HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN AND SANITATION MARKETING IN MALI
A cost-efficient approach to scale sustainable sanitation access

BACKGROUND

In Mali, the sanitation situation is very concerning. Open defecation still remains a widespread practice, especially in rural areas. According to the Mali, MICS 2015, World Population Prospects 2017, 2019 Projection, the number of households using unimproved sanitation is 1,018,969, with an additional 285,540 households practicing open defecation. A study conducted by UNICEF showed that the vast majority of rural latrines were still built with wood platforms, as introduced as part of CLTS (Community Led Total Sanitation) programs. While CLTS is extremely effective at driving behavior change to end open defecation and allows households to build latrines at reasonable costs, wooden latrines don't last very long and are known to degrade quickly and eventually collapse - leading to relapse of open defecation. In this context, PSI/Mali implemented a program to promote sales of concrete toilet slabs through private sector actors to ensure the construction of long-lasting sustainable toilets.

METHOD

Human-centered design was used to develop a low-cost, durable, and desirable toilet product. Local entrepreneurs were then trained in manufacturing, installation, and quality control. Ninety-five (95) independent businesses collaborated with the project to sell improved latrine slabs. An evidence-based sales and marketing strategy was implemented, including community engagement, door-to-door sales, and local radio. The cost of commissions for sanitation promotors was built into the cost of the latrine slab.

RESULTS

During an 8-month pilot phase in 10 municipalities with 100 villages, 566 toilets were built in 3 regions: Koulikoro, Mopti, and Sikasso. Based on pilot results, the project was extended to 1,000 villages. Sanitation promotors targeted both heads of household and women and children, who helped to persuade household heads to purchase a toilet slab. Over the next 18 months, project-affiliated businesses installed 6,280 improved latrine slabs at a cost of $24 each. The profit margin for businesses was $7, and the sales agent earned $4 for each slab installed. Project funding and activities ended in November 2017, but a group of market actors trained by the program have continued to sell and average of 154 toilets per month with no donor or project-support - demonstrating that the project succeeded in creating a sustainable market. Of the 1000 villages targeted by the project, 655 villages saw at least one slab purchased. Beyond the targeted area, sales extended to an additional 136 villages. The population of the areas targeted by the project can be estimated at 1,200,000 people. In the targeted area, shared toilet use among neighbors in common. With 10,193 toilets sold, an estimated 180,000 people now have access to improved toilets.

CONCLUSIONS

The sanitation marketing approach in Mali within a limited geographic zone had impressive results in providing rural populations access to improved and sustainable toilets. The use of HCD to design a product that was both affordable and desirable allowed the slabs to be sold for a low price while still providing sufficient profit margins for both masons and sanitation promotors, who have continued promoting and selling toilets long after the project. Sanitation marketing offers a cost-efficient way of moving customers up the sanitation ladder to basic sanitation and should be scaled-up to additional geographies.

Key Learning Objectives of HCD Workshop

- Participants will learn how human-centered design (HCD) was used to develop an affordable, desirable product.
- Participants will learn how to develop a sustainable rural sanitation market for low-income consumers.
- Participants will learn about the most effective promotion and sales techniques for selling improved latrines, even when subsidized latrines are also being offered.

The funding for this approach was provided by UNICEF. For more information, contact Boureima MAIGA at bmaiga@psimali.org

For a copy of this poster go to www.psi.org