



Speech by Mr. David Shimkus, GSF Programme Director, Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council, upon the occasion of the launch of the “Togo SANDAL”, Lomé 11 December 2015

- Honourable Ministers,
- Resident Representatives of UNICEF Togo and WHO Togo,
- Presidents of the Institutions of the Republic,
- Honourable Members of the National Assembly,
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps and Representatives of International Organizations,
- Representatives of the United Nations,
- Prefects,
- Presidents of Special Delegations,
- Venerable Religious and Traditional Leaders,
- The WSSCC National Coordinator,
- Distinguished Guests,



- Ladies and Gentlemen,
- All protocols observed.

It is a real honour for me to be here in Lomé to launch the Togo SANDAL and I am impressed by your commitment to make Togo open defecation free.

We are currently in the midst of a worldwide silent emergency. Despite efforts of governments, international organisations, NGOs, civil society and communities over the past decades, 2.4 billion people, or 1 out of 3 people in the world, still lack access to sanitation. This is a tragedy. Let me tell you why:

Among these 2.4 billion, 1 billion people practise open defecation in streams, fields, bushes and ditches causing people in their environment to involuntarily ingest shit and fall sick. Diarrhoea, often caused by open defecation and other unhealthy sanitation practices, is the 2nd most common cause of death among children under five. Poor sanitation is also one of the leading causes of child malnutrition, leading to serious consequences for child development. And more than 1,400 children die from this condition, every day. Lastly, I would like to emphasize that the global sanitation crisis disproportionately affects



the most vulnerable: the poorest of the poor, the elderly, the disabled, women, adolescent girls and children. We need to change this.

Let us now look at the financial consequences of the sanitation crisis. When people lack access to adequate sanitation and safe hygiene practices, many become sick; are unable to work or go to school, and they cannot spend time on productive activities that could contribute to their own welfare and that of their country. The cost of poor sanitation for developing countries is enormous: It costs 260 billion USD a year in terms of lost work and school days and health expenditure.

(Your Excellency)

Honorable Ministers

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Recognizing the immense need, and yet lack of resources, to address this global crisis, the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council set up the Global Sanitation Fund in 2008. The GSF is a financing mechanism exclusively dedicated to sanitation and hygiene in order to address the lack of progress to achieve the MDG sanitation goal. Today the GSF works in 13 countries and another few are in the pipeline.



GSF programmes are established on the principle of national ownership. The programmes are tailor-made by national sector experts to address specific country needs, institutional frameworks, capacity and context. I must take the opportunity to thank members of the Programme Coordinating Mechanism for all their hard work in designing the GSF programme in Togo. You are visionaries and the GSF is proud to work with you.

Furthermore, GSF programmes promote collective behaviour change, through approaches, such as Community-Led Total Sanitation, to support communities to change their sanitation and hygiene situation. In the past, the sector favoured subsidies over behaviour change approaches. However, we now know that subsidy-driven approaches have failed. If we want to address a problem of this magnitude in a non-discriminatory and equal way, it is simply financially impractical to build toilets for the entire population of a country. And more importantly, subsidy-provided toilets are not used if people are not triggered to end engrained behaviours, such as open defecation. GSF programmes demonstrate that focusing on collective behaviour change is more effective, more sustainable and cheaper.

(Your Excellency),

Honorable Ministers

Distinguished Guests,



Ladies and Gentlemen,

All this might seem quite straightforward and easy. But when you deal with something as fluid as human behaviour one has to be flexible and constantly prepared for new twists and turns. Therefore GSF programmes continuously analyze and learn from failures and challenges and thereby become more intuitive and sensitive to the country contexts. We encourage all GSF countries to embark on these learning journeys.

You have already embarked on this journey. We have seen how the GSF programme in Togo continuously evolves by learning from successes as well as challenges faced along the way. It is encouraging to see that you have internalised this dynamic implementation approach. Keep it up!

Big problems, like the global sanitation crisis, require big solutions.

Therefore, we see the Togo SANDAL as a national movement to end open defecation, with the ultimate goal that *the Togolese population should no longer involuntarily have to eat shit*. This national movement will carry everyone along, rich and poor, women and men, old and young, rural and urban populations, to ensure that no one is left



behind, just as the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals confirm.

We accompany you to improve your sanitation situation. However, I would like to emphasise that the Togo SANDAL is not owned by the GSF or UNICEF. It is owned by YOU. It was developed in Togo, by the Togolese and for the Togolese people. It is a national initiative that we fully support!

(Your Excellency),

Honorable Ministers

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For the dignity of the Togolese population and with a vision where no Togolese will have to involuntarily eat shit, we encourage you to develop a road map for the Togo SANDAL. Use the GSF as a catalyst to demonstrate that sanitation coverage at scale with quality and speed is possible, and that this does not have to cost very much.

Honorable Minister of Health and Social Protection,



For this Road Map to be more than a symbolic document, your patronage and that of the government and the sector is necessary. We appeal to you to continue your strong support and the leadership of this important initiative.

We believe that if this Road Map enjoys full government commitment it can be a powerful tool to coordinate activities of various actors and to mobilize additional funds to an otherwise neglected sector, from the government of Togo and beyond.

Honourable Minister of Health and Social Protection,
Honourable Ministers,

Your contribution would demonstrate that there is true national ownership and could inspire other donors and partners to also invest in rendering Togo Open Defecation Free. Such a commitment would echo far beyond the borders of Togo and the sub-region. Honourable Ministers, we truly believe that with the right support, Togo can become the first ODF nation in Africa.

The Togo SANDAL movement needs high-level champions and strong political commitment, which can be personified through high level



champions, such as you present here today. Honourable Ministers and Prefects, we encourage you to attend a triggering and visit Open Defecation Free communities. I can assure you that you will see astounding changes that are taking place in these communities. Currently a wildfire is spreading throughout Togo in the form of a sanitation movement.

Honourable Minister of Health and Social Protection,

We are seeing promising results that represent a foundation on which the Togo SANDAL movement will flourish. For this to become reality we want to offer our support to you and your government in your full leadership of the Togo SANDAL. A gradual transition of capacity and responsibility from UNICEF to Ministry of Health and Social Protection is needed. This goes beyond the management of the GSF programme. Instead it represents a shift in mindset from merely implementing individual sanitation & hygiene projects to coordinating a fully-fledged Togo SANDAL movement.

So I assure you, Honourable Minister, that the strengthening of the Division de l'Assainissement et de l'hygiene du Milieu (DAHM) is for the benefit of the entire sub-sector. The envisaged progressive handover will give the DAHM ample time and preparation to intellectually and



financially lead the Togo SANDAL. We encourage all actors to support this process for the benefit of the wellbeing of the Togolese population.

To conclude, I would like to say to all of you who have gathered here today that you are now followers and even champions of the Togo SANDAL movement. Poor sanitation affects us all and it goes beyond bureaucratic systems, organisational affiliations, technical manuals and procedures as it touches the very core of human dignity. In the past few years and through experiences gathered from the GSF family we have realised that sanitation is not a regular day job. It is a passion. The urgency of the global sanitation crisis requires the dedication of thousands and even tens of thousands of people. Let's join hands and support this movement for the dignity of the Togolese people!