



# Sanitation Marketing

## *Social Marketing – a tool for sanitation behaviour change?*

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### Abstract

Alternative sanitation solutions can provide sustainable sanitation services for settlements in African countries. With support from Austrian Development Cooperation (through Austrian Development Agency) EcoSan Club currently implements a project in Northern Uganda which addresses sanitation issues (human excreta management) from two complementary sides. On the one hand, the project will create additional demand for sanitation and, on the other hand, establish a sanitation service chain to tend to this newly created demand.

This paper deals with the methodology to create demand for sanitation. Demand shall be created by applying a social marketing approach. The project will identify appropriate “sanitation products”, minimise their prices, make them available and promote them.

“Sanitation products” are defined as all required services along a sanitation service chain – from design to construction and operation and maintenance. To make sure that appropriate products are available the project will support private sector actors in technical and entrepreneurial aspects.

### Introduction

Recent experiences (Müllegger et al., 2010; Muchiri et al., 2009) have clearly demonstrated that alternative sanitation solutions can become the key to providing sustainable sanitation services for settlements in African countries. However a main pre-condition must be fulfilled – any proposed solution must limit the required involvement of the user to using the toilet.

Common approaches which require the user to assume

- a professional engineer’s role during design and construction (e.g. user friendly design) or
- a plumbers role during operation and maintenance (e.g. cleaning of pipelines) or
- a garbage collector’s role during operation (e.g. emptying of dry toilets) or
- a farmers role (e.g. reuse of biosolids)

fail because they neglect the simple truth that the user has only one main objective for investing in sanitary

infrastructure which is to be able to use a (private) toilet. The user is generally not interested in any of the other required activities.

Western water borne solutions fulfil this condition perfectly and are therefore successful, wherever and as long as they can be afforded.

Assuming this fact as a starting point EcoSan Club has designed a project (implemented in Kitgum, Uganda) which receives funding from Austrian Development Cooperation (through Austrian Development Agency) aiming at establishing a comprehensive system of alternative sanitation solutions for toilet users. The system shall comprise all services necessary to provide toilet users with what they want but relieve them from activities which are required to make the system functional but which the user has no immediate interest in performing.

### Key assumptions:

- Social marketing creates demand for sanitation
- Creating demand for sanitation requires all products along the sanitation service chain as a precondition
- All sanitation products must be state of the art and affordable in order to be sustainable

However, still the real impact depends on numbers. Common approaches fail in this respect because they neglect that

- existing laws are hardly ever enforced,
- an abstract problem awareness does not constitute a sufficiently strong driving force for change and
- dealing in resp. with sanitation has a low social status and therefore there is a significant lack of service providers in appropriate quality along the sanitation service chain.

Therefore the project will use a social marketing approach aiming at improving the social status of activities related to sanitation (from design, construction/installation to operation and maintenance) and creating competition on all levels, both on the supply and demand side.

## Approach

The entire project is based on a number of major assumptions:

- a behaviour change is necessary to improve household sanitation (human excreta management) on a significant scale,
- awareness creation does not per se initiated the required behaviour change,
- social marketing is a tool that can initiate a factual change in behaviour with regard to household sanitation (USAID, 2007).

At the same time social marketing requires an affordable and attractive product, two criteria which will be addressed in the project.

Social Marketing combines traditional approaches to social change with commercial marketing and advertising techniques, uses methods from the commercial sector (market research, developing products and services corresponding to genuine needs, creating demand, marketing) and ultimately aims to influence people's ideas and behavior. The differences to commercial marketing are that demand has to be created and not steered only, and that social marketing products are so-called non-tangible products like ideas and practices.

Elements of social marketing are similar to commercial marketing:

- Understanding "customer needs" (market research),
- Making the "product" available (media, interpersonal contacts, etc.),
- Product pricing (price serves to position a product, indicator of quality and prestige value),
- Understanding opportunity costs (total cost of adopting an idea goes beyond the monetary price).

## Expected Results

### Social Marketing

One result of the project will therefore be a social marketing campaign, which results in the creation of demand for sanitation services.

The project assumes that the market / private sector responds to demand if it has a sufficiently large magnitude (Van der Wel, et al., 2010). It is postulated that currently demand for services in the sanitation sector is insufficient to create interest from potential service providers. Furthermore it is commonly accepted that awareness creation alone does not necessarily initiate behaviour changes which result in increased demand for sanitation services. Therefore the proposed project will design and implement a social marketing campaign to create demand for sanitation services on a substantial scale.

However at the same time complementary to increasing demand, means and ways to satisfy this demand will have to be established.

### Services and Finance

To avoid the creation of frustrated demand by social marketing activities appropriate sanitation service chains, viable business opportunities and potential service providers will be identified in parallel. Interested individuals and entrepreneurs receive training and technical and entrepreneurial support to an extent which enables them to react to an increase in demand for a particular service along the sanitation service chain. The combination of increased demand and improved availability of sanitation services should result in an automatic positive feedback between demand for sanitation services and provision of sanitation services. Furthermore only systems which are affordable for the users are sustainable; therefore under these assumptions the users will not need gift money but only access to affordable financing systems.

In practice this means that there will be access to loans with favourable conditions (no collateral, relatively low interest rates) provided through a local financing institution. The direct benefit of this result will be that one frequently mentioned reason for not investing in sanitation facilities will be eliminated. Indirectly the sanitation facilities' perceived value increases with someone (in an appropriate social position) showing interest - an interest which in this case is demonstrated by investing money in this financing mechanism.

## Possible conclusion

The project is in its initial phase, currently defining viable sanitation service chains and developing a social marketing strategy. The following possible conclusions are envisaged:

## Success

If even only one viable sanitation service chain can be defined, a well-designed social marketing approach will result in an increasing demand for sanitation services and a sustainable change of the sanitation situation in Kitgum. Viable is defined as affordable for the sanitation service users, profitable for the sanitation service providers and in line with national and local legal requirements.

## Failure

No sanitation service chain which fulfils legal requirement, e.g. no illegal dumping of hazardous material but proper treatment or disposal, can be designed in a way to be affordable for the local population. Considering that legal standards in Uganda are high (Government of Uganda, 1998, 1999) – comparable to European Standards – “cheap” solutions do not exist. Not without reason sanitation services receive high levels of subsidies in most “developed” countries.

In this case the obvious conclusion would be that under the current economic conditions sanitation services according to legal requirements are simply not possible and that any investment in sanitation infrastructure by necessity will fail because it is either not economically sustainable or illegal.

Also a social marketing approach cannot work because it lacks the product.

Consequently the social marketing approach would not fail but rather not be implemented at all, as no thinkable sanitation service chain would be economically sustainable. Possible solutions for this dilemma would then be reducing required standards – which might compromise sanitation targets – or subsidising hardware and/or operation and maintenance of sanitation service chains.

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