

## **Scaling Pit Emptying Services In Blantyre-Malawi Through Pit Emptiers Association**

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

Blantyre is Malawi's commercial city and is one of the fast-growing cities in Africa. With a population of more than 1,068,681 (NSO, 2015) people during the day, the city is the epicenter of businesses in Malawi. While Blantyre City Council (BCC) has categorized Blantyre peri-urban into 21 low-income areas (Informal settlements) which constitute over 65% of the city's population, provision of piped sewer system for fecal sludge management in these informal settlements has proved to be unfeasible. With an estimated fecal sludge emptying demand of 100 pit latrines per day (*draft report - Blantyre Shit Flow Diagram 2018*), established pit emptiers have had several operational challenges hindering demand expectations. These included; high transportation costs to the treatment plant; high dumping fees; conflicts with BCC public health regulations and inability to own a pit emptying equipment by entrepreneurs who had intentions of venturing into pit emptying business.

In 2014, individual pit emptiers in collaboration with Water for People assessed these challenges, saw an opportunity and mobilized themselves to form an association which was aimed at addressing their common hindrances in reaching more customers and growing their businesses. Today, Tipope Pit Emptiers Association is a legally registered institution with the Malawi Government and has 45 members (*15 have their own pit emptying equipment while 25 conduct latrine construction businesses but occasionally hire pit emptying equipment from the association*). The association has its own truck (vehicle) and pit emptying equipment (an Evac) which enable small pit emptying businesses have access by hiring at a fee to conduct their pit emptying services.

The association is self-financing through membership fees, hire of the vehicle and pit emptying equipment. Members pay an annual subscription fee of Mk40,000 (U\$55) while vehicle is hired at a fee of Mk5,000 (U\$7) per trip and the pit emptying equipment (Evac) is hired at Mk7,000 (U\$10) per day. Pit emptiers charge households for emptying 200 liters of fecal sludge at a minimum fee of Mk5,000 (U\$7). Dumping fee at a fecal sludge treatment plant managed by Blantyre City Council is Mk2,000 (U\$3).

Furthermore, Tipope Pit Emptiers Association has a constitution which guide their day-to-day operations and a bank account with three trustees as signatories. The trustees meet quarterly to formulate and asses operations.

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

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

## **Summary**

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

## Lessons learned

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

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

### **2. Lessened resource burden on BCC:**

With the private sector in place (Tipope Pit Emptiers Association), Blantyre City Council can now re-allocate resources initially meant for public services on faecal sludge management towards other developmental activities in the city.

## Recommendations

1. City Councils must enforce city regulations on latrine construction standards on all households in the city which will facilitate efficient pit emptying when it is full.
2. Rehabilitation of faecal sludge treatment plants by the City Council and decentralizing establishment of treatment plants is vital in the reduction of transport costs for pit emptiers.

## Next Steps

1. Support Pit Emptiers Association to employ a salaried Administrator to reduce the burden of trustees conducting day-to-day duties. This will enable members concentrate on their businesses.