Testing CLTS Approaches for Scalability

CLTS Learning Series:
Niger Country Report

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About the Project

The project, *Testing CLTS Approaches for Scalability,* evaluates through a rigorous research program three distinctive strategies to enhance the roles of local actors in CLTS interventions in Kenya, Ghana and Ethiopia. The project aims to learn, capture and share reliable and unbiased information on CLTS approaches and scalability.

About the Author

Vidya Venkataramanan is a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) and a researcher at The Water Institute at UNC.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

BMGF   Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

CLTS   Community-led Total Sanitation

CO   Plan International Country Office

JMP   WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme

MHA   Ministère de l'Hydraulique et de l'Assainissement (Ministry of Water and Sanitation)

LNGO   Local Non-Governmental Organization

NGO   Non-Governmental Organization

ODF   Open Defecation Free

PU   Plan International Program Unit

TCAS   Testing CLTS Approaches for Scalability

ToT   Training of Trainers

TSC   Technical Services Committee

UNC   University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

WaSH   Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

WHO   World Health Organization

Executive Summary

This report presents findings on Plan International's Community-led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach in Niger. The report is part of the CLTS Learning Series, a collection of case studies on CLTS implementation approaches. The study was conducted by The Water Institute at UNC as part of the Plan International USA project, "Testing CLTS Approaches for Scalability" (TCAS), which evaluates the roles of natural leaders, teachers, and local government in CLTS. The CLTS Learning Series investigates the roles of these and other important actors involved in the CLTS approach. This study is a result of a sub-agreement to UNC from Plan International USA, the recipient of a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF).

This report reviews Plan International Niger's CLTS implementation approach by addressing the following research questions:

- What roles do local actors play in the CLTS implementation process in Niger?

- What are enabling and constraining factors for successful implementation of CLTS?

- What implications does the involvement of local actors have for Plan International Niger's CLTS implementation process?

In April 2014, a UNC researcher conducted 29 in-depth interviews with 39 policymakers, Plan International Niger CLTS staff, other non-governmental organization (NGO) partners, local government, and community leaders. Relevant organizational documents and national reports were also collected. Thematic analysis was conducted using interview transcripts, field notes, and documents. Key findings and implications are summarized below.

Roles of local actors

The main actors involved in CLTS activities presented in this report are Plan International Niger; their local NGO (LNGO) partners; the local government's Technical Services Committees (TSCs); and natural leaders and other community leaders.

Plan International Niger finances CLTS activities and trains LNGOs, local government officers, natural leaders, and masons in their working areas. They contracted LNGOs to lead CLTS triggering and follow-up activities. LNGOs work with natural leaders, religious leaders, and village leadership at the community level. Plan International Niger also formed TSCs for CLTS with representatives from department (district) government, who were tasked with overseeing LNGOs and certifying communities as open defecation free (ODF). TSCs comprise nine to eleven officers from the water, health, education, civil engineering, and community development sectors.

This report highlights factors that enable and constrain the ability of these local actors to implement CLTS in Plan International Niger's program areas. A brief summary is presented below.

Enabling factors and implications for successful CLTS

- **CLTS has been incorporated into the national sanitation policy** through the efforts of Plan International Niger and other NGO partners. Governmental recognition of CLTS as one viable

approach for sanitation behavior change enables Plan International Niger to gradually strengthen local government buy-in for the approach and expand their activities within a conducive environment.

- **Decentralization of government services**, which makes the local government responsible for improving rural sanitation, has allowed Plan International Niger to engage closely with district government. By forming, training, and engaging TSCs to lead the ODF verification process, **Plan International Niger is gradually building local government capacity** for sanitation.

- Descriptions of triggering events indicate that **Plan International Niger had trained LNGO and local government well on the participatory and analytical methodology of CLTS**. Based on communities' limited baseline knowledge about the harms of open defecation, it appeared that facilitators had adapted triggering techniques to focus on communicating health benefits rather than eliciting shame and disgust. This approach appeared to have been received well in this context, as community leaders viewed triggering as an empowering approach.

- Plan International Niger has **built the capacity of community-level actors**, especially natural leaders, religious leaders, and community radio broadcasters, by training them on monitoring progress, and on the importance of latrines and environmental sanitation. **Routine exchange visits** between communities has fostered a sense of competition and learning, which could help Plan International Niger realize greater progress in their triggered communities.

- Plan International Niger recognizes the importance of following demand generation with supply options by **training masons** in their CLTS communities in the post-triggering phase. These masons are **beginning to improve access to the sanitation supply chain** for households than can afford to construct better latrines. Masons will need to be trained to build a greater variety of latrines that are acceptable and affordable to more households.

Constraining factors and implications for successful CLTS

- The department (district) government **had not yet taken ownership of the CLTS approach**, possibly because Plan International Niger still plays the lead financial and programmatic role. In addition to strengthening local government capacity, Plan International Niger should continue to advocate for the **formalization of TSCs into government entities** with a dedicated budget, so that TSCs are eventually able to lead sanitation efforts in their districts.

- Plan International Niger's internal **administrative challenges** led to delays in activities of LNGOs and TSCs, slowing down **the process of certifying communities as ODF**. These delays could demotivate communities that have made significant progress.

- There was a **perception amongst implementers that CLTS is a universally applicable approach** in rural communities, and that **follow-up would have to occur indefinitely** to keep communities from reverting to open defecation. As Plan International Niger, other NGOs, and the government aim to expand the scope of CLTS activities, it will be important for them

to learn from their experiences and **target communities where CLTS is more likely to succeed** rather than attempting the same approach in all rural communities. This can enable them to focus resources on follow-up visits to receptive communities to ensure that those who have made sufficient progress receive **positive reinforcement** in time.

- There appeared to be low demand for latrines made from locally available materials, but **most household were also unable to afford higher quality latrines**. No single approach can adequately address sanitation for poor and vulnerable populations. In addition to sanitation marketing, Plan Niger can influence the nature of post-CLTS support to communities by advocating for **financing plans,** mobilizing villages to collectively finance latrines or create **self-help initiatives**, and **target government subsidies** to those who need it most, possibly after communities have become ODF.

- **ODF verification criteria need to be more specific**. These criteria did not list benchmarks, making it difficult to know on what basis a community could be certified as ODF. The current approach can lead to different interpretations of ODF status, making it **challenging to compare results across districts**. Furthermore, Plan International Niger's **monitoring system also does not contain data on shared and communal latrines**—which appeared to be common in their working areas—making it difficult to assess alternative latrine options for those who did not own latrines but claimed to no longer practice open defecation. They can help influence national sanitation monitoring by improving their own baseline assessments, monitoring, and verification processes to become a model for the government.

1. Background

The Water Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC), in partnership with Plan International USA and Plan International offices in Ghana, Kenya and Ethiopia, is implementing a research project titled Testing CLTS Approaches for Scalability (TCAS). This project evaluates the roles of natural leaders, teachers, and local government in CLTS. As part of this project, UNC and Plan International USA conducted case studies of CLTS programs implemented by Plan International country offices (COs) to form a "CLTS Learning Series." Plan COs applied to be included in the study, and countries were selected by Plan International USA and UNC. Individual reports will be produced for each country. A cross-country synthesis, guided by the goal of assessing different approaches to CLTS implementation, will also be produced at the end of the series.

In April 2014, a UNC researcher collected data for the CLTS Learning Series in Niger with support from Plan International Niger. This report describes Plan International Niger's CLTS implementation approach, focusing on the roles and perspectives of local actors at each phase of CLTS. The most commonly cited enabling and constraining factors for successful implementation are also discussed, along with implications for Plan International Niger's CLTS approach. This report does not capture CLTS activities funded by other organizations, nor does it comprehensively cover the Government of Niger's sanitation strategy. It is intended to serve as a case study describing the roles of local actors in Plan International Niger's CLTS program areas.

2. Research Questions

The primary research questions this report addresses—through the perspective of Plan International Niger's CLTS program—are:

- What roles do local actors—including natural leaders, teachers, and local government—play in the CLTS implementation process in Niger?

- What are the enabling and constraining factors for successful implementation of CLTS?

- What implications does the involvement of local actors have for Plan International Niger's CLTS implementation process?

3. Methods

Data collection consisted of in-depth interviews with a variety of stakeholders and gathering of policy and programmatic documents. A list of process indicators was developed to guide the document review and the development of semi-structured interview guides. Responses from interviews were validated by comparing accounts from different sources. Purposive sampling was used to identify key informants at the national, district, and village levels who could describe experiences with Plan International Niger's CLTS approach. Interviews were conducted with the support of an independent Zarma/Hausa to English interpreter who was not affiliated with Plan International. These semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by the author and a transcription company.

Interview transcripts and recordings were analyzed using a program called Atlas.ti, focusing on the types of roles of local actors and enabling and constraining factors for their activities. The analysis presented in this report is one part of a cross-country comparison of all Learning Series countries, which will be produced at the culmination of the project.

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of UNC, the Ministry of Water and Sanitation in Niger, and the Ministry of Public Health in Niger.

3.1. Study Participants

Twenty-nine interviews were conducted with 39 respondents in April 2014 in the capital city, Niamey, and in the departments[1] of Dosso and Tillabéri (Table 1).

Three interviews were conducted in English and the remaining interviews were in Zarma or Hausa. Respondents represented the national and district government; Plan International Niger CO and field office staff; other NGOs familiar with CLTS; journalists; a LNGO contracted for triggering; and community leaders.

Four triggered villages were visited, two in each district. All villages had been triggered between 2010 and 2012, and one had been certified as open-defecation-free (ODF) at the time of this study.

Table 1. Study participants

Stakeholder Type	No. of Respondents
National and district government	8
External partners	5
Plan International Niger	3
Local NGO	3
Natural leaders and other community leaders	20
Total	**39**

3.2. Limitations

Boundaries of a qualitative study design

This study describes and analyzes the process of CLTS as implemented by Plan International Niger through the perspectives of local actors. The qualitative methods used in this study do not identify relationships through statistical correlations between variables. Sample sizes in qualitative studies are intentionally small to allow in-depth analysis. Readers should be cautious about broadly generalizing findings presented in the following sections beyond the scope of Plan International Niger's activities.

Quantitative data on CLTS outcomes in Plan International Niger's program areas cannot be directly

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[1] Departments (*départements* in French) are second-level administrative sub-divisions, preceded by regions and followed by communes. In this report, local or district government is synonymous with departmental government.

correlated with findings from this study because of methodological differences. These data were provided by Plan International Niger and were not independently verified. Therefore, while findings from this study may be compared to Plan International Niger's monitoring data to generate hypotheses on the effectiveness of CLTS, it would not be appropriate to draw definitive conclusions on effectiveness. There are also likely to be other factors affecting the outcomes that this study may not have identified.

Practical considerations

Four communities were visited out of 87 communities in which Plan International Niger works, so some variations in CLTS implementation may have been missed. Furthermore, leaders and key informants were interviewed to represent the experiences of their communities. The perceptions and opinions of other residents of the communities may differ from those of their leaders, but it was beyond the scope of this study to survey community members not directly involved in CLTS activities.

Because all four communities were triggered one to two years before this study, there may be recall bias among community leaders, which could have affected the accuracy of their responses, especially with regard to recalling trainings and triggering events. Additionally, Plan International Niger played the primary role in arranging interviews and community visits based on recommendations from UNC. For this reason, it is possible that respondents may have biased their answers to be more favorable towards Plan International Niger. To minimize this, the independent nature of this study was emphasized during the informed consent process, and all interviews were conducted in private so that analysis presented in the report could not be linked to respondents.

Lastly, it is also possible that some data were lost in translation.

4. Findings

Firstly, an overview of Niger's sanitation policy and Plan International Niger's CLTS approach is presented for context. The remainder of the report focuses on the roles of local actors at each stage of the CLTS process in Plan International Niger's programs: planning and pre-triggering, triggering, and post-triggering.[2] Sub-sections of this report cover themes that emerged in these phases as a result of the involvement of certain local actors, and are largely descriptive; they reflect analysis of interview transcripts of how people described their own roles and the roles of other actors. Each sub-section ends with a table of the main enabling and constraining factors, along with implications for Plan International Niger's CLTS approach. These factors emerged from analysis of the interview transcripts, and implications were identified by the author. Some of these enabling and constraining factors may have been suggested previously in the grey literature by practitioners but may not have yet been identified through independent research, whereas other identified factors were novel to this research.

The final section of the report presents conclusions and implications from this study for Plan International Niger's future CLTS activities. These implications may be useful to other CLTS

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[2] For detailed information on CLTS, refer to the *Handbook on community-led total sanitation* (Kar et al. 2008).

practitioners working with a similar implementation approach in a similar context.

4.1. Niger's sanitation policy

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WaSH) policy in Niger has been in a state of transition over the past several years. The Ministère de l'Hydraulique et de l'Assainissement (MHA), or Ministry of Water and Sanitation, was created in 2013, and is responsible for WaSH in Niger, with a specific Department of Sanitation. The MHA works with the following line ministries to deliver WaSH services: the Ministry of Public Health; Ministry of Education; Ministry of Environment and Urban Safety and Sustainable Development; Ministry of Town Planning and Housing; and the Ministry of Interior, Security, Decentralization and Customary and Religious Affairs. The primary documents for rural sanitation in Niger are:

- 2011-2015 National Plan on Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation, written in 2011; and

- 2014-2018 Operational Strategy for Hygiene and Basic Sanitation, formalized in July 2014.

A number of coordination mechanisms have been established at the national level including the National Commission for Water and Sanitation and the "Cluster WaSH" and "Coalition WaSH" groups. Similar mechanisms exist at the regional level. These groups bring the government, donors, and NGOs together to monitor sector performance, and to share data and lessons learned. Advocacy by NGOs, including Plan International Niger, in the Cluster WASH led to the integration of CLTS in the National Plan. However, interviews and reports also revealed that meetings are not always held regularly, which poses a significant challenge in terms of aggregating all hygiene and sanitation activities occurring around the country.

The WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) estimates Niger's rural coverage of improved sanitation in 2015 at 5%, with 2% using shared facilities, 7% using another unimproved source, and 86% practicing open defecation (Figure 1). The National Plan aimed to improve access to basic sanitation in rural areas to 25% by 2015, and also aimed for 10% of the rural population to have been triggered through CLTS. The 2014 national Operational Strategy aims for 50% household latrine coverage (traditional or improved latrines) by 2018, as well as 50% of rural communities becoming ODF by 2018.

The national Operational Strategy reinforces the government's policy of decentralisation, placing the responsibility for rural sanitation on local government bodies. The government recognizes CLTS as a means of promoting behavior change and generating demand for sanitation. The strategy calls for large-scale implementation of both CLTS and sanitation marketing, as well as the provision of latrine subsidies to ODF villages. These subsidies are intended to enable households who built traditional latrines to have access to "improved and sustainable material," with a focus on vulnerable groups such as women-headed households, the disabled, and the elderly (MHA 2014).

The Government of Niger has shown increasing commitment to sanitation by committing to "reduce open defecation by at least 30% by 2016"; to "strengthen implementation of the sanitation sector's monitoring and evaluation framework"; and to "concentrate on establishing a budget line for sanitation by 2016" (Sanitation and Water for All 2014). However, reports from the WaSH sector and

interviews conducted for this study reveal the need for greater investment, improved coordination, and capacity building of local government in order to meet these targets.
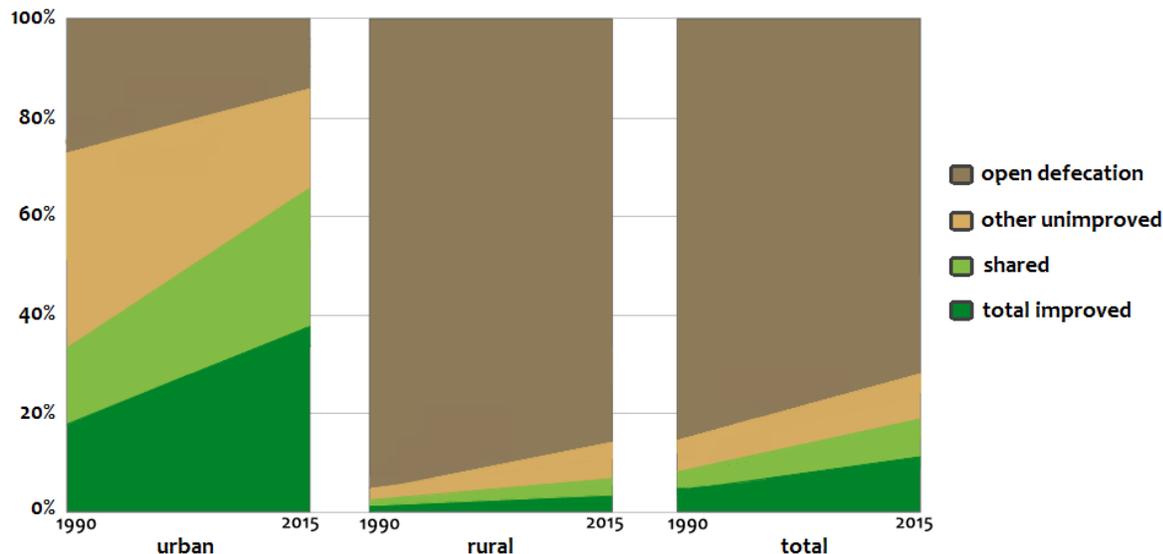
Figure 1. Urban, rural and total sanitation coverage trend in Niger, 1990-2015. (Adapted from WHO/UNICEF 2015)

4.2. CLTS by Plan International Niger

CLTS was introduced to Niger by UNICEF in 2009. Plan International Niger began implementing CLTS in 2010, and remains one of the main non-government actors using this approach, recognized as such in the national Operational Strategy (MHA 2014). At the time of this study, Plan International Niger had triggered 87 villages across Tillabéri and Dosso departments, financed primarily by the government of the Netherlands. The CLTS project reviewed in this study was managed by WaSH staff at the CO and CLTS managers in each department.

Institutional arrangements

Figure 2 is an institutional map of Plan International Niger's CLTS activities. At the national level, representatives from Plan International Niger coordinate with the MHA, other ministries, and other NGOs through the "Cluster WASH" working group. The national level actors who were interviewed for this study all appreciated Plan International Niger's involvement, and expressed that they would like to see increased participation from them by further publicizing their work and sharing findings on a national stage. For example, some national government officials responsible for sanitation were not aware of Plan International Niger's current CLTS activities.

In Dosso and Tillabéri, Plan International Niger program units (PU) had a contract with an LNGO to lead CLTS triggering and follow-up activities. Plan International Niger also formed a Departmental Committee for the Promotion of CLTS with representatives from the technical services offices of the departmental government, hereafter referred to as the Technical Services Committee (TSC). The TSC is tasked with assisting the LNGO in triggering, and in certifying communities as ODF. TSCs comprise

nine to eleven officers from the water, health, education, civil engineering, and community development sectors. In Dosso Department, the TSC had been formalized by administrative authorities, allowing them to use government resources to conduct activities if needed. In Tillabéri Department, the TSC was still an informal entity, relying entirely on Plan International Niger and the LNGO. One TSC member in Tillabéri envisioned the TSC as a "consulting team" for all hygiene and sanitation projects in the department, provided they could become a formal entity.

Although Plan International Niger's approach of working closely with departmental government and LNGOs is to be appreciated, LNGO and TSC members faced difficulty in following through on their activities due to slow processing of payments by Plan International Niger and inadequate finances, which slowed or halted their activities altogether. The implications of these administrative issues are described in Sections 4.3-4.5.
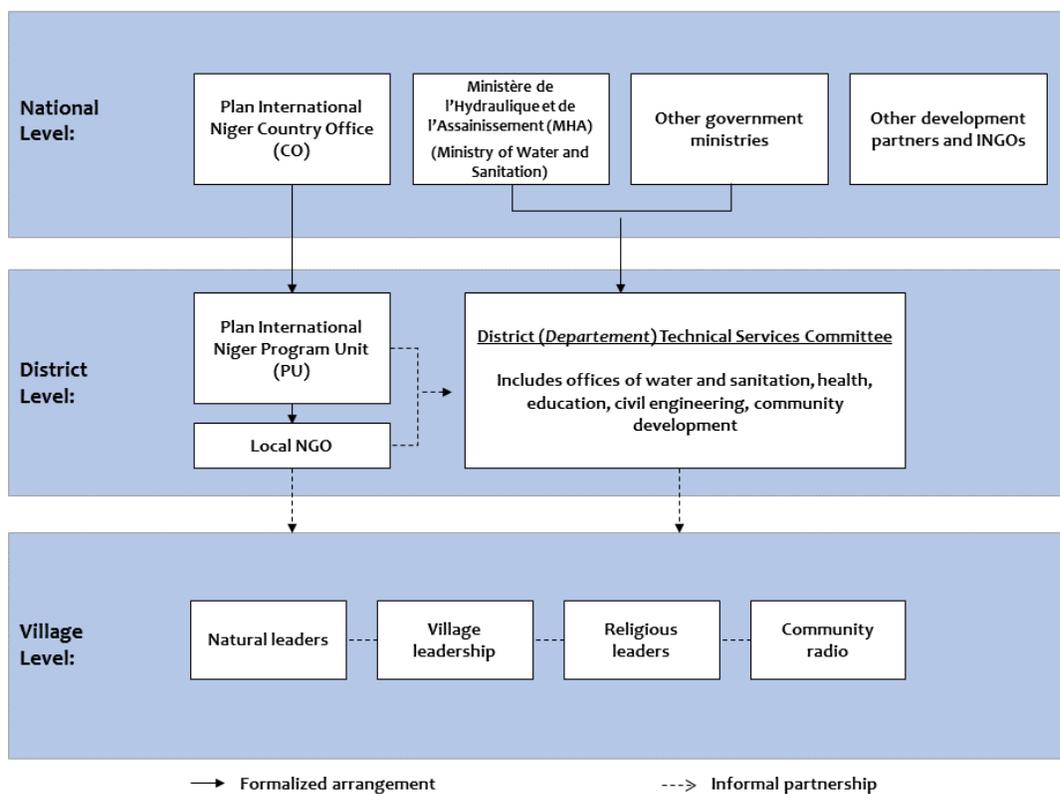
Figure 2. Institutional map of Plan International Niger's CLTS approach

Available data on CLTS outcomes

Table 2 highlights the most recent data obtained from Plan International Niger; median values are provided because the data on latrine coverage are skewed, which makes the average a poor representation of the data. Figure 3 compares the distribution of latrine coverage in triggered communities by department, both before (baseline) and after (end-line) triggering. Figure 4 compares baseline and end-line latrine coverage by ODF status. Latrine coverage is defined as the percent of households in a village with latrines.

Table 2. Outcomes of Plan International Niger's CLTS projects, 2013

| Department	Tillabéri	Dosso	Total
No. of villages triggered	35	52	87
Total no. of households (HH)	4,141	6,827	10,968
Average no. of HH per village	118	131	126
Median latrine coverage before triggering (baseline)	11%	7%	8%
Median latrine coverage after triggering (end-line)	61%	15%	33%
No. (%) communities certified ODF	19 (54)	12 (23)	31 (36)
No. (%) of villages with >= 50% latrine coverage	10 (29)	0 (0)	10 (8)

Source: Plan International Niger 2013

Note: By June 2015, 22 (63%) villages in Tillabéri and 35 (67%) villages in Dosso were certified as ODF.

By the end of 2013, Plan International Niger had implemented CLTS in 87 villages: 35 in Tillabéri Department and 52 in Dosso Department. Baseline latrine coverage ranged from 0% to 86% in Tillabéri and 0% to 43% in Dosso, but on average, baseline coverage was very low in both departments (Figure 3). Triggered villages in Tillabéri saw a much higher improvement in latrine coverage compared to triggered villages in Dosso; eight villages in Tillabéri had 100% latrine coverage after triggering, while no village achieved higher than 50% latrine coverage at the end of the project in Dosso. The disparity between Tillabéri and Dosso may be explained by the fact that fewer villages were triggered in Tillabéri, so activities were more manageable, or because baseline latrine coverage was already higher in Tillabéri (11% compared to 7%).

Data provided by Plan International Niger did not include triggering and ODF dates, so it was not possible to ascertain the time taken for communities to become ODF. Of all 87 villages, 31 (36%) were certified as ODF in 2013. By 2015, three more villages in Tillabéri and 23 more villages in Dosso were certified as ODF, but updated latrine coverage was not available. Latrine coverage in the 31 villages certified as ODF in 2013 ranged from 8% to 100%, with a median of 41% latrine coverage. Of 56 non-ODF villages, latrine coverage ranged from 1% to 100%, with a median of 11% latrine coverage. The data clearly indicate that it was not necessary for all households in a village to have a latrine in order for the village to be certified as ODF. Data from non-ODF villages also indicate that some villages with 100% latrine coverage had not yet been certified as ODF.

ODF villages had a higher median baseline latrine coverage before triggering of 6% compared to 1% in non-ODF villages (Figure 4). ODF villages also saw greater improvements in latrine coverage compared to non-ODF villages. However, even in ODF villages, median household latrine coverage remained low (41%). This may be partly explained by the high prevalence of shared or communal latrines in these areas, as indicated by community-level interviews. However, it is still unlikely that villages with a very low household to latrine ratio had no open defecation at all. On the other hand, four villages with high latrine coverage (75-100%) had not yet been certified as ODF due to lack of funding. This variation in latrine coverage and ODF status is a reflection of the verification process and criteria used to certify villages as ODF. This process and associated challenges are described in more detail in Section 4.5.
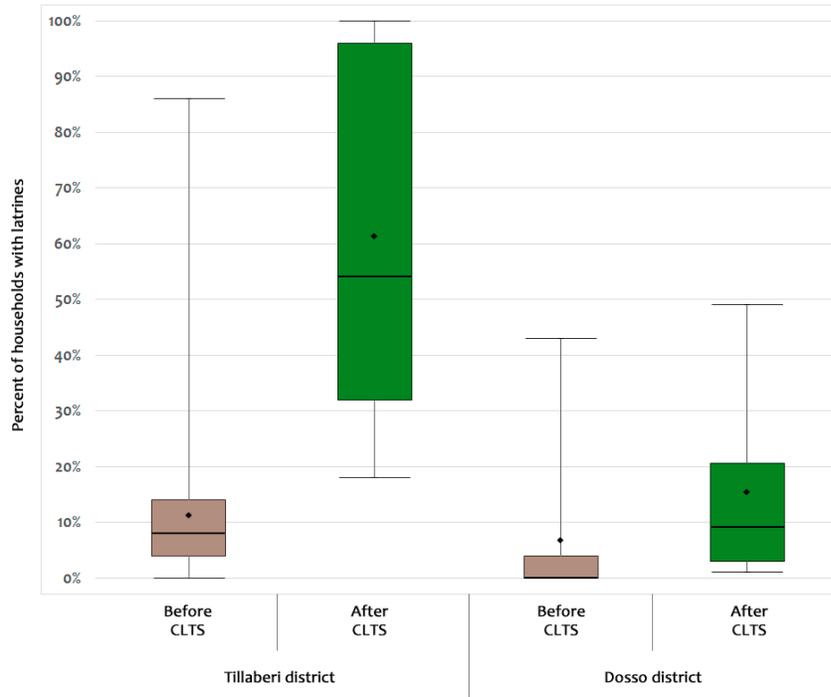
Figure 3. Distribution of latrine coverage in Plan International Niger's CLTS communities, by department, 2013[3]
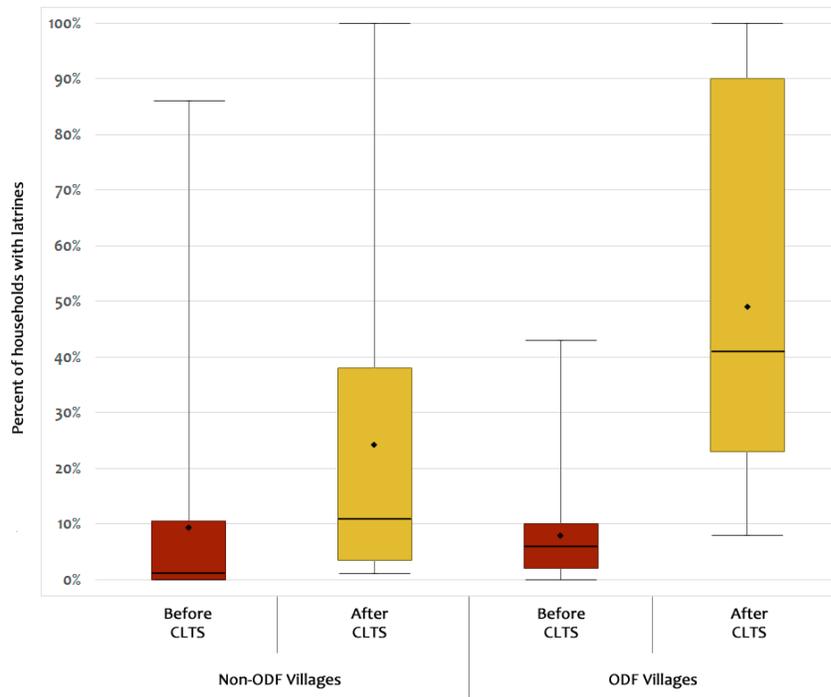
Figure 4. Distribution of latrine coverage in Plan International Niger's non-ODF and ODF villages, 2013[2]

[3] Box plots illustrate the distribution of data. The box represents half of the data. The solid black lines inside the boxes represent the median value (50% percentile), and the diamonds represent the mean, or average, value.

4.3. Roles of local actors: planning and pre-triggering stage

This section describes the roles of local actors as they relate to central themes that emerged from the case study during the planning and pre-triggering stages of CLTS. The roles are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Roles of local actors during planning / pre-triggering in Plan International Niger's CLTS program

Actor	Role
Plan International Niger	Financing; training; community selection
Local government	Community selection

Financial responsibility for CLTS

Plan International Niger financed all CLTS activities in their working areas, including trainings, per diem allowances for triggering events, follow-up visits, workshops, and communication materials. They received funding for CLTS from Plan International Netherlands, Plan International Canada and Plan International United Kingdom.

Funding was cited as a considerable challenge by both the LNGO and the TSCs in both departments, especially with regard to financing mechanisms. One TSC member felt that *"we are giving more than what we get [financially]."* Because Plan International Niger's administrative system would sometimes take several months to process reimbursements, the TSC in this department decided to put all verification visits on hold. Furthermore, the contract between Plan International Niger and the LNGO had ended four months before this study was conducted. TSCs, which were funded by Plan International Niger through the LNGO, were therefore unable to follow-up in communities and verify ODF status after that point. The concern is not only one of funding, but also that the local government does not appear to have internalized CLTS as part of their duties, and were only participating as part of an NGO project. If TSCs are formalized by the local government, they may feel a greater sense of ownership and may be able to mobilize government funds to carry out activities independent of NGOs.

Training

The government's Operational Strategy calls for all commune and department technical services officers to be trained in CLTS. To this end, Plan International Niger had already conducted several trainings on CLTS for their staff, local and international NGO staff, technical services officers, administrative authorities and local representatives, and journalists. Trainers were invited from Burkina Faso. The CLTS Handbook in French was used as the main training manual (Kar et al. 2008).

At the time of this study, respondents did not describe any challenges relating to CLTS trainings. However, as the scope of CLTS continues to grow in Niger, a pool of master trainers will have to be established to meet the demands of training all technical services officers across the country. Some TSC members in Plan International Niger's working areas had already received a training of trainers (ToT), which enabled them to train others in their department; such a system would need to be expanded to develop a pool of master trainers.

Community selection and village entry

Plan International Niger reportedly worked with TSCs and LNGOs to select communities for CLTS. However, some TSC members reported selecting communities themselves, whereas others thought that it was the LNGO that had selected communities. On the other hand, all LNGO facilitators said that Plan International Niger had given them a final list of villages. These varying responses suggest that Plan International Niger is likely to have still been the primary decision maker in this process, with varying levels of support from others.

Interviews with implementers helped identify the criteria for selecting communities, presented in Figure 5. The most frequently cited criteria were small villages, willing village leadership, and the presence of modern water points. One TSC member stated: *"We cannot talk about CLTS without water. You cannot go to ease yourself without water."* Regarding baseline assessments, one Plan International Niger staff member described a detailed process, whereby twice the number of villages were visited in order to select villages for triggering. In general, TSC members were not able to recall such baseline assessments, and one TSC member was of the opinion that government officials knew their communities well enough and could make the decision themselves.

Figure 5. Criteria for community selection as recalled by interview participants
Note: This figure is meant to illustrate the main criteria that were mentioned by more than one participant without prompting by researchers, and therefore represent what participants perceived to be most important at the time of the interview. The small sample size does not lend itself to weighting the importance of individual factors.

It was evident from interviews that Plan International Niger and partners spent considerable effort in the pre-triggering process of "community entry" (see Kar et al. 2008 for details). Multiple respondents mentioned that they would only trigger communities that were receptive to the message. Those communities that were not interested were not triggered at first, but several respondents noted that these communities often came back to them for assistance after seeing

progress in neighboring triggered communities. One Plan International Niger staff member said that starting with easier villages allowed them to gain experience in the CLTS approach before tackling more challenging villages.

Despite implementers' recognition that some communities are more challenging than others, there was still a widespread belief among those interviewed that CLTS could be used universally in rural areas. The perception was that CLTS is about raising awareness of open defecation rather than a means to achieve universal household latrine coverage, and is therefore relevant everywhere. However, it is still possible that communities—such as those with strong expectation of external support or those with competing priorities—may not be receptive to the CLTS message. As Plan International Niger continues to expand CLTS activities, it can use baseline assessments to continue to target communities where CLTS is more likely to succeed to ensure that their efforts are cost-effective.

Enabling and constraining factors for successful planning and pre-triggering

Table 4 summarizes the most frequently cited enabling and constraining factors for planning and pre-triggering activities that are relevant to the role of local actors. The enabling factors allow Plan International Niger to conduct CLTS activities more effectively, whereas the constraining factors pose a challenge to CLTS implementation. Alongside each factor is a brief discussion of its implications for Plan International Niger's CLTS approach.

Table 4. Enabling and constraining factors for successful planning and pre-triggering

Enabling Factor	Relevant Local Actors	Implication for Plan International Niger
CLTS in national sanitation policy	National government Plan International Niger Local government	Plan International Niger, with other NGO partners in the Cluster WASH, have been able to incorporate CLTS into the national policy. Growing governmental recognition of CLTS enables Plan International Niger to gradually strengthen local government buy-in for the approach.
Local government responsible for improving water and sanitation	Plan International Niger Local government	Decentralization of government services allows Plan International Niger to engage closely with local government and form TSCs to lead the ODF verification process. This has the potential to create greater government accountability and ownership of sanitation.
Strong coordination between Plan International Niger and local government	Plan International Niger Local government	Plan International Niger has demonstrated their commitment to strengthen local government capacity by engaging them from the initial stages of the CLTS process. They can further enable local government leadership in sanitation by advocating for the formalization of TSCs, which could become a focal point for other sanitation projects in their departments.

Constraining Factor	Relevant Local Actors	Implication for Plan International Niger
Funding and administrative bottlenecks	Plan International Niger Local government Local NGO	Plan International Niger will need to improve the efficiency of their financial procedures to ensure that payments are processed in a timely manner, and that CLTS activities are not impeded due to administrative issues.
Perception that CLTS is a universally applicable approach in rural communities	Plan International Niger Local government Local NGO	As Plan International Niger continues to expand CLTS activities, it will be important for them to continue to target communities where CLTS is more likely to succeed rather than attempting the same approach in all rural communities. This can allow them and the government to focus resources on communities that are more likely to be receptive to the CLTS message, and adapt their sanitation approach in communities that do not meet their criteria for CLTS.

4.4. Roles of local actors: triggering

This section describes the roles of local actors as they relate to central themes that emerged from the case study during the triggering stage of CLTS. The roles are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Roles of local actors in triggering in Plan International Niger's CLTS program

Actor	Role
Plan International Niger	Oversee triggering
Local government	
LNGOs	Trigger communities

Triggering activities in Plan International Niger's program areas follow many of the steps established in international CLTS guidelines and practiced around the world. The steps most commonly cited by respondents in this study were the transect walk or "walk of shame," the water bottle demonstration, village mapping, and discussion of disease transmission.

Triggering activities are primarily the responsibility of the LNGO. Several TSC members reported that they jointly triggered communities with the LNGO, but most community level respondents could not recall government presence in their communities in relation to CLTS.

The facilitators described large triggering events, sometimes with 300 people. Each triggering team had a lead facilitator and a co-facilitator, accompanied by people responsible for note-taking and crowd control. Descriptions of triggering events by Plan International Niger, the LNGO, and TSC members all highlighted the need to have communities analyze their sanitation situation for themselves. The local government's TSC members all showed considerable buy-in for the triggering approach, with an ability to describe triggering steps in detail and explain reasons for their effectiveness. One TSC member compared the CLTS approach to their previous strategies by saying, *"In these communities, in a few hours, we have done things—positive things—that in years the*

authorities have not been able to do."

Community leaders also recalled the CLTS approach in terms of empowerment. When asked about the support they received from facilitators, one natural leader was clear to point out: *"They brought us support in the sense that [they explained that] we should work for our own benefit."* Another natural leader from a different village said, *"People understood that if you build a latrine, you are building it for yourself, you are not building it for anyone else. Their [Plan International Niger] objective is to see every household with some latrine."*

Several facilitators suggested that it was not culturally or religiously appropriate to talk openly about open defecation. Therefore, they would not use the crude word for feces until later in the triggering. Facilitators often engaged with religious leaders, and used Islam as a means of promoting the idea of cleanliness. One TSC member described how they would begin the meeting respectfully: *"First, we tell them, 'We have come for a project. We want you to forgive us for everything that you will see.'"* Most respondents found the walk of shame to be the most effective step, although one LNGO facilitator preferred the water-hair demonstration and said they sometimes skip the walk of shame because of less participation. Those that did use the walk of shame as a triggering tool indicated that it was one of the last steps in their process because they did not want to start with such a shocking demonstration.

Emphasis on health benefits

Interviews suggest that facilitators emphasized health benefits of ending open defecation in triggering events, rather than triggering techniques that are meant to incite shame and disgust. Community level interviews strongly indicated that before CLTS, people were not as aware of the harms of open defecation, so focusing on health benefits could indeed have been more effective than other methods. One natural leader from an ODF village observed that, *"Even if we were aware that [open defecation] was not good, it was with the arrival of Plan that we have seen the real dangers. [Initially] we felt that if you defecate in the open air, maybe you would be ashamed that someone will see you, […] but when Plan came, we understood that the danger was more than shame but regarding your own health."* Many communities in Plan International Niger's working areas had also been affected by a cholera outbreak, which allowed people to more easily form connections between open defecation and diarrheal disease.

Role of natural leaders

Most natural leaders reported being selected for this role immediately after triggering events. They were selected by the community members because they volunteered to build latrines as a result of triggering, and because they were already leaders in their communities. These natural leaders helped develop action plans for the communities and were tasked with routinely following-up on progress. None of the natural leaders or other community leaders owned or used latrines prior to triggering, but all of them were building latrines as a response to the triggering.

In most communities, three natural leaders were selected; along with village chiefs and religious leaders, they were all given additional training after triggering events on CLTS and sanitation messages, including an introduction to basic latrine types. The natural leaders were then asked to

use this training to motivate their community members to stop open defecation.

Triggering in the context of subsidies

All facilitators that were interviewed spoke of the challenges of triggering communities where Plan International Niger had previously provided subsidized latrines, food assistance or water systems. While it was not possible to obtain data on the number of triggered villages with a history of Plan International Niger projects, facilitators indicated that it was easier to trigger so-called "new" communities because of fewer expectations, and this also reportedly led to better outcomes. Most facilitators felt that the older subsidized latrines were not being used, although community leaders insisted that people did use them until they filled up. In one non-ODF community where Plan International Niger had provided cement latrines in the past, the village chief indicated that once their household latrines had filled up, village members started using the school latrines. When the school locked the latrines to public use, people resorted to open defecation. This community had a baseline latrine coverage of 30% before triggering as a result of subsidized latrines. Triggering this community did not seem to have the intended effect, as latrine coverage only increased by nine percent at the end of the project. According to community leaders, few people felt motivated to build simple pit latrines, which is all they could afford, because they had already experienced better quality latrines built by Plan International Niger.

Plan International Niger staff indicated that they already avoid villages with a history of other NGO projects. Based on LNGO facilitators' experiences, community selection criteria could also include absence of previous Plan projects, particularly those that provided full or partial hardware subsidies for latrines. In these communities, CLTS triggering may not be the most effective method of reducing open defecation since people already have an expectation of external support.

Enabling and constraining factors for successful triggering

Table 6 lists the most frequently cited enabling and constraining factors for triggering that are relevant to the role of local actors. The enabling factors allow Plan International Niger to conduct CLTS activities more effectively, whereas the constraining factors pose a challenge to CLTS implementation. Alongside each factor is a brief discussion of its implications for Plan International Niger's CLTS approach.

Table 6. Enabling and constraining factors for successful triggering

Enabling Factor	Relevant Local Actors	Implication for Plan International Niger
Triggering adapted to local context	Plan International Niger Local government Local NGO	Plan International Niger trained LNGO and local government well on the participatory and analytical methodology of CLTS, as community leaders viewed triggering as an empowering approach. The emphasis on communicating health benefits rather than eliciting shame and disgust appeared to have been received well in this context, given communities' limited baseline knowledge about the harms of open defecation prior to triggering.

Constraining Factor	Relevant Local Actors	Implication for Plan International Niger
History of latrine subsidies by Plan International Niger	Plan International Niger Local government Local NGO	Facilitators' struggled to successfully trigger communities that had experienced better quality latrines built previously by Plan International Niger. This indicates that villages need to be better targeted for CLTS in the future. CLTS may not be the most effective method of reducing open defecation in communities with a recent history of subsidies, as few people felt motivated to build simple pit latrines themselves.

4.5. Roles of local actors: post-triggering

This section describes the roles of local actors as they relate to central themes that emerged from the case study during the post-triggering stage of CLTS. The roles are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7. Roles of local actors in post-triggering activities in Plan International Niger's CLTS program

Actor	Role
Plan International Niger	Oversee monitoring and aggregate data; train natural leaders and masons
Local government	Train masons; verify and certify ODF villages
LNGOs	Monitor latrine coverage and ODF status; persuade communities to change hygiene and sanitation behaviour
Natural leaders and other community leaders	Persuade communities to change hygiene and sanitation behaviour; routinely collect data on latrine coverage

Monitoring progress in communities

Follow-up activities largely consisted of encouraging communities to stop open defecation, monitoring progress, facilitating access to sanitation hardware, and verifying and certifying ODF status. The LNGO was responsible for conducting routine follow-up visits to communities, which were divided amongst four to five LNGO facilitators in each department. LNGOs relied on natural leaders to collect data on the number of latrines built, and would then submit a progress report to the TSC and Plan International Niger every three months. TSC members indicated that they would periodically visit communities to verify the progress described in LNGO reports.

LNGOs reported visiting communities several times a month until they reached ODF status, and they would then visit communities once a month. This frequency was roughly corroborated by community level interviews. Reported follow-up frequency of TSCs varied. Some members said that they would visit communities once a month, but most others described their role as supervisors rather than as routine monitors, and would therefore not make routine community visits.

There was no clear end-date for post-triggering activities other than achievement of ODF status, regardless of how long it would take. There was a widespread perception among implementers that

communities should be followed-up with indefinitely, even if they had not seen any progress in months. Several LNGO and TSC respondents suggested that Plan International Niger should not *"abandon the communities."* Even at the community level, leaders expected Plan International Niger and their partners to keep visiting them. One natural leader said, *"You know, we are not happy that the activities of tebonse (CLTS) are not very frequent. What we could advise Plan is that they should not stop. They should continue the activities of CLTS."*

Lack of routine follow-up did lead to slow progress in some villages; for example, in Dosso Department, Plan International Niger had contracted one LNGO for triggering, and due to unsatisfactory performance, switched the contract to another LNGO one year later. The current LNGO believed that poor follow-up immediately after triggering had led to a lack of interest in the CLTS approach. One LNGO facilitator described an example of two communities, one that had been triggered earlier by the previous LNGO, and a neighboring community triggered by this respondent:

"There is a neighboring village where Plan had done CLTS [the previous year]. And this village, the entire village was smelling. [...] The people in [the newly triggered village] always tease these people. They laugh at the people in the village and tell them the latrines that have been built are making the village smell. And that's the reason [the newly triggered village] says they will not accept the approach. For one year, no latrine had been built because they say they don't want the approach."

Even in this instance, when neither community was interested in CLTS, the LNGO facilitator believed that all they could do was to keep following up with the same messages *"to raise their awareness, because it is in our contract. We hope that they will change the behavior. But all these things have not worked."* This example indicates the need for better targeting of CLTS, rather than continuing to follow-up with the same strategy to no avail. Furthermore, indefinite follow-up is not cost-effective or practical, especially given that Plan International Niger's CLTS activities were already constrained by donor funding. Plan International Niger did not have funds to renew their contract with the newer LNGO in December 2013, which effectively brought all activities to a halt.

Training natural leaders and conducting exchange visits

Natural leaders and other community leaders all mentioned that they had been trained by Plan International Niger after triggering. They were taught *"how to approach the community,"* about the importance of latrines and environmental sanitation, and how to monitor progress. One natural leader talked about how they would take the opportunity of any gathering in their community to *"remind people about the importance of making latrines or of sanitation."*

In addition to this training, Plan International Niger had organized exchange visits between community leaders from different triggered communities. Most respondents recalled quarterly exchange visits, where they heard about progress in other communities, and shared lessons learned. This forum was described as a powerful motivational tool for communities. One religious leader observed that the meetings created a sense of competition: *"When we came back to our village, we would say, 'Be careful, the next village has gone ahead of us so we should make a greater effort, so that that village does not pass us.'"* It is also because of these exchanges that the village mentioned earlier

learned that the verification team can make a visit unannounced, so they should always be prepared.

This engagement of community leaders and natural leaders, and interaction between villages has been novel to sanitation programming in this area. Natural leaders are also mentioned in the national Operational Strategy, tasked with "daily monitoring of community commitments, relaying behavior change communication activities, and supporting the triggering process in new villages" (MHA 2014). One TSC member felt that CLTS was unique in this regard because it took people's point of view into account. Another TSC member felt that *"instead of spending millions making latrines that have remained unused, the only method is to raise the awareness of people."*

ODF definition, verification, and celebration

There is no national definition of ODF status, other than the absence of open defecation in a village at the time of certification. Except for one respondent, there was consensus that a village does not need to have 100% latrine coverage to be considered ODF. Plan International Niger's monitoring data also support this definition, since household latrine coverage in communities was not necessarily related to ODF status (Figure 4).

The verification process began once the LNGO believed that a village was ODF. The TSC was ultimately responsible for ODF certification, but there were conflicting accounts of who participated in the verification process—some said Plan International Niger, the LNGO, and the TSC jointly made these visits, whereas others said the TSC went alone to remain objective.

Some TSC members said they developed ODF verification forms on their own, whereas others said these forms were provided to them by the NGO. Table 8 lists ODF verification criteria provided by Plan International Niger. Villages were scored and ranked based on some of these indicators, but no benchmarks were listed, making it hard to know on what basis a community could be certified as ODF. Plan International Niger's monitoring forms state that the main criteria necessary for ODF attainment are 100% latrine utilization and the absence of excreta around the village.

One TSC member described the process in the following manner: "We do not have in our criteria a specific number of latrines or a percentage. When we go to a village or a household that does not have latrines, we ask them, 'Where do you defecate?' and they would tell us, 'We defecate at this place.' If there are three households in between [your household and] the household where you go to defecate, we understand that it is not possible. You are probably still defecating outside." This may be a pragmatic approach to assessing ODF status in a community, but can lead to different interpretations of ODF status, and makes it challenging to compare results across departments. It also does not indicate incremental progress toward overall improvements in sanitation in the community. Furthermore, neither monitoring data nor verification criteria appeared to count the number of shared or communal latrines, making it difficult to assess the latrine options that people were using if they claimed to no longer practice open defecation but did not own a latrine. For example, it is difficult to imagine how a village where 10% of households have latrines is ODF; additional data on shared latrines would provide evidence of other latrine options.

Table 8. ODF Verification Criteria

Criteria	Measurement	Score
Absence of excreta around village	Qualitative observation	20 points
Household latrine coverage	Number of latrines / Number of households	15 points
Latrine utilization rate	Number of latrines being used / Total number of latrines	20 points
Handwashing facility coverage	Number of latrines with handwashing facility / Total number of latrines	15 points
Overall sanitation of village	Qualitative observation	30 points
Households access to latrines	Not indicated	-
Additional criteria		
Presence of a local hygiene and sanitation committee	Yes/No	-
Rules for respecting hygiene and sanitation practices	Yes/No	-
Average motivation of the population	Enthusiasm of village-level monitoring committee	Very good = 6 points
	Enthusiasm of natural leaders	Good = 4 points
	Frequency of sanitation meetings	Fair = 2 points

Source: Plan International Niger 2014

Note: this table compiles indicators from various forms provided by Plan International Niger.

ODF status can serve as a tool to motivate communities to improve their sanitation and hygiene behaviors, rather than being used as a final outcome indicator of sanitation. For example, ODF ceremonies were described enthusiastically by community level respondents. Plan International Niger provided rewards to ODF villages by way of rakes, wheelbarrows, soap, an ODF sign and an ODF certificate. They invited natural leaders from other villages, which spread the momentum to those villages. However, due to administrative and financial challenges, ODF certification had stalled at the time of this study because the LNGO contract with Plan International Niger had ended. According to Plan International Niger, 10 villages were awaiting certification in Tillabéri, but it was unclear when the TSC would be able to make the verification visits.

This delay in certification can demotivate communities that have made significant progress. Community leaders from one village that considered itself to be ODF said that when no verification visits had occurred, people slipped in keeping the village clean. Subsequently, a surprise verification visit led to their village not being certified as ODF. This village then attended a neighboring village's ODF ceremony, which inspired them to keep up their behavior change in the hopes that they would be surprised with another verification visit that would lead to ODF certification. This sense of competition was promising, but if the TSC is not willing or able to conduct any more verification visits, it is possible that villages like these would eventually lose motivation due to lack of positive

reinforcement. A natural leader from this village said, *"Our only thing is that all the work we have done, that it gets rewarded."*

Access to the sanitation hardware supply chain

Simple pit latrines were the most common type of latrine in communities visited for this study. In all interviews with implementers and community leaders, the quality of latrines was widely described as the main challenge for realizing behavior change and for ensuring sustainability. A number of respondents cited latrine collapse due to floods. One village chief noted that acquiring better building material was the biggest problem, as iron and cement were not easy to find and were very expensive. One community leader said, *"The latrines that we build ourselves […] are not as good, beautiful or resistant as the ones that would be built by people who come and build it for us."*

One method Plan International Niger employed to address latrine quality was to train masons from villages on how to build more durable latrines. Plan International Niger aimed to train two masons per triggered community. By the end of 2013, their progress report stated that 109 masons had been trained, and half of them were working on building latrines. The main challenges reported were low demand from communities and migration of masons.

Interviews with TSC members suggested that masons were trained after ODF status had been achieved *"because after they see the importance of making latrines, people would like to improve the latrines, so they will need masons to make their latrines much better."* However, it was evident from interviews that not all communities were aware of these trained masons or had different experiences with them. One natural leader thought that masons worked as volunteers, whereas in another village, a natural leader said that only those who could afford to hire masons had latrines of a higher quality than those they could built themselves. None of the community leaders could describe the contribution of masons in detail.

The latrines that masons were trained to build included a combination of wood, mud, used tires, barrels, stones, and recycled wood. The government's national Operational Strategy also refers to the need to train masons on using local or recycled materials (MHA 2014). A natural leader from a village where Plan International Niger had previously built cement latrines revealed that the wood-lined pits that masons were now taught to build were not in high demand because they were not of the same quality as the cement latrines that had previously been subsidized; these new wood-lined latrines were expected to collapse within one year. To support construction of stronger latrines, the government strategy calls for promoting "so-called modern materials such as precast slabs through financial incentives for their promoters" (MHA 2014). Such incentives were not in place at the time of this study, but in 2014, Plan International Niger and partners had begun discussing the viability of sanitation marketing in Niger. Sanitation marketing is likely to be an uphill struggle, however, as it requires a sufficient number of people to have the purchasing power for latrines.

Financing sanitation hardware

By all accounts, there had been no provision of new latrine subsidies by Plan International Niger or the government in triggered communities. However, the national government's policy and strategy for hygiene and sanitation includes latrine subsidies, both for household and public latrines. LNGO

and TSC respondents felt that financial or material support could be given to communities after they had achieved ODF status, which would indicate that they had demonstrated sufficient behavior change and were ready for better latrines. One TSC member wanted to be in the position of directing any subsidy-based project only to ODF communities, thereby following CLTS with subsidies. Standardized monitoring mechanisms would enable the TSC to test this approach.

Community leaders in the four villages that were visited requested external support, but in general, did not indicate a strong expectation for Plan International Niger to build latrines without any joint partnership. One village leader described this as a cultural factor: *"In our tradition here, it is a shame to ask someone for something [...] but if someone gives it willingly, it would go a long way in cleaning the village and in improving sanitation. If I have external support, I would make sure that everyone in my village plays his part in the sanitation of our village and that they also contribute. Any condition that the external support wants in relation to the improvement of sanitation I would make sure that the people in my village follow and give their part in it."*

Plan International Niger staff were against the idea of subsidies, which they felt would harm the process of CLTS. This is a valid concern given the challenges they faced with implementing CLTS in communities with a history of subsidies, and given their organizational shift to a no-subsidy policy. However, the challenge of increasing access to sanitation for the ultra-poor is real. In all communities visited in this study, people described more urgent priorities of water supply and food over sanitation. One natural leader said: *"If you are not fed properly, you will not be fit enough to properly think about cleanliness or sanitation."*

There is no single approach that can adequately address sanitation for poor and vulnerable populations. Plan International Niger is in a position to influence the nature of post-CLTS support to communities through approaches that maintain the motivational nature of CLTS but still provide access to higher quality sanitation. In addition to training masons and piloting sanitation marketing projects, they can consider introducing financing plans, mobilizing villages to collectively finance latrines or create self-help initiatives, and finally, target government subsidies to those who need it most, possibly after communities have become ODF.

Enabling and constraining factors for successful post-triggering

Table 9 lists the most frequently cited enabling and constraining factors in post-triggering that are relevant to the role of local actors. The enabling factors allow Plan International Niger to conduct CLTS activities more effectively, whereas the constraining factors pose a challenge to CLTS implementation. Alongside each factor is a brief discussion of its implications for Plan International Niger's CLTS approach.

Table 9. Enabling and constraining factors for successful post-triggering

Enabling Factor	Relevant Local Actors	Implication for Plan International Niger
Natural leaders trained to motivate their communities	Plan International Niger Local government Local NGO Natural leaders Other community leaders	Plan International Niger helped build village level capacity for CLTS by providing specific training to natural leaders and other community leaders after triggering. This approach appeared to keep them engaged and motivated to persuade behavior change and monitor progress in their communities.
Exchange visits between communities	Plan International Niger Local government Local NGO Natural leaders Other community leaders	These visits enable Plan International Niger to create linkages between their triggered communities and allow community actors to influence each other. They generate a sense of competition and learning between communities, which can help Plan International Niger realize greater progress in their triggered villages.
Plan International Niger building capacity of local government to lead ODF verification	Plan International Niger Local government	Despite operational challenges associated with verifying ODF status, Plan International Niger's strategy of placing the responsibility of ODF certification on the government can help build a sense of ownership for CLTS and official recognition of the approach.
Constraining Factor	**Relevant Local Actors**	**Implication for Plan International Niger**
Perception that indefinite follow-up is required to keep communities from reverting to open defecation	Plan International Niger Local government Local NGO Communities	Not only would this approach be cost-ineffective, but it would not be practical given Plan International Niger's funding and administrative challenges. It indicates the need to better target appropriate communities for CLTS, rather than continuing to follow-up with the same strategy.
Non-specific ODF verification criteria	Plan International Niger Local government Local NGO Communities	ODF verification criteria need to be strengthened in Plan International Niger's CLTS program. These criteria did not list benchmarks, making it difficult to know on what basis a community could be certified as ODF. The current approach is subjective and makes it challenging to compare results across departments.
Delays in ODF certification	Plan International Niger Local government Local NGO Communities	Administrative and financial challenges within Plan International Niger slowed the process of certifying communities as ODF, which can demotivate communities that have made significant progress. The TSC's inability to make these visits without funding from Plan International Niger also reflects the

		government's financial constraints, and that the government has not yet internalized CLTS as part of its sanitation programming, treating it as an NGO project.
Poor quality of latrines	Plan International Niger Local government Local NGO Communities	There is low demand for latrines made from locally available materials, but affordability for higher quality latrines is also an obstacle. No single approach can adequately address sanitation for poor and vulnerable populations. To ensure that gains made as a result of CLTS are sustained, Plan International Niger would need to influence the nature of post-CLTS support to communities. In addition to sanitation marketing and training masons, they can advocate for financing plans, mobilizing villages to collectively finance latrines or create self-help initiatives, and target government subsidies to those who need it most, possibly after communities have become ODF.

5. Conclusions and Implications

This study illustrated the roles of local actors in Plan International Niger's CLTS implementation process, highlighted enabling and constraining factors for successful implementation, and discussed implications of these factors for Plan International Niger's CLTS approach. There are six key conclusions with implications that may be useful to practitioners working with demand-led sanitation approaches in similar settings.

Plan International Niger's coordination with other partners on the national stage
Plan International Niger is an important stakeholder in the country's sanitation sector; for example, their advocacy efforts led to CLTS being included in the national policy. However, other actors involved in sanitation—including the national government, international NGOs, and the media—wanted Plan International Niger to play an even greater role by publicizing their efforts and sharing their lessons learned on a national stage. As one of the early implementers of CLTS, Plan International Niger has the ability to influence the direction of CLTS programming in the country and strengthen coordination between national stakeholders.

Local government engagement in CLTS
Local government is responsible for improving water and sanitation in Niger. As a result, Plan International Niger has engaged closely with the departmental government by forming TSCs to supervise CLTS activities and certify ODF villages. The TSC has shown some buy-in for the CLTS approach, but still treats it as an NGO project and does not yet recognize it as a core function of government efforts to improve sanitation. Plan International Niger should advocate for TSCs to be formalized into government entities with a dedicated budget, which can at least generate the

potential for greater ownership of the approach. Plan International Niger can gradually transfer leadership of sanitation efforts to the local government by building their capacity in CLTS and by engaging with them to consider CLTS as one of several approaches to improve sanitation in their departments.

Targeting CLTS to the most appropriate communities

There was a perception amongst implementers that CLTS is a universally applicable approach in rural communities, and that follow-up would have to occur indefinitely to keep communities from reverting to open defecation. As Plan International Niger, other NGOs, and the government aim to expand the scope of CLTS activities, it will be important for them to target communities where CLTS is more likely to succeed rather than attempting the same approach in all rural communities, such as those with a history of latrine subsidies. Especially given Plan International Niger's funding and administrative challenges, targeting can enable them to focus resources on communities that are more likely to be receptive to the CLTS message, and adapt their approach in communities that do not meet their criteria for CLTS. Remaining resources can be used on follow-up and certification visits to ensure that communities that have made sufficient progress after triggering receive positive reinforcement and do not lose motivation.

Engagement with natural leaders and other community actors

Plan International Niger's approach of training natural leaders on how to monitor progress and on the importance of latrines and environmental sanitation builds capacity at the village level for CLTS and can empower leaders to motivate their communities. In addition to trainings, Plan International Niger also organized exchange visits between community leaders from different triggered communities. This engagement of community leaders and natural leaders, and interaction between villages, has been novel to sanitation programming in this area. It allows communities to create linkages and to influence each other by generating a sense of competition and learning, which could help Plan International Niger realize greater progress in their triggered villages.

Financing and supply of sanitation hardware

Plan International Niger recognizes the importance of following demand generation with supply options by training masons in their CLTS communities in the post-triggering phase. However, pit latrines using local and recycled materials built by masons were not in high demand, especially in communities where people had experienced higher quality subsidized latrines. On the other hand, affordability of high quality latrines remained a challenge. The national government policy contains latrine subsidies, and local government and LNGO facilitators all expressed the need to provide hardware support to improve quality of latrines in ODF communities. In this environment, Plan International Niger is in a position to influence the nature of post-CLTS support to communities. They can not only continue attempts at sanitation marketing—including financing plans—but can also advocate for other approaches such as mobilizing villages to collective finance latrines or create self-help initiatives. Finally, they can help the department government target subsidies to those who need it most to ensure that gains made as a result of CLTS are sustained.

Defining and measuring success

At the time of this study, the national definition of ODF was a general absence of open defecation in a village at the time of certification. Villages did not need to have 100% latrine coverage to be considered ODF, and were scored and ranked based on a set of verification criteria. However, these criteria were subjective and did not have benchmarks, making it difficult to know on what basis a community could be certified as ODF. This can lead to different interpretations of ODF status and makes it challenging to compare results across departments. Plan International Niger's monitoring system also does not contain data on shared and communal latrines—which appeared to be common in their working areas—making it difficult to assess alternative latrine options for those who did not own latrines but claimed to no longer practice open defecation. Once the monitoring and certification process is streamlined, ODF status could serve as a tool to motivate communities to improve their sanitation and hygiene status and behaviors. Plan International Niger can help influence national sanitation monitoring by improving their own baseline assessments, monitoring, and verification processes to become a model for the government.

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7. Annex 1 – Summary of enabling and constraining factors

Stage	Enabling Factor	Local Actors	Implication
Planning / Pre-Triggering	CLTS in national sanitation policy	National government Plan International Niger Local government	Plan International Niger, with other NGO partners in the Cluster WASH, have been able to incorporate CLTS into the national policy. Growing governmental recognition of CLTS enables Plan International Niger to gradually strengthen local government buy-in for the approach.
Planning / Pre-Triggering	Local government responsible for improving water and sanitation	Plan International Niger Local government	Decentralization of government services allows Plan International Niger to engage closely with local government and form TSCs to lead the ODF verification process. This has the potential to create greater government accountability and ownership of sanitation.
Planning / Pre-Triggering	Strong coordination between Plan International Niger and local government	Plan International Niger Local government	Plan International Niger has demonstrated their commitment to strengthen local government capacity by engaging them from the initial stages of the CLTS process. They can further enable local government leadership in sanitation by advocating for the formalization of TSCs, which could become a focal point for other sanitation projects in their departments.
Triggering	Triggering adapted to local context	Plan International Niger Local government Local NGO	Plan International Niger trained LNGO and local government well on the participatory and analytical methodology of CLTS, as community leaders viewed triggering as an empowering approach. The emphasis on communicating health benefits rather than eliciting shame and disgust appeared to have been received well in this context, given communities' limited baseline knowledge about the harms of open defecation prior to triggering.
Post-Triggering	Natural leaders trained to motivate their communities	Plan International Niger Local government Local NGO Natural leaders Other community	Plan International Niger helped build village level capacity for CLTS by providing specific training to natural leaders and other community leaders after triggering. This approach

		leaders	appeared to keep them engaged and motivated to persuade behavior change and monitor progress in their communities.
Post-Triggering	Exchange visits between communities	Plan International Niger Local government Local NGO Natural leaders Other community leaders	These visits enable Plan International Niger to create linkages between their triggered communities and allow community actors to influence each other. They generate a sense of competition and learning between communities, which can help Plan International Niger realize greater progress in their triggered villages.
Post-Triggering	Plan International Niger building capacity of local government to lead ODF verification	Plan International Niger Local government	Despite operational challenges associated with verifying ODF status, Plan International Niger's strategy of placing the responsibility of ODF certification on the government can help build a sense of ownership for CLTS and official recognition of the approach.

Stage	Constraining Factor	Local Actors	Implication
Planning / Pre-Triggering	Funding and administrative bottlenecks	Plan International Niger Local government Local NGO	Plan International Niger will need to improve the efficiency of their financial procedures to ensure that payments are processed in a timely manner, and that CLTS activities are not impeded due to administrative issues.
Planning / Pre-Triggering	Perception that CLTS is a universally applicable approach in rural communities	Plan International Niger Local government Local NGO	As Plan International Niger continues to expand CLTS activities, it will be important for them to continue to target communities where CLTS is more likely to succeed rather than attempting the same approach in all rural communities. This can allow them and the government to focus resources on communities that are more likely to be receptive to the CLTS message, and adapt their sanitation approach in communities that do not meet their criteria for CLTS.
Triggering	History of latrine subsidies by Plan International Niger	Plan International Niger Local government Local NGO	Facilitators' struggled to successfully trigger communities that had experienced better quality latrines built previously by Plan International Niger.

			This indicates that villages need to be better targeted for CLTS in the future. CLTS may not be the most effective method of reducing open defecation in communities with a recent history of subsidies, as few people felt motivated to build simple pit latrines themselves.
Post-Triggering	Perception that indefinite follow-up is required to keep communities from reverting to open defecation	Plan International Niger Local government Local NGO Communities	Not only would this approach be cost-ineffective, but it would not be practical given Plan International Niger's funding and administrative challenges. It indicates the need to better target appropriate communities for CLTS, rather than continuing to follow-up with the same strategy.
Post-Triggering	Non-specific ODF verification criteria	Plan International Niger Local government Local NGO Communities	ODF verification criteria need to be strengthened in Plan International Niger's CLTS program. These criteria did not list benchmarks, making it difficult to know on what basis a community could be certified as ODF. The current approach is subjective and makes it challenging to compare results across departments.
Post-Triggering	Delays in ODF certification	Plan International Niger Local government Local NGO Communities	Administrative and financial challenges within Plan International Niger slowed the process of certifying communities as ODF, which can demotivate communities that have made significant progress. The TSC's inability to make these visits without funding from Plan International Niger also reflects the government's financial constraints, and that the government has not yet internalized CLTS as part of its sanitation programming, treating it as an NGO project.
Post-Triggering	Poor quality of latrines	Plan International Niger Local government Local NGO Communities	There is low demand for latrines made from locally available materials, but affordability for higher quality latrines is also an obstacle. No single approach can adequately address sanitation for poor and vulnerable populations. To ensure that gains made as a result of CLTS are sustained, Plan International Niger would need to influence the nature of post-CLTS support to

communities. In addition to sanitation marketing and training masons, they can advocate for financing plans, mobilizing villages to collectively finance latrines or create self-help initiatives, and target government subsidies to those who need it most, possibly after communities have become ODF.