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**2019 MALAWI NATIONAL SANITATION CONFERENCE**

**Entrepreneurship, Key in Peri-Urban Feacal Sludge Management – A Case of Blantyre City**

*Background Context, problem statement or objective. Costs, finance, and sustainability*

Blantyre City is Malawi’s commercial city and is one of the fast-growing cities in Africa. With a population of more than 1,068,681 (NSO, 2015) people during the day, the city is the epicenter of businesses in Malawi. While Blantyre City Council (BCC) has categorized the City peri-urban into 21 low-income areas (Informal settlements) which constitute over 65% of the city’s population, provision of piped sewer system for feacal sludge management in these informal settlements has proved to be unfeasible. Local Government Act places the responsibility of provision of sanitation services on local authorities. The act also empowers local authorities to regulate sanitation services in their areas of jurisdiction.

With an estimated feacal sludge emptying demand of about 100 pit latrines per day *(Blantyre Shit Flow Diagram 2018),* entrepreneurs saw business opportunity in sanitation services. Established pit emptiers have had several operational challenges hindering demand expectations. These included; high transportation costs to the treatment plant; high dumping fees; conflicts with BCC by-laws and inability to own a pit emptying equipment by entrepreneurs who had intentions of venturing into pit emptying business.

In 2014, individual pit emptiers in collaboration with Water for People, BCC and stakeholders assessed these challenges, saw an opportunity and mobilized themselves to form an association which was aimed at addressing their common hindrances in reaching more customers and growing their businesses without conflicting with BCC by-laws. Today, Tipope Pit Emptiers Association is a legally registered institution with the Malawi Government and has 45 members *(15 have their own pit emptying equipment while 25 conduct latrine construction businesses but occasionally hire pit emptying equipment from the association).* The association has its own truck (vehicle) and pit emptying equipment (an Evac) which enable small pit emptying businesses have access by hiring at a fee to conduct their pit emptying services.

The association was formed on the basis of self-financing through membership fees, hire of the vehicle and pit emptying equipment. Members pay an annual subscription fee of Mk40,000 (U$55) while vehicle is hired at a fee of Mk5,000 (U$7) per trip and the pit emptying equipment (Evac) is hired at Mk7,000 (U$10) per day. Pit emptiers charge households for emptying 200 liters of feacal sludge at a minimum fee of Mk7,000 (U$9.3). Dumping fee at a feacal sludge treatment plant managed by Blantyre City Council is Mk4,000 (U$6) per 1000 liters (5 x 200litre drums.

Furthermore, the Pit Emptiers Association has a constitution which was reviewed at a 2018 annual general meeting (AGM) to effectively guide Association’s day-to-day operations. The Association has also a bank account with three trustees as signatories. The trustees meet quarterly to formulate and asses operations. Furthermore, the Association enables BCC effectively regulate the operation of the pit emptying practitioners.

The presence of Pit Emptiers Association has also provided an opportunity for different organizations in Blantyre City and beyond to enhance their market-based interventions in peri-urban feacal sludge management. Water for People, BCC and other stakeholders, through their operations have partnered with the Association in developing generic marketing and business promotional materials (radio jingles, posters, leaflets, discount coupons) and a Call Centre to boost awareness of pit emptying services and enable pit emptiers reach more customers.

Malawi Government encourages Public Private Partnerships (PPP) for public service delivery and therefore Pit Emptiers Association model is the perfect sustainable option on feacal sludge management which can be replicated in cities and municipalities of Malawi and beyond.

**Conclusion**

Collective efforts by individual pit emptying businesses, BCC, Water for People and other stakeholders in Blantyre City to form an association (Pit Emptiers Association) has enabled households access quality pit emptying services much closer to their homes at an affordable price while empowering new small pit emptying businesses to grow. While their strength in unity has enabled Pit Emptiers Association to have a stronger negotiation niche with different institutions (including Blantyre City Council and NGOs), their services compliment efforts of the City Council in the provision of a much-needed pit emptying service in the unplanned, high density 21 low income areas of Blantyre City.

Lessons learned

1. ***Enhanced household ownership of pit emptying service:***

Shifting of pit emptying services from City Council to the private sector, instils a perception of sanitation facility ownership in individual community members/households.

1. ***Lessened resource burden on BCC:***

* With the private sector in place (Pit Emptiers Association), Blantyre City Council can now re-allocate resources initially meant for public services on feacal sludge management in low income areas towards other developmental activities in the city.
* Blantyre City Council is now able to save and re-locate to other services over Mk30 million annually.

1. ***Effective regulation of pit emptying practitioners***

Through the Association, BCC is able to reach out and register all pit emptying practitioners. BCC provides and enforces minimum Standard Operating Procedures for pit emptying services.

1. ***Effective lobbying for better terms and conditions***

It is easy and effective to lobby for better terms as an association than would have been individually.

1. ***Coordinated stakeholders’ approach in supporting feacal sludge management in Blantyre City.***

Presence of the Association has enabled stakeholders (BCC, Water for People, WASTE Advisors and academia) to provide support in a more coordinated and efficient way.

Recommendations

1. City Councils to enforce city regulations on latrine construction standards on all households in the city which will facilitate efficient pit emptying when it is full.
2. City Councils should promote formation of pit emptying associations to enhance regulation.
3. Rehabilitation of feacal sludge treatment plants by the City Council and decentralizing establishment of treatment plants is vital in the reduction of transport costs for pit emptiers.

**References**

Blantyre Shit Flow Diagram (2018)

National Statistical Office Report (2015)

Blantyre City Council Reports

Water for People Quarterly Reports (2018)

Pit Emptiers Association Constitution (2019)