significance of household resilience and food security alongside WASH activities:** As described in other RFSA programming, “you can’t sell a latrine to someone who is hungry,” and this also extends to families wishing to construct a latrine on their own. As such, the Apolou sanitation and hygiene strategy was constrained by households’ limited purchasing power affected by COVID-19 market closures, insecurity, and increased climate impacts (drought). During hunger, households tended to appropriately prioritize health and nutrition over WASH. Additionally, some communities abandoned their facilities due to insecurity and migration to cope with climate impacts. This highlights the importance of partnering WASH strategies (CHA, SanMark and CLTS) with other livelihood and resilience interventions.
- **Importance of sequencing, layering and integration within and beyond WASH interventions:** The layering of the three WASH strategies alongside Apolou’s livelihood activities and SBCC campaigns was a critical step. The integration of SanMark into CLTS activities created a strong private sector enabling environment for the uptake of latrine products and services and led to a 55% reduction in the number of days required to reach ODF after triggering. Secondly, the integration of SILC and other income generating activities ensured that food secure households were ready to purchase WASH products and services such as soap, water filters, and latrine components. The SBCC campaigns and CHA messaging further strengthened community acceptance and understanding of good WASH behaviors, ensuring that behavior messaging was not a one-off activity.

¹⁹ The Eyok Kiyán / Kengalanena (“our discussion” in Karimojong) campaign worked through experiential marketing activities (Manyatta Wagon), silent trigger videos, a radio magazine programme, and various community platforms to encourage behavior change.

- **Shortcomings of the CLTS approach:** While CLTS has been an effective sanitation promotion modality, within the Karamoja context it was not effective as a standalone activity. Firstly, the team identified that shame and fear doesn't work in achieving triggering results and moved to a strengths-based triggering approach. Secondly, the focus on communal ODF status rather than household level changes was shown to inadvertently lead to lower quality latrines and variable latrine use. However when a household *and* communal focus was adopted, households were more likely to adopt higher quality latrines and use them. Lastly, communities required more frequent and sustained mentorship and monitoring visits to achieve ODF than what was originally estimated due to well-entrenched sanitation and hygiene practices and several social norms that discourage latrine use. Apolou noted that a regular clean-up campaign is more likely to motivate and potentially sustain communities' ODF status than a follow-up visit, especially as the government is not doing the follow-up frequently due to logistical constraints.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Apolou has identified recommendations for future programming in Karamoja:

- **Focus on latrine coverage and use, rather than ODF targets alone.** It has been difficult to sustainably ensure ODF communities maintain ODF status. This is coupled with weak government follow-up constrained by lack of transport for key personnel like health assistants and CDOs. Apolou has learned that focusing purely on ODF has potentially reduced the sustainability and use of toilets and further research is required to understand the intra-household use of latrines beyond access.
- **Employ market-based sanitation interventions alongside other more traditional CLTS and CHA activities.** CLTS+ activities thus provide impact in communities especially in Karamoja where the sanitation markets are not yet well established. We strongly recommend that future programming should incorporate CLTS+ with strong market-based sanitation activities to ensure latrine quality in Karamoja as the scale-up will improve quality and ensure durable facilities are constructed that will last longer. This includes inspiring entrepreneurs to lead community demonstrations on latrine construction, and connecting households to community leadership (e.g Natural Leaders) for follow-up. Additionally, the distribution of any latrine digging tools should be carefully planned, rotational, and not owned by households to limit dependency.
- **Foster a holistic sanitation market system that includes latrine installers.** Community masons established through the Apolou program were a vehicle for improvement of latrine quality, we thus recommend that future market based activities should heavily rely on them as part of the sanitation supply chain. Latrine installers are often an overlooked part in sanitation supply chains.
- **Promote the use of savings groups for latrine construction.** The low purchasing power of households hugely affected the purchase of WASH products and services and this was further aggravated by COVID-19 disrupting markets. We recommend that participants should be encouraged to save for latrine facilities at the start of the project and communities where WASH will be implemented must be strongly layered with income generating opportunities for households to increase household purchasing power. Secondly, we also recommend that a guarantee fund be set up for households to access WASH loans and pay over the project period to enable them to construct durable latrine facilities through community masons; we noticed that banks' collateral policies discourage entrepreneurs from applying and accessing WASH loans.

CONCLUSIONS

This learning brief has described Apolou's sanitation and hygiene strategies which leveraged a blend of light and heavy touch activities including CLTS, SanMark, and CHA. The blending of CLTS and SanMark led to a reduction in the number of days required to reach ODF status after triggering by 55%. Despite this success, food insecurity remains a critical challenge in the Karamoja and food security is seen as an important precursor before households can consider sanitation and hygiene. Future programs in Karamoja can consider the importance of sequencing and layering approaches while engaging the private sector as a key stakeholder in the promotion of improved sanitation and hygiene.



WASH entrepreneurs selling soap to meeting participants.