



LEARNING BRIEF: AN APPROACH TO SANITATION MARKETING



Background

The need for decent sanitation in Nigeria, especially in rural areas, is enormous. As of 2015, global monitoring estimates revealed that national access to 'basic' sanitation¹ in Nigeria was only 33 percent – and lower than that was 36 percent in 2000. Rural areas were estimated to have only 27 percent access to basic sanitation².

The consequences for the country are very grave. Diarrhoeal diseases account for 16% of child deaths in Nigeria, and an estimated 150,000 deaths (mainly among children under five) occur annually due to the prevalence of diseases mainly caused by poor sanitation and hygiene³.

A major challenge faced in Nigeria is the lack of affordable household sanitation products that meet the aspirations of consumers, and which are readily available for purchase in local markets. WaterAid has been working on tackling this problem through the Sustainable Total Sanitation (STS) project, implemented in Ekiti, Enugu, and Jigawa states, supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. WaterAid adopted the Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach as well as a Sanitation Marketing (SanMark) initiative, along with in-depth project research and action learning.

Ensuring that affordable household sanitation products are available in local markets is a key challenge for the WASH sector in Nigeria. SanMark addresses demand and supply together to increase uptake and use of improved toilets that are durable, hygienic, available, affordable, and aspirational. While there is still much to learn about how to tackle Nigeria's sanitation crisis, WaterAid hopes that the lessons identified through its SanMark initiative will help inform Nigeria's water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector and contribute towards achieving and sustaining the national target of 100 percent sanitation access by 2025⁴.

This Learning Note summarises the key approaches of the SanMark initiative in an effort to share this information with Nigeria's development sector, and hopefully to stimulate further discussion and action to expand affordable sanitation markets throughout the country.

Sanitation Marketing (SanMark) approach

The Sanitation Marketing (SanMark) effort has been carried out in nine local government areas (LGAs) in Enugu and Ekiti states, introducing new and innovative products to Nigeria's sanitation marketplace based on in-depth market research and human-centred design. Through these efforts, a branded line of high-quality household sanitation products has been established (collectively known as the 'Water Easy Toilet' or WET). They are hygienic, low-water-use toilets

¹For the Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030), 'basic' sanitation is equivalent to the 'improved' sanitation classification used for the Millennium Development Goals (1990-2015).

²Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene - 2017 Update and SDG Baseline. UNICEF and World Health Organization, 2017.

³Reducing the burden of diarrhoea among children under five years old: lessons learned from oral rehydration therapy corner program implementation in Northern Nigeria. Z. Charyeva, et al., Journal of Health, Population and Nutrition (2015) 34:4.

⁴Making Nigeria Open-Defecation-Free by 2025, A National Road Map. Federal Ministry of Water Resources, 2015.



suitable for a wide range of on-site sanitation environments. The suppliers are in turn linked to a sales force of trained community-based representatives called the 'Door 2 Door' agents, who stir up toilet demand in communities and boost sales. The key stages or steps of the SanMark effort are outlined below:

1. Assessment and planning

The preliminary phase was used to develop an understanding of the intervention areas, as well as defining the specific objectives of the SanMark programme, including its focus and targets, phasing of its key components and links to any complimentary approaches such as CLTS and achieving open defecation free (ODF) status in communities.







The assessment included a baseline survey on the WASH profile of target area communities, including residents' knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding sanitation and hygiene; their access, use, and maintenance of household sanitation facilities, family health status (especially children), and other relevant data.

Entry to the area was led by the local government area WASH team, and included advocacy visits to local civil society, community-based organisations, and traditional leaders to gather additional information and seek support and buy-in. Also, this phase was used to identify or select local implementing partners. This phase also included 'town hall' style meetings with interested stakeholders (communities and suppliers separately) to introduce and discuss SanMark, learn more about the local cultural and social issues, and to identify interested local businesses.

2. Market research

An in-depth Formative Research on the sanitation market was conducted to gain a thorough understanding of the sanitation supply and demand situations. The research investigated the socio-economic profiles of target area communities, as well as the sanitation and hygiene attitudes, needs, practices, and aspirations of the residents (consumers). Consumer information was collected on current sanitation practices, needs and preferences, and ability and willingness to pay. Barriers and constraints to sanitation uptake were also identified. On the supply side, businesses and entrepreneurs were identified and assessed according to their skills and capacities as well as where their materials and components were sourced. Preferences and practices were used to identify appropriate product design, pricing, and marketing options.

The market research was also used to map and assess the suitability of the entrepreneurs and businesses in the target areas and their interest for the SanMark initiative. The assessment criteria included:

-  Type of products and services the business offers
-  Number of employees, and their skill levels
-  Length of time the business has been operating
-  Financial health of the business, and access to credit
-  Location with respect to local markets and transport
-  Geographic extent of its customer base

In addition, this phase was used to identify and select entrepreneurs who would work with product design experts to develop sanitation products - based upon the findings of the formative research.



13. Product design and development

Formative research was used as a basis for a 'human centred design' (HCD) process⁵ that was used to develop sanitation products for the market. Prototypes were designed with input from community members, and tested to gauge their performance, safety, and consumer interest. Promising models were assessed in terms of their feasibility of production, sales prospects, and potential profitability.

The process required engaging a skilled engineer with extensive HCD experience, and local artisans who could produce the necessary moulds and prototype products. Members of the target community were involved to evaluate the prototypes in terms of their appeal, affordability, durability, and cultural acceptance.

Based on the results of the Formative Research and further observations, WaterAid engaged concrete block producers (CBPs) and metal fabricators to produce the prototypes, and eventually these businesses became part of the core SanMark business model. CBPs, owing to their technical skills as well as their market position (selling products for home construction and improvement), proved to be very well-suited for SanMark.

The above process led to design of a household latrine product that provided a two-compartment toilet that utilised a single pit. This responded to consumer interest in sanitation solutions for households which typically comprised extended families, and for cultural reasons. However, the two-seat toilet could also be sold as separate, single-seat units. The toilet was branded as the 'Water Easy Toilet' or WET.



⁵Human-centred design is a creative approach to problem solving that starts with a deep understanding of the people or communities of interest, identifying new solutions that are tailored to best meet their needs. From Ideo.org's website: <http://www.designkit.org/human-centered-design>.



product
design and
production

A critical step in the development of the WET product line was the introduction of the SaTo toilet pan⁶ as an essential element. The SaTo pan offered an attractive, low-cost, easily-cleaned pour flush option but with a low water volume requirement. The product, which is manufactured by the Lixil Corporation, proved to be a significant draw for potential WET customers.



SATo pan

4. Establish a supply side strategy

Information and learning from the formative research guided the product design and development of a business model, with concrete block producers (CBPs) as central players. Another outcome of the research was to identify a consumer preference for simpler purchasing arrangements, as opposed to the previous situation, which required engaging with multiple suppliers and artisans to secure the needed toilet components, as well as skilled and unskilled labour. The SanMark business model response was to establish a one-stop-shop approach, wherein a consumer could purchase the entire WET product with a single transaction from a vendor.

The supply side effort focused on a small, core group of capable and willing CBPs who had expressed interest, been trained on WET production, and had demonstrated the capacity for follow-through. These suppliers were then provided access to designs and moulds to manufacture the WET product line, which evolved to consist of three versions:

- i) A two-seat version called the Dual model
- ii) A single-seat direct-drop version called the Direct Pit model
- iii) A single-seat offset pit version called the Offset model.

⁶For more information, see <http://www.sato.lixil.com/>. Lixil is currently working on establishing manufacturing SATO pans in Nigeria.



In addition, the above-ground portion of the Offset model was seen as an additional business opportunity, to convert existing household pit latrines or ventilated improved pits (VIPs) to the improved WET design which incorporates the SaTo pan. Also, additional efforts on the supply side were focused on building the capacity of CBPs, verifying product quality and safety, and encouraging further innovation by the suppliers.

5. Establish a demand creation strategy

Formative research also helped direct the demand-creation strategy, along with ongoing learning from project implementation. A social marketing expert agency was brought on board to craft messages and marketing materials for the WET products. The materials emphasised socially and culturally significant themes in a creative format, highlighting the positive messages of pride in family and other aspirational themes as drivers for product appeal.

To drive demand creation and sales at the community level, a cadre of community-based sales agents were recruited and trained, and provided marketing materials which emphasised real-life situations that customers could relate to. These 'Door 2 Door' (D2D) agents earn commissions, paid by CBPs, for each WET product sold. WaterAid also trained the D2D agents to carry out sales events at community level as well as helping to organise promotional events with CBPs at large public markets. Demonstration units were also installed at several public markets to help introduce the WET products to the general public. In sales pitches, D2D agents were encouraged to use messaging which includes a tie-in to ODF campaigns: 'Stop Open Defecation - acquire, use and maintain the Water Easy Toilet.'

2. SanMark implementation (market facilitation)

To commence market facilitation, all the elements of the business model were brought together in late 2016. Since then, concrete block producers (CPBs) and Door 2 Door (D2D) agents, with support from local government area and civil society organisations partners, have been working to market, sell and install WET products. To further strengthen the effort, business development experts were engaged to provide on-site marketing and management support to CBPs and D2D agents, and to assist with monitoring results. However, WaterAid has endeavoured to ensure business support mechanisms to either the CBPs or D2D agents are not overly prescriptive, in keeping with its 'hands off' approach to market facilitation.

Finding affordable financing remains an ongoing challenge, for both suppliers and consumers. WaterAid has examined a range of options in this area, and has also joined other stakeholders in the National Multi-sector Stakeholders' Platform on Sanitation Marketing Group that is focused on improving the availability of financing for sanitation marketing.

3. Monitoring and adaptation of strategies

Monitoring progress of the SanMark effort continues. To date, the STS SanMark focus has remained fairly narrow – four LGAs in Enugu (where five CBPs are actively engaged), and five LGAs in Ekiti (where four suppliers are actively engaged). WaterAid has developed a monitoring template (Sales Tracker) to help record SanMark data.

Suppliers (CBPs) have continued to innovate with variations on their products. The 'Offset conversion' model has proven popular for upgrades of existing pit latrines or ventilated improved pits (VIPs) to using the SaTo pan and having an improved and more hygienic squatting area. Several variations of this conversion model have evolved from the original WET Offset Pit version.

WaterAid is conducting field trials of approaches to tackle the problem of pit collapse, which is a leading cause of households abandoning toilets and reverting to open defecation (OD).



Key lessons learned

The SanMark effort has been both rewarding and challenging. It has resulted in a great deal of learning for all involved parties, including businesses, communities, government, civil society partners and WaterAid. Some of the key lessons learned include the following:

- The time required to develop products and a suitable business model took much longer than initially planned. Future projects should allocate substantial time for these critical steps.
- Most businesses that were approached to be a part of the SanMark effort seemed interested and motivated at first and were comfortable investing time and money. However, many eventually dropped out, possibly due to the perceived risk of investing in a new product.
- Businesses involved in SanMark need ongoing support and mentoring in areas such as record-keeping, managing customers, sourcing alternative financing and profit and loss tracking.
- 'Sanitation as a business' is still an emerging concept in Nigeria. Businesses are seemingly aware of the large market potential.
- One very enthusiastic business owner became a trail blazer; this entrepreneur has led the way with innovation and opening up the market, as well as attracting other businesses to join in.
- Affordable financial products to support sanitation enterprises are not readily available. As a result, fit-for-purpose financial instruments may need to be developed. The lack of financing options will need to be addressed before SanMark can be scaled up in Nigeria.
- Businesses can play an important role in developing context-specific marketing strategies for their products. For example, organising community sales events, August meeting 'sales drives, and use of individualised promotional materials such as caps, T-shirts and related items.
- The community-based (D2D) sales agent model is still new but has been accepted by communities. This has also shown initial promise in terms of increasing sales.

While the progress made to date has been encouraging, there is still a lot of work to be done before SanMark can be scaled up. Product refinement, financing for businesses and households, ways of stimulating demand and more - all have room for further experimentation and innovation in Nigeria.

WaterAid would welcome any comments or feedback on this Learning Note and on Sanitation Marketing generally. Please contact us at wanigeria@wateraid.org

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Written by:

Nneka Awkunwa, Sanitation Marketing Manager, WaterAid Nigeria.

Supported by:

Erik Harvey, Kyla Smith, Peter Feldman, Ada-Oko Williams,
Oluseyi Abdulmalik and Vremudia Lawal.



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wanigeria@wateraid.org

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