

## Evaluating CLTS Triggering

*Latrine Construction and Open Defecation Outcomes in Oromia, Ethiopia (2000–2026)*

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### ABSTRACT

{ "background": "Community-led total sanitation (CLTS) is a widely adopted strategy for eliminating open defecation in sub-Saharan Africa. Its initial 'triggering' event is designed to provoke collective action, yet robust longitudinal evidence on its sustained impact on latrine construction and use in specific regional contexts remains limited.", "purpose and objectives": "This working paper evaluates the causal impact of CLTS triggering on household latrine construction and the prevalence of open defecation in a major Ethiopian region. It aims to determine the effectiveness of the intervention and identify key moderating factors influencing outcomes.", "methodology": "A mixed-methods, quasi-experimental design is employed, combining panel survey data from households in triggered and non-triggered villages with in-depth qualitative interviews and focus group discussions. The analysis uses difference-in-differences estimation and thematic analysis.", "findings": "Initial analysis indicates a significant but temporally bounded increase in latrine construction post-triggering, with a 40-percentage-point rise in household latrine ownership within the first year. However, qualitative data reveal a critical theme of high latrine attrition due to poor construction quality and a lack of materials for maintenance, which undermines long-term reductions in open defecation.", "conclusion": "While CLTS triggering effectively stimulates initial latrine building, its long-term success in achieving open defecation free status is compromised without embedded support for durable construction and ongoing maintenance. The intervention's impact is non-linear and highly dependent on post-triggering contextual factors.", "recommendations": "Programme design must integrate post-triggering support mechanisms, including access to affordable, resilient construction materials and skills training. Monitoring should shift from counting latrines to assessing functionality and consistent use. Policy should link CLTS with local supply chain development for sanitation products.", "key words": "sanitation, behaviour change, WASH, programme evaluation, rural development, mixed methods", "contribution statement": "This paper provides novel longitudinal evidence

**Keywords:** *Community-led total sanitation, Open defecation, Oromia, Participatory development, Sanitation behaviour, Sub-Saharan Africa, Triggering methodology*

#### Article Highlights

- CLTS triggering spurs rapid latrine construction but long-term use declines.
- Poor construction quality and maintenance access drive high latrine attrition.
- Impact is non-linear and dependent on post-triggering contextual support.
- Success requires shifting monitoring from latrine counts to functionality.

#### Core Finding

The study finds CLTS triggering effectively stimulates initial latrine building, but its long-term success in eliminating open defecation is compromised without embedded support for durable construction and ongoing maintenance.

*This working paper presents longitudinal, mixed-methods evidence from Oromia, Ethiopia.*

## ABSTRACT-ONLY PUBLICATION

This is an abstract-only publication. The complete research paper with full methodology, results, discussion, and references is available upon request.

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