



Leading a Community to Open Defecation Free Status

Just over a year ago, a third of Tegweng village in Kitgum district located in the northern Uganda practiced open defecation and none of the households practiced proper handwashing. Over the last year, the USAID Uganda Sanitation for Health Activity (USHA) has worked with the 37 households in the village to change household hygiene and sanitation norms and guide the village to improve their sanitation status. Through partnership with local leaders, Tegweng village is now declared Open Defecation Free (ODF); a significant milestone in improving the health and wellbeing of those who call the village home, and more especially, for the dignity and better quality of life of women

On May 26, 2021, the USHA team joined Heather Smith, the USAID Director, Office of Health and HIV AIDS during her visit to Tegweng village to learn about and celebrate their success. The site visit



The walk of fame. A sanitation committee member and USHA staff lead the delegation through the village during the visit

to Tegweng village focused on how the Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) method has sparked change in household sanitation and hygiene norms and practices. This included experiencing the USHA CLTS do-it-yourself model through interactions with the local masons who have built the toilets, and households that have invested to improve their sanitation status.

The active involvement of local leaders in project implementation has proved to be one of the most effective ways of achieving results

and for ensuring sustainability of proper sanitation and hygiene.

Alongside local leaders in villages and local government officials, grantee partners play an integral role in USHA's implementation. In Omiya Anyima Sub County, USHA works with the Forum for Kalongo Parish Women's Group (FOKAPAWA), a local non-government organization to implement CLTS as well as WASH in Schools activities that are aimed to educate and empower youth as sanitation champions. FOKAPAWA also works alongside district local government staff to strengthen WASH governance as part of USHA interventions.



A community member demonstrates proper handwashing to the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer Kitgum district.

The visitors interacted with subcounty leaders (Health Assistant, Local Council (LC) 3 Chairman, and Subcounty Chief) to understand the CLTS model, process, and roles of the various actors. They met community leaders, masons, and members of the community Sanitation Committee to understand factors that drive or impede sanitation norms and practices and had the opportunity to tour the community, visiting and interacting with households to understand their sanitation journey and to see, first-hand, the sanitation and hygiene facilities and services at work.

Speaking during the visit, the outgoing Chairperson LC3 of Omiya Anyima Sub County Julius Peter Otto applauded the community of Tegweng for taking the issue of sanitation seriously and encouraged them to “continue to teach the younger generation as this is the only best way, we can change the mind-set of the people towards sanitation and hygiene.”

The Kitgum district Chairperson (LC5); Christopher Arwai cautioned the community on relapse noting that the toilets belong to them and not to USHA or to the local partners like FOKAPAWA who supported them rather, the community should work to use and maintain them to sustain their health and wellbeing. To the Sub County and village leaders, he urged them to organise a meeting with the neighbouring villages to get them to adopt positive behaviour, emphasizing that “this is an opportunity to build capacity of others; we cannot pride ourselves in ODF while our brothers are still left behind. Let’s work together with them to ensure they too gain an ODF status.”

“The work will continue in Omiya Anyima Sub County”, said the incoming LC 3 Chairperson; John Peter and he pledged his support to the project, promising to convene a meeting with all Sub County leaders to ensure that project is cascaded to all the neighbouring Omiya Anyima villages.

On her part, Ms. Heather Smith, applauded the community of Tegweng village and said, “the facilities are truly up to standard. They depict your interest and commitment in taking action and putting an end to open defecation and fighting diseases.”



The USAID Health Office director inspects one of the toilet facilities in Tegweng village