SUCCESSFUL SLUDGE ENTERPRISES IN SMALL URBAN CENTRES IN ZIMBABWE

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Key Messages:
Thorough and systematic engagement of all actors (public, provider and customer) in collecting and reflecting on sustainability factors and in identifying actions, is crucial. And requires lots of follow up to see that actions are implemented. Facilitate Local Authority buy in and partnership with the operator/s early and consistently. Understand vested interests for and against the desludging business

Problem: An appropriate technology for pit emptying in Zimbabwe
Most Zimbabweans are unaware that latrines can be emptied and instead build new latrines when pits fill up. In particular this affects poor households in peri-urban areas of Zimbabwe.

Research questions:
- Small-scale desludging businesses are viable in the capital, what are the factors that need to be considered to develop sustainable business models suitable for desludging units in small urban centres?
- Bulk treatment plants are expensive and unwieldy, what alternative faecal sludge treatment and disposal options are available and which are better suited to small urban centres in Zimbabwe?
- Zimbabwean municipalities have a strong regulatory environment with clearly defined rules and by laws. However these regulations have not been adapted to suit rapid urbanisation and growth. How can the regulatory environment be adapted to best accommodate local faecal sludge conveyance, treatment and disposal options?
- Small and Medium Enterprises have been operating successfully in the faecal sludge collection and disposal sector in the capital city, Harare for years, but not in the smaller towns. What are barriers influence the success of mobile desludgers in the small urban centres in Zimbabwe and how can they be overcome?

Expected changes:
- Private sector companies providing clean affordable mobile desludging services to all households and institutions.
- Faecal sludge being treated and disposed according to local authority/national regulations.
- The useful life of onsite latrines will be extended due to cost effective emptying services.
- Improved partnerships and better accountability between service providers, consumers (households and schools) and local authorities/ regulators for the provision of desludging and other sanitation services.

Process diagram

- Introduce Mobile Desludger concept, import desludger and select Small Scale Operator/s
- Hold first Technology Applicability Framework (TAF) workshop to guide the desludger introduction based on the perspectives of users, operators, provider, regulators.
- Launch of Mobile Desludger service to residents in small urban centres
- Market research and marketing of the desludger among residents, mines, local authorities and NGOs
- Second TAF workshop to guide and strengthen the ongoing operation of the desludgers from the perspectives of of users, operators, provider, regulators.
- Mobile Desludger service redesigned in light of recommendations from TAF2
- Final TAF workshop to evaluate business model and guide scaling up to other urban centres in the country

We are here!

CHALLENGES

Private Sector	Local Authority	Customer
Selecting an operator with the right contacts and drive yet wants to focus on this aspect of their business	Adopting a private operator partnership, seeing the service as an extension of municipal services and therefore in their interests	Thinks the service is expensive
Focus on more profitable parts of the business	Sees the MDU as a threat to their own honey sucker "business"	Local Authority offers a subsidised service for much less
Requires a lot of assistance with the business model and marketing	Wants to make money from the initiative	
Zimbabwe ranks low on the 'ease of doing business scale', there were long delays with the registration process for the MDU and the trailer	Long delays in agreeing to the pilot and under what conditions it could proceed.	

LESSONS SO FAR

- The use of the TAF tool to spark and guide discussion between users, operators, authorities and regulators, and to form the basis of action planning is very useful.
- The role of WHH as an honest broker and mediator between the local authority and the private sector company has been very important.
- The accessibility advantage of the MDU has been as important for business as its ability to desludge high solid content.
- LA and the private sector to synchronise prices. Currently the LA is charging US$20 per load whereas the Private Sector charges US$35 per load
- LA to see the private sector services as complimentary to its efforts in providing sanitation services in their jurisdiction
- An enabling regulatory environment is key for business viability.
- More disposal options are needed to ensure viability in remoter areas.