



POLICY BRIEF

Water and Sanitation Action Research in the City of Blantyre:

Community mapping towards inclusive
development



A toilet built at a federation housing development.

Acknowledgments

This research was conducted collaboratively by

Shack/Slum Dwellers International's (SDI) Malawi affiliates, the Malawi Homeless People's Federation and the

Centre for Community Organisation and Development (CCODE).

The research was funded by the Sanitation and Hygiene Applied Research for Equity Consortium (SHARE)

Who we are: Shack/Slum Dwellers International and its affiliates in Blantyre

SDI is a network of community-based organizations representing the urban poor across 33 countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. SDI promotes inclusionary, community-led processes with the poor as agents and not just beneficiaries of development. The network links poor urban communities that have successfully mobilised to develop advocacy and problem solving strategies.

SDI uses savings and self-enumeration schemes, community profiling and mapping to generate information that challenges widely held developmental assumptions. Communities use this information, as well as the support and solidarity of their community-based organisation to leverage resources and assistance and to engage with the state *on their own terms*. SDI believes that the only way to manage urban growth and create inclusive cities is for the urban poor to be at the centre of strategies for urban development.

The Malawi Homeless People's Federation (referred to below as the Federation) has supported and represented the urban poor since 2003. The Federation has mobilised communities through womens'-led savings and credit schemes leading to people-driven housing processes in Blantyre, Mzuzu and Lilongwe.

CCODE has worked closely with the Federation in Malawi to support urban poor communities improve their access to water and sanitation. Through a revolving urban poor fund called *Mchenga*, CCODE provides water and sanitation specific loans. The organisation has also worked to develop the capacity of communities to manage water and sanitation projects on their own.

The scale of sanitation needs in sub-Saharan Africa is widely recognised. Most of the continent is not on track to meet the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target for sanitation and in urban areas fewer than half of households have access to safe sanitation. In the absence of adequate state responses, affiliates of SDI, along with the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) have been working to develop a bottom-up approach in which the residents of informal settlements engage with their local authority to identify new ways forward. In developing this approach, we seek to address four challenges faced by community-led approaches to sanitary improvement: 1) getting local residents to coordinate and combine their demands for sanitary improvement; 2) finding and implementing improvements that are affordable and acceptable to both the local authorities and the residents; 3) getting local authorities to work with residents and their organisations to co-produce the needed improvements; 4) and ensuring that other poverty-related problems, such as insecure tenure, do not undermine improvement efforts.

This booklet reports on the first year, focused on data collection, of a three-year project. The second year is for the development of precedents to exemplify new and effective sanitation solutions. These precedents have been identified because of their relevance to addressing needs in the city and their potential to scaling up sanitation provision. The third and final year is dedicated to planning to expand provision to those in the city without adequate sanitation. It is anticipated that this final year will develop a city-wide strategy for inclusive sanitation and include agreements with local government that can help provide the foundations for such a strategy.

The sanitation situation in the communities of Blantyre

Blantyre is a rapidly growing commercial city with over one million inhabitants. 65% of the population lives in 21 informal settlements, which occupy around 23% of the land in the city. Our study revealed that the settlements have very poor water and sanitation infrastructure, with widespread use of unimproved pit latrines and reliance on water kiosks.

The study found that 69% of informal dwellers source water from water kiosks. The kiosks can be government or privately owned and the price of water varies considerably. There are 24 boreholes across the seven settlements, built by international non-governmental organisations (NGOs). However, due to poor infrastructure and management, the majority of boreholes are not operational. The frequent breakdown of the existing water sources pushes households to use a range of unsanitary sources, such as contaminated streams.

Over 20% of informal settlement dwellers live over 20 minutes' walk from the nearest water source. Water connections in informal settlements are largely unaffordable to the residents due to poor accessibility and high connection costs. The average monthly expenditure on water per household is US \$4.8-9.6.

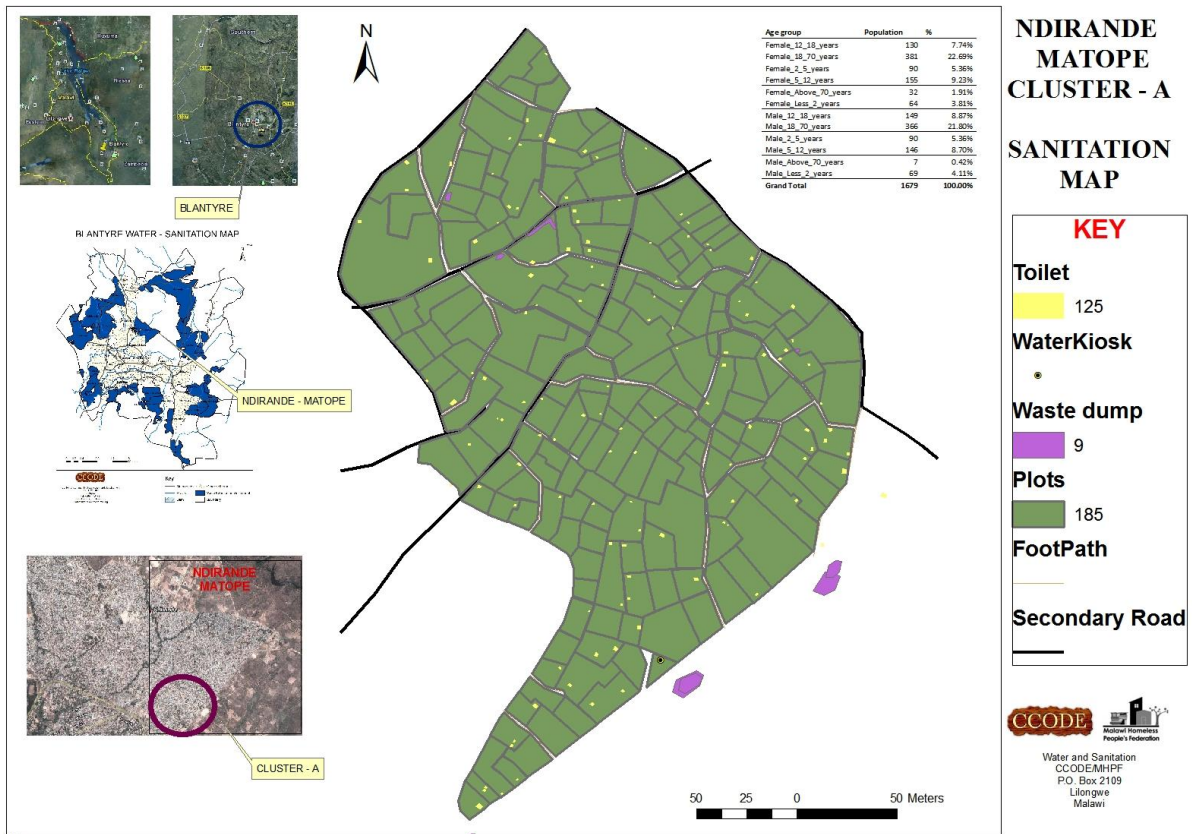
There is a lack of communication and coordination between the agencies, including government departments, community-based organisations and international NGOs involved in water and sanitation in Blantyre.

The study found that 26% of residents do not have access to their own toilet and rely on neighbours, public facilities or the bush. 91% of residents use unimproved pit latrines, and only 9% use improved facilities. The majority of residents have experienced a collapse of pit latrines during the rainy season, and most cannot afford the sanitary draining of latrines, opting instead to dig new pits, on average, every two years. 54% of households do not have hand-washing facilities.

Waste collection in the city is erratic; up to 70% of solid waste is uncollected. This has led to the widespread practice of illegal dumping and burning of household waste.

The study found that tenants, who make up 54% of households, are less likely to invest in improved water and sanitation facilities than property owners.

There is a significant discrepancy between the findings of this research, and official government figures on access to water and sanitation.



Assessing the sanitation situation: our methodology

This research was carried out by the organised urban poor of Blantyre. The Federation and CCODE presented the research proposal in 15 out of the city's 21 informal settlements, seven of which showed a willingness to participate.

The community-led process consisted of a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection including 4037 household surveys, focus groups, a policy review and interviews with key informants across the seven settlements and the City Council.

The household survey collected demographic and socio-economic information about the residents as well as detailed information on their water and sanitation situation. The surveys were circulated and delivered by local young people who were well informed and involved in the research. This helped achieve the very high response rate of 98%.

The surveys were used to collect information on water supply and access, including data on water sources, water usage per household per day, walking time to the nearest water point, the household cost of water and water treatment methods. The surveys were also used to collect data on access to sanitation, the types of toilets used and how wastewater is dealt with at household level.



A local leader explaining the sanitation work that they do in the mapped settlement.

Four city study on community-led sanitation improvement

Blantyre City is one of four cities participating in a SHARE funded project into community-led improvement of urban water and sanitation facilities. The purpose of the research project is to secure a model for the development and realisation of pro-poor citywide sanitation through four scalable examples in cities of Blantyre (Malawi), Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), Kitwe (Zambia), and Chinhoyi (Zimbabwe).

The community mapping and profiling is the first step towards developing inclusive, sustainable sanitation strategies. The project has the following two specific aims:

I. Develop a better understanding of the principal obstacles to city-wide sanitary improvement, and how they can be overcome

II. Develop and test an approach to pro-poor city-wide sanitation strategies that can be adopted and driven by federations of community organizations, and supported by public authorities and private providers

The project is using action research to explore various strategies that can be adopted by federations and other networks of the urban poor to scale up sanitation. In addition to exploring sanitation strategies at the household level, the research is also investigating aspects of sanitation related to both gender and spatial marginalisation.

In its second year this action research project will demonstrate new sanitation precedents. These precedents will exemplify models of sanitation provision that are affordable to low-income households and which have the potential to address the scale of need through replication across the city. The collaboration with local government is intended to maximise the likelihood of leveraging financial resources and the political commitment required for policy and regulatory reform. A partnership between government and organized communities of the urban poor is central in this strategy and the co-production of affordable sanitation solutions is likely to be the most effective way to secure city-wide improvements.



The mapped settlement.

Helping form alliances that can drive improvements

This community-led approach to understanding the water and sanitation situation in Blantyre has already produced a number of significant results. Local residents are better informed and Federation leaders understand the situation in low-income informal settlements and are able to represent the needs to politicians and city officials. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed in December 2011 lays out how the City Council, CCODE and the Federation will work together in the housing, water and sanitation sectors. The council also set up the Informal Settlement Unit (ISU) to work directly with the informal settlements in the city and in so doing demonstrated its commitment to scaling up action to address needs in these areas.

There is now an agreement with the Blantyre City Council that staff will provide technical expertise for community-led projects. This agreement has not yet been signed but work is in progress to have it put into an MOU.

In addition to these formal arrangements, this research process has helped promote a productive relationship between the communities and the local authority. The project has helped to raise the SDI Federation's profile with the city authorities and local members of parliament. As a result, negotiations have begun for a health clinic to be provided in the area.

The strong relationship between the Federation and local authorities has led to Federation members being involved in the 2013 Council budgetary sessions.



A SHARE meeting.



Partners

Blantyre City Council

The City Council is the local authority for Blantyre City.

IIED

IIED is an international development and environment policy research organisation. It carries out research, advice and advocacy work – generating robust evidence and know-how informed by a practical perspective acquired through hands-on research with grassroots partners.

SHARE

The Sanitation and Hygiene Applied Research for Equity (SHARE) Consortium is a five year initiative (2010-2015) funded by the UK Department for International Development. The Consortium seeks to contribute to accelerated progress on the MDG sanitation target by generating critical knowledge to inform policy and practice in areas of sanitation and hygiene.

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