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**UWASNET**

# **Experiences of Water and Sanitation sector NGOs and CBOs in Uganda**

*Improving sanitation services for the urban poor*

**UWASNET Series No. 002**

# **Experiences of Water and Sanitation sector NGOs and CBOs in Uganda**

**NGO/CBO delivering water and sanitation services to the unserved urban poor**

**2005**

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UWASNET Series 002

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This report provides some highlights of NGO/ CBO contribution towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals - MDGs that aim at halving the proportion of people without access to safe water and effective sanitation by 2015 in Uganda. In Uganda very few NGOs have ventured into providing water and sanitation services to the urban poor. This has been especially because of the challenges of working in the urban environment. This report highlights some of the activities of the water and sanitation sector NGOs/CBOs in urban areas, the approaches employed, challenges and lessons learnt. It is targeting development practitioners especially those working in poorly planned communities and promoting participatory approaches. Town planners also have a lot to learn from this report.

The report aims at opening up debate with development practitioners and policy makers to ensure effective urban and sanitation development.

## **2.0 ABOUT UWASNET**

The water and sanitation sector in Uganda aims at achieving universal access to safe water and improved sanitation by 2015. This is a big challenge that cannot be achieved through government efforts alone, given that national water coverage is estimated at 57% for rural areas and 65% for urban areas and sanitation coverage at 56% (Water and Sanitation Sector Performance Report, 2004). Over the years, the Government of Uganda has shown commitment towards achieving the MDGS through the decentralization system that allows for support and involvement of the various stakeholders namely all tiers of Government, donors, NGOs and the Private Sector. However it was recognized that despite the tremendous efforts, the NGO contribution in the sector was not properly reflected due to the inadequate coordination, networking and collaboration amongst NGOs and with other stakeholders. It is against this background that the need for strengthening NGO coordination and collaboration was proposed in 1997. Therefore, a stakeholder consultation, dialogue and research was carried out with a purpose of generating support and building consensus. A national NGO

consultative conference was held in February 2000 during which a Task Force was elected and mandated to establish the Uganda Water and sanitation NGO Network (UWASNET).

UWASNET was officially launched in November 2000, with support from the Ministry of Water, Lands and Environment through the Directorate of Water Development - DWD, Danida, WaterAid and a National Task Force of NGOs. It was mandated to ensure effective coordination, networking and collaboration of NGOs and CBOs in the Water and Sanitation Sector in Uganda. UWASNET has a membership of 100 NGOs/CBOs.

### **UWASNET VISION**

*"To contribute to poverty alleviation by increasing access to safe water and improved sanitation through effective co-ordination of NGOs and CBOs in the water and sanitation sector in Uganda".*

### **UWASNET MISSION**

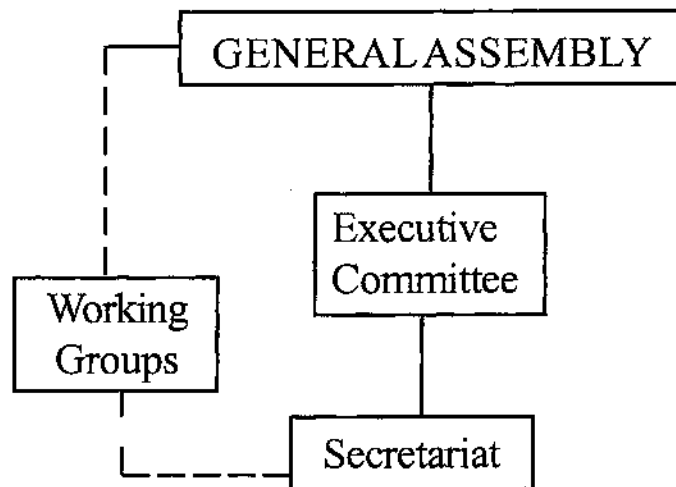
*"To work towards achieving universal access to safe water and improved sanitation. The main strategies to be adopted include promoting effective coordination, supporting stronger collaboration and developing strategic partnerships in the sector".*

## **2.1 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

- To strengthen the collaboration between NGOs and Government departments
- To promote partnerships between NGOs and other sector stakeholders in the water and sanitation sector in Uganda
- To strengthen the co-ordination and networking among NGOs and CBOs at all levels
- To contribute to the development and implementation of sector policies, strategies, standards and guidelines.

## 2.2 UWASNET MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

The management structure comprises of the general assemble-members, Executive Committee- selected regional representatives, Secretariat, Working Groups- membership according to thematic concerns.



## 2.3 UWASNET WORKING GROUPS

Working Groups are thematic groups of UWASNET members. They take on specific responsibilities and undertake in depth analysis and studies of identified specific trends and concerns in the water and sanitation sector. The Working Groups are focal points for NGOs/CBOs and other agencies interested in promoting specific issues or addressing concerns identified in the water and sanitation sector.

Through Working Groups, UWASNET seeks to contribute and influence sectoral operations and lobby support from governments and other stakeholders through sharing of best practices by NGOs and CBOs. The diverse membership of the Working Groups also provides an opportunity for generation, analysis and production of a better-informed position on critical issues in the sector.

Working Groups are one way in which UWASNET enables its membership to share and consolidate ideas for advocating as well as representing the membership at national and international fora. In accordance with the general aims of UWASNET, the Working Groups are involved in the initiation and promotion of activities and issues to enhance the capacity of members in their specific area of interest. It is hoped that the efforts by the different groups will contribute to creating more enabling environment for the operation of NGOs in the sector. The Working Groups debate the current assumptions in the sector, stimulate new thinking and contribute in shaping future ways of working. They also debate best practices, discuss new ideas, drawing and building on NGO practical experiences and lessons on the ground. Thus, the Working Groups are well positioned to inform the sector and influence policy development.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND TO URBAN WATER AND SANITATION**

The growing urbanization trends in the towns and cities have increased strain with heavy consequences on the available services. The water and sanitation situation in urban areas is quite appalling as characterized by deteriorating conditions of the facilities in place. Therefore, the challenge facing urban water and sanitation development requires innovative, new approaches to ensure effective service delivery to the urban poor. Land tenure issues and inadequate legal regulatory framework create more barriers than incentives. However some NGOs in Uganda have developed innovative ways of providing water and sanitation to such informal settlements.

The Urban Water and Sanitation Working Group of UWASNET is a forum for discussing and sharing experiences of how to meet the challenge of providing water and sanitation service needs of the urban poor. In a seminar held in the last quarter of 2004, it was realized that a numerous NGOs were implementing water and sanitation activities in urban areas of Uganda. However, this report focuses on experiences of four (4) NGOs;

- **Community Integrated Development Initiatives - CIDI**
- **Youth Initiative for Development Association - YIFODA**
- **Action for Slum Health and Development - ASHD**
- **Mariam Foundation**

#### **4.0 NGO ACTIVITIES**

The NGO activities range from mobilisation and sensitisation of the community about hygiene and sanitation and improving existing water and sanitation facilities such as tap stand drainages, and community water and sanitation education, extension of water mains, lining drainage channels, RWH tanks in schools and places of worship, public VIP latrine and bath shelter construction.

##### **4.1 A walk into serving the urban poor.....**

YIFODA working in the peri-urban areas of Nabweru sub county and CIDI in Kampala district observed that urban areas served by NGOs in Uganda are often characterised by **stagnant water** and **unplanned settlements** that are growing bigger by the day.

ASHD explained that Makerere-Kivulu slum is characterised by **scarcity of land** with no space for public toilets/ latrines. Where pit latrines exist, ten (10) households with an average size of seven (7) persons per household share one stance. CIDI pointed out that landownership in slum areas becomes contentious especially with absent landlords and cases of people claiming ownership of land have been witnessed leading to land wrangles. Therefore, in most cases tenants take up the responsibility of water and sanitation development and management because they need the services. However, YIFODA observed that it was difficult to obtain land in their project area to construct a public latrine facility.

The community sanitation practices observed by YIFODA include using **"flying toilets"** while others have raised latrines, which they empty on rainy days for the faecal matter to flow with the running water into the valleys and neighbouring communities. "Flying toilets" is a phenomenon



where faecal matter is wrapped in polythene bag and thrown to the neighbour's roof, drainage or at a rubbish skip. This was echoed by CIDI who noted that poor urban neighbourhoods often lack proper faecal disposal facilities. Urban residents do not want to get involved in sanitation activities because they do not offer immediate tangible benefits.

CIDI mentions that, *"the population in slum areas is of a transient nature. Today you sensitise, tomorrow they are gone. Always on the move on, making maintenance and management of the structures difficult"*

**Community heterogeneity and dynamics** in the urban areas are a challenge especially since the people are from different tribes, culture and attitude. The community as observed by CIDI has the belief that un-boiled spring water is tastier than boiled tap water. On the other hand Mariam Foundation explained that despite continued sensitisation, during the implementation of the project some beneficiaries still think water could be provided at no cost. It is believed that O & M is a responsibility of the government and NGOs thus no clear appreciation for O & M contributions.

**Availability of the community** members for urban meetings is only late in the evenings and on weekends, which calls for flexible working hours among NGO staff.

The **political trends** have affected the progress of work since most activities are politicised and NGOs have to tread carefully. If an NGO is perceived to be supporting one political group/aspirant against another, it is likely to lose out on effective community participation and effective involvement of the local leadership. This ultimately undermines the success of the project.

Provision of services to the poor is sometimes characterised by **poor community contribution**. YIFODA noted that, project areas are often composed of a very poor community in the informal employment sector. Getting the beneficiaries to make local contribution is a problem

## 5.0 NGO URBAN EXPERIENCES

### 5.1 CASE STUDY 1: Youth Initiative for Development Association (YIFODA)

YIFODA operates in Nabweru-Bwaise, a peri-urban area in Wakiso district. To combat rampant contamination of water in the marshy area and to curb these poor sanitation practices YIFODA constructed a 12 stance public latrine. The latrine serves a quarter of the village population. During construction all spring eyes delivering water were sealed off. The latrine pit is a cesspool type of facility, which can be emptied. However it had to have some breathers to prevent it from cracking as it cured. It took about six months to complete the construction of the pit latrine.

During the implementation of the project the NGO worked closely with the Sub County authorities. The Sub County wanted to construct a latrine of a similar technology but was financially constrained. They were thus willing to work with YIFODA to achieve the common development objective.

During the implementation of the project, YIFODA learnt that a project **addressing community needs** is likely to succeed. The community embraced the community latrine project because they saw hopes of privacy and proper faecal disposal thus restoring their human dignity.

Having a **vigilant user committee**, committed to the cause is a fundamental issue. This was demonstrated by the committee often meeting at night because they had no time during the day.

The project area was composed of a **very poor community** in the informal employment sector. Getting the beneficiaries to make local contribution was a problem. As a result the Local Council (LC) 1 made the contribution from the Local Government 25% tax returns but it took so long thus delaying the project.

It was **difficult to get land** in the urban areas but the NGO eventually got land and signed agreements with the landowner.



*Theatre for Development in Makerere-Kivvulu Slum to improve hygiene and sanitation practices*



*Theatre for Development in Makerere-Kivvulu Slum to improve hygiene and sanitation practices*



*Community water stand post in Makindye Division-Kampala*



*Rainwater Harvesting at St. John's Primary School-Kikubamutwe*

**Supportive donors** were a key facilitating factor given the fluctuating costs of the materials. Moreover the technology was relatively new to YIFODA, which therefore had to outsource technical services. This did not only raise the confidence of YIFODA to engage in urban work, but gave them an opportunity to develop and strengthen a joint partnership for service delivery to the urban poor.

As a result of effective community participation, upon completion of the project YIFODA **handed over management of the facility** to a CBO with a clear management structure under the leadership of the Local Council (LC)1 Chairperson. YIFODA also persuaded the sub county to develop bylaws and enforce them. Subsequently most raised latrines in the village were demolished. As a result of this project, there was overwhelming demands for similar facilities in the neighbouring communities.

YIFODA **planned follow up visits** once every six months which has been done once. During the follow up visit the CBO reported that the LC1 Chairperson had hijacked the management of the O&M fund claiming that he had used a lot of funds to generate locally available materials for the construction. It was mentioned that the sub county Health Assistant had been requested to intervene and address the concerns.

## **5.2 CASE STUDY 2: Community Integrated Development Initiative (CIDI)**

CIDI has carried out projects in Katwe, Gaba, Namuwongo, Salama-Nakinyuguzi, Nsambya and Kabalagala all in Makindye Division, Kampala district.

It conducts community water and sanitation education, extension of water mains, lining drainage channels, constructing Rainwater Harvesting tanks in schools and places of worship, public VIP latrine and bath shelter construction. CIDI constructed a six (6) stance VIP latrine near the Gaba landing site. This facility, which also has two bathrooms, is serving one hundred (100) households. However on market days it serves a wider community of market vendors.

*CIDI increases access to affordable safe water*

*A water main pipe was extended for 400m and two stand water posts were set up in Katwe zone. By the end of the project 10 individuals had been able to tap water from the mains. This led to reduction in water cost per jerry can from Shs 100= to Shs 50=. Later the price dropped further to Shs30=. When more people tapped the line water prices further dropped to Shs 25=.*

*The Water User Committee of one of the original stand posts initially accumulated Ug Shs 800,000= on its account. However with the reduction in cost of water, the revenue collected substantially reduced. The caretakers eventually lost interest in water point and at one time closed it. It has now reopened with new management.*

CIDI started a Child-to-Child program focusing on children in primary schools namely Katwe Primary School and St. John's Primary School-Kikubamutwe. The Child-to-Child programme in Katwe Primary School resulted in water recycling initiative. The children trap water used for washing hands and use it to wash toilets/ pit latrines. The Child-to-child programme was initiated to address water and sanitation issues through music, dance and drama by targeting children since

they are effective change agents. To create a multiplier effect, children were expected to educate their parents about good hygiene and sanitation practices.

Before CIDI intervention, the roads in Kamwanyi-Nsambya and Katwe 1- Musoke zone were characterized by gullies, which would fill up with water in the rainy season. As a result of poor drainage, tenants would abandon their houses in the rainy season. Upon lining the drainage channels transport across the channel was made easier. Ultimately water can now flow properly and even restaurants have been set up. Abandoned houses have now got tenants because sanitation around the area has improved.

Communities living in gazetted areas e.g. Namuwongo railway land cannot access sanitation services. CIDI tried to construct a pit latrine for them but it failed to get permission from the railway authorities.

**CONSTRAINTS FACED BY CIDI**

- Population Pressure
- Poor Community Response
- Cultural Beliefs and attitudes
- Political Interference
- Limited resources
- Sanitation neglected
- Poor co-ordination
- Unclear management systems

Relying on information provided by the LC 1 Chairperson of Salama Nakinyuguzi, CIDI planned and budgeted to make an 800m water main extension from where the Local Government Development Programme - LGDP project had stopped. Unfortunately upon embarking on the extension it was established that LGDP

project didn't extend the water pipe to the expected point but stopped 200m before though there was no indication of the discrepancy. CIDI had to incur unbudgeted for costs of extending 200m backwards.

CIDI has been able to contribute towards improved conditions of living for the unserved urban poor because of the community support, external support i.e. donor funds as well as skilled and committed staff within the organisation. However the task remains enormous.

**Population Pressure:** The ever-growing changing population numbers, tight project schedules and poor stakeholder coordination has a great impact on planning for urban activities. The changing nature of the community set-up because of growing population vis-à-vis the inflexible budget is a challenge. Sometimes the NGOs plan for one sensitisation seminar after conducting a baseline survey, only to go back and realise the situation has changed, the population has increased, and more seminars need to be held, within the fixed budget.

**Poor community response:** The response from the community is slow to achieve the objectives given the limited project life span. The mobilization pace is so slow to get positive responses and work done in one year.

**Limited resources** are another challenge since the organisation often ends up doing more than it actually planned for.

**CIDI contributes to increasing access to safe water**

An 800m water main extension was made uphill in Salama-Kyamula and one stand water post was set up by CIDI. Much as the extension of the water main stopped half way up the hill, the distance travelled by the uphill community to collect water was drastically reduced.

However because the hill was steep, the water pressure went down especially during the day when water was needed most. In the evening and during the night when water was flowing faster there was always too much overcrowding at the water point. The community therefore set-up a water reservoir tank to tap water at night and use it during the day when pressure was low. In the evening and at night when pressure was high, they would collect water directly from the standpipe.

Before and during the extension of the water main the community raised a cash contribution of Ug Shs 800,000 in cash and made other contribution in kind

**Cultural beliefs and attitudes:**

The community as observed by CIDI has the belief that un-boiled spring water is tastier than boiled tap water.

**Political Interference:**

The political trends have affected the progress of work, politicians target and ride on the the projects in search for votes, therefore, NGOs have to tread carefully and strive to work harmoniously to avoid conflict.

**Sanitation a neglected issue:**

Household sanitation is an issue, which has been largely neglected. Household members have devised various disposal habits, which take long to get rid of despite the sensitization. Heavy rains cause floods that negate all sanitation efforts done in a year. It has been observed that unless household sanitation is addressed, improved community sanitation will be not be easily realized.

**Poor co-ordination:**

The approaches of different stakeholders to development work vary quite a lot. CIDI believes in community participation and contribution whereas some projects are supply driven. Therefore there is often conflicting



### 5.3 CASE STUDY 3: Action for Slum Health and Development (ASHD)

ASHD operates in Makerere-Kivvulu slum, Kagugube Parish, Kampala Central Division. Its activities include mobilisation and sensitisation of the community about hygiene and sanitation and improving existing water and sanitation facilities such as tap stand drainages.

Makerere-Kivvulu slum is characterised by scarcity of land with no space for public toilets/ latrines. Where pit latrines exist, ten (10) households share one stance. At the same time urban residents don't want to get involved in sanitation activities because there is no tangible benefit. To address this challenge ASHD has adopted Theatre For Development (TFD) during sensitisation to motivate the community about sanitation. TFD is a powerful tool which clearly depicts good and poor hygiene and sanitation practices within the community. Community members are then helped to draw action plans of what changes they would like to make in their homesteads and community. Specific messages portrayed in TFD are better use of latrines and advantages of using safe water. Facilitators who are members of ASHD have been trained to carry out TFD. This is because it is more sustainable since maintaining a drama group is expensive.

As a result of ASHD intervention, there has been improvement in hygiene practices and Kivvulu slum dwellers know where to get safe water. The wave of lack of sanitation facilities had forced some landlords to break parts of their buildings to construct pit latrines. Secondly Leaders want to be involved in any active development group and have therefore been supportive.

The NGO has managed to carry out its activities because of community involvement in the programmes. The NGO has also encouraged the community to be self-supporting and not rely on external donors.

messages to the community making it difficult to get positive and harmonised responses.

**Unclear management systems:** The NGO always plans for sustainability of projects after handover to communities. In most cases Community Health Workers (CHWs) are trained as trainers, and are expected to sensitise and train the community about water and sanitation issues. However CHWs lack facilitation in terms of stationary and funds to purchase working tools such as wheelbarrows and gumboots. Whereas this is possible during the project implementation period, there is no sustainability once the project is completed. This is a demotivator for the CHWs to effectively carry out their roles and responsibilities.

#### **5.4 EMERGING ISSUES**

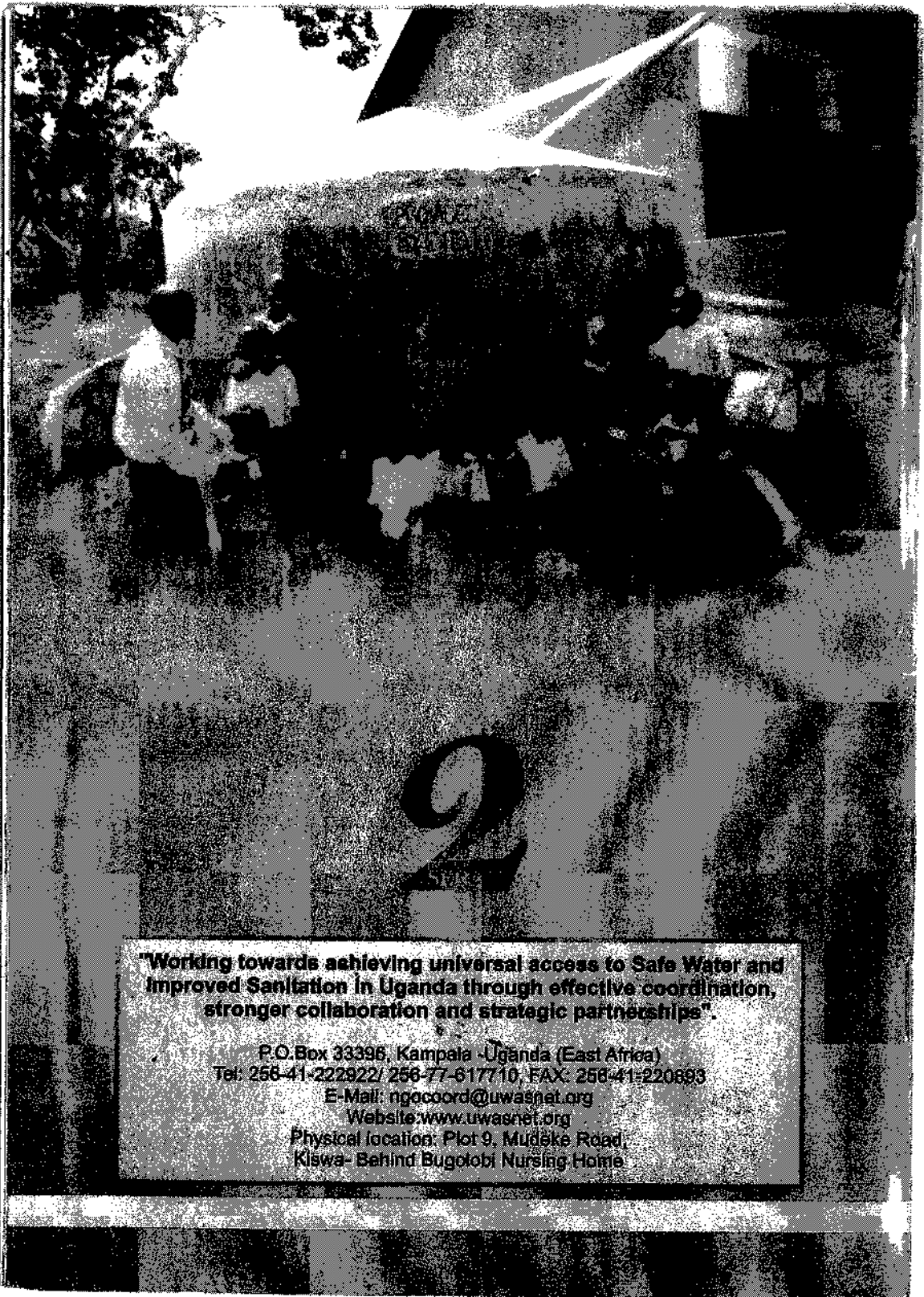
- ⇒ Trained health workers need to be supported by the local authorities to ensure adequate support and encouragement in carrying out their roles and ensure maximum benefits to the entire communities.
- ⇒ The duration of water and sanitation promotion is a key determinant to the sustainability of the practices introduces. There is need to clearly design interventions that are culturally sensitive and consider the time required to communicate behaviour change in a heterogeneous community.
- ⇒ Local councils and municipal authorities need to actively enforce regulations that require landlords to maintain a minimum standard of sanitation in their areas.
- ⇒ Demonstrations of cost effective latrine designs in congested areas needs to be given attention by sector actors.

- ⇒ There is need for harmonised approaches by the development workers to avoid setting unsustainable precedents.
- ⇒ Management of the facilities put in place needs to be in built at the beginning of the project to ensure a clear sense of ownership by the communities.

## **6.0 CONCLUSION**

The work done by the above mentioned NGOs/CBOs in providing water and sanitation services to the urban poor communities is commendable. However to improve on service delivery, legislation has to be strengthened to ensure that landlords provide sanitation facilities for tenants. There is need for the city authorities to reserve land for the construction of public pit latrines in densely populated areas with land stressed issues. NGOs need more support from the government and donor communities to be able to advance the innovative creative approaches of serving the urban poor.

UWASNET Board and Secretariat have to put in place measures of motivating more NGOs/CBOs to provide services to the urban poor. Such measures may include though not be limited to building capacity of NGOs/CBOs to effectively deliver services in urban areas; Continuously provide forum for generating new ideas; Promoting networking among NGOs to motivate others to provide services to urban areas and provide donor links to NGOs/CBOs interested in working with urban communities.



**"Working towards achieving universal access to Safe Water and Improved Sanitation in Uganda through effective coordination, stronger collaboration and strategic partnerships".**

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