



# Sustainable Total Sanitation Programme

## Final Evaluation Executive Summary

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## Executive Summary

The WaterAid Sustainable Total Sanitation (STS) program was implemented in three states in Nigeria – Ekiti, Enugu and Jigawa - from 2013-2018 and funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF). The program is attempting to develop, test and then learn from a new approach to achieving sustainable sanitation in Nigeria. This represents a departure from more conventional strategies where the primary focus is maximising the number of communities achieving or maintaining Open Defecation Free (ODF) status, or using improved latrines.

Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) has been the central methodology in Nigeria since being introduced by WaterAid in 2004. Despite better results than previous construction driven approaches, CLTS has had only limited success in Nigeria. STS aimed to develop a model which combines the demand driven, participatory philosophy of CLTS with Sanitation Marketing (SanMark), an approach focusing on creating an effective supply of quality, affordable toilets which meet the needs of local communities. This model was to be further supported by action learning and advocacy interventions to help review and communicate challenges and successes. The final element of STS was a program of formal research. This research aimed to provide a rigorous study of the approach to gather evidence to inform future programs in Nigeria and in other countries facing similar issues.

The evaluation focused on two central questions:

1. Has the STS Program led to the development of a robust and replicable model?
2. What has the impact of the formal research been on the model?

**The primary conclusion is that a promising new sanitation model is emerging (Figure below), but it cannot be considered at this stage to be robust or replicable as it hasn't been fully tested.** The primary flaw in the operation of STS was a mismatch between the timing of CLTS triggering (demand creation) and effective San Mark market activity (supply side provision). Developing an operational San Mark approach with the requisite organisational capability took WaterAid Nigeria longer than expected; so, despite considerable progress being made in terms of product and process development, market penetration is still limited.

**A major shift is a clearer recognition of the need for a holistic approach which doesn't focus on any one linear, sequential method or discourse (demand or supply) but instead takes a more systems-based approach** looking for different entry/leverage points including access to finance and fecal sludge management (FSM). STS has helped drive this shift in understanding and WaterAid's experience and learning, both successes and failures, do seem to be influencing the policies and practice of other development partners.

**Operationally it requires a significant mindset shift as well as the development of a new set of individual and organisational capabilities across the sector and different institutional arrangements.** For WaterAid and other institutional players, including national and local government officials, being open to more 'market' oriented thinking may provide the greatest challenge.

**The formal research, undertaken by the Institution of Fiscal Studies (IFS), was well conducted but did clearly impact on the implementation of STS.** It is difficult to assess the significance of this impact though the evaluation does not think it in anyway invalidates the results of the study. The formal research was a central element of STS and accounted for a significant proportion of the overall budget. There was much debate about what methodology would be appropriate. The desire for 'rigorous evidence' meant, a quasi-experimental approach was taken. Given the complexity, variation and fluidity of the social setting this was always going to be methodologically challenging. Though the research was designed and undertaken in a highly competent, professional manner, it was never fully understood by most WaterAid Nigeria staff or by other relevant stakeholders. The research process did clearly influence the object of its study as it created boundaries and structures (whether perceived or real) which affected decision making and, in the process, slowed or limited intervention flexibility. It also provided a possible justification and deflection from other operational and organisational challenges and weaknesses.

A quasi-experimental approach requires a level of rigidity to ensure rigour, however if there are contextual or intervention model shifts, this rigour can impact on validity. **In complex and developmental social settings where the intervention itself is in the process of being developed the evaluation team would strongly suggest a shift in research approach to a more action research philosophy,** where the methodology explicitly balances inquiry into the results and workings of the intervention with trying to support and progress its effectiveness. This approach should still include rigorous deductive methods but focus on mixed inquiry methods including ethnographic approaches.

**There was an expectation that the research itself would inform STS implementation and help inform the development of an operational model and provide evidence for advocacy. This was not what was intended in the program**

**design where action learning processes were expected to fill this role.** Informal ‘action learning’ did take place and thinking and processes did evolve; however, the lack of a structured, routine action learning process meant this was not systematic and raised unrealistic expectations of what might come out from the formal research during the lifetime of the program.

**It is important to emphasize that the evaluation team are fully supportive of the investment into the research process and the ambition, flexibility and risks taken by BMFG, WaterAid and IFS in designing and implementing this program.** Sanitation has swung from different dominant methodologies based on often unquestioned or fully researched assumptions. STS has tried to address this and focused on learning rather than short-term results. The formal research results had not been finalised by the time of this evaluation, but the evaluation team have no doubt they will provide useful input to inform future approaches; similarly, despite often challenging organisational and operational issues WaterAid Nigeria is now better positioned to influence and deliver sustainable sanitation to communities in Nigeria.

Figure 1: A visualisation of the Emerging Framework+ model

