

PROMOTING SATO TOILETS IN UGANDA

Case Study On How Urbanites Brought City Sanitation Standards To Their Rural Homes

January 2024



YOUNG ↔ **OLD**
URBAN ↔ **RURAL**
MODERN ↔ **TRADITIONAL**

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INTRODUCTION

Marketing campaigns can play a key role in creating demand for sanitation products. Reaching Sustainable Development Goal 6.2 – achieving access to adequate and equitable sanitation for all and ending open defecation by 2030 – requires creative and innovative ways to influence behavior change and inspire communities to invest in toilets at the household level.

In late 2019, the USAID Uganda Sanitation for Health Activity (USAID USHA), alongside partners SATO and Nice House of Plastics (NHOP), designed the Sons and Daughters of the Soil (SODAS) campaign to promote SATO toilet sales – specifically SATO Pans and SATO Stools. This case study details the campaign’s activities and highlights its unique approach, which harnessed the influential power of young, modern, urbanites to bring city sanitation standards to their rural family homes.

This review of the SODAS campaign was undertaken by the Partnership for Better Living (PBL), USAID’s cooperative agreement with LIXIL, the maker of SATO products. As part of PBL’s mandate to accelerate access to safe, affordable sanitation and hygiene products, PBL looked back on this campaign to understand the nuances of the various marketing strategies and tactics used, to document what led to its success, and to share these learnings with implementers of USAID projects. Specifically, PBL hopes these lessons learned can improve coordination between LIXIL, USAID, and other donor-funded activities toward a shared objective to increase access to basic sanitation and hygiene, particularly through marketing campaigns that raise awareness and generate demand for affordable toilets and handwashing solutions.

SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF THE SOIL: A SOCIAL PHENOMENON SPARKS A NATIONAL CAMPAIGN



Over the past several decades, hundreds of thousands of young people across Uganda have migrated from their rural homes to live in towns and cities, primarily seeking employment opportunities. Each year during the holidays, they return home to reunite with their older parents, grandparents, and other family members. In local dialects, these urbanites have become known as the “Sons and Daughters of the Soil” (SODAS).

Their annual migration happens *en masse*, with sons and daughters traditionally returning home in December for Christmas and again in April for Easter to spend the holidays, typically bringing gifts for their families when they make their treks. This annual social phenomenon provided the spark for the SODAS campaign, which sought to target both the urbanites and their rural families with the idea that **the urbanites could take SATO’s affordable and modern sanitation products into rural communities**. The campaign was premised on the audience assumptions outlined below, which helped the campaign’s designers narrow the key messages and geographic reach for each target audience.



Assumptions About the Young Urban Customer

- Has regular monthly (non-agricultural) income; is driven by trends; trusts and uses social media; lives beyond his/her means; and wants to have a good time.
- Can influence behaviors and the adoption of better sanitation practices by his/her rural family;
- Customarily brings gifts when returning home during the Christmas and Easter seasons;
- Has become accustomed to better sanitation conditions in the city and would appreciate the availability of improved sanitation when returning home;
- Would like to provide the family with a status symbol and a source of pride, which a toilet can offer;
- Would like to help elderly family members who may have difficulty squatting find an easier way to use the toilet, particularly if made aware of the raised SATO Stool;
- Would respond positively to advertising encouraging the purchase of SATO products as the ideal gift for family back home.

KEY CAMPAIGN MESSAGES:

- *You can take your village home latrine to another level.*
- *The greatest gift you can give your family is pride. Bring them SATO products when you travel back home this season, and improve their household toilets.*
- *You can't go to the village this season without bringing a SATO – up your family's respect.*
- *Your elderly family members will have a safer and easier toilet experience using the SATO Stool. Give them this gift from the heart.*



Assumptions About the Older Rural Customer

- Has fewer resources / less money but is often the recipient of gifts from wealthier, urbanite children;
- Lives in a household that lacks improved or upgraded toilets;
- May have seasonal savings to invest in sanitation upgrades and/or may ask children to help fund upgrades;
- Loves functional products that are easily accessible;
- Values community and visitors' respect and recognition; aspires to have good things from urban areas;
- Believes an improved toilet will bring respect to the home;
- Would appreciate learning about the SATO Stool (for those who struggle to use squat toilets);
- Would respond positively to advertising that encourages him/her to request children bring SATO products from the city.

KEY CAMPAIGN MESSAGES:

- *Boost your family's respect – ask your children in the city to bring home a SATO during the holidays.*
- *After the Christmas and New Year's greetings, the next step must be a SATO to up your respect in the village.*
- *Ask your children to pay to upgrade your household toilet (including installation and other construction).*
- *If you struggle to use a squat toilet, ask your children to bring home a SATO Stool.*



Geographic Scope of the Campaign

The SODAS campaign was national in scope, as it sought to increase awareness of the SATO brand and contribute to USAID USHA's National Sales target. Through the use of television commercials, it reached a broad audience across Uganda. To reach an urban audience, marketing activities centered in the capital city, Kampala. USAID USHA activities also concentrated in these rural districts:

CENTRAL WEST:

Masaka, Bukomansimbi, Gomba, Kyotera, Lwengo, Mpigi and Sembabule

CENTRAL EAST:

Buikwe, Buyende, Jinja, Kaliro, Kayunga, Luuka and Namutumba



With the customer assumptions, the key messages, and the geographic targets in place to guide them, USAID USHA, NHOP, and SATO strategized a simultaneous rural/urban sanitation marketing campaign which launched as Phase I in November 2019, and extended into Easter 2020 (albeit hampered in late March by COVID-19) across a variety of channels. A later Phase II was launched the following holiday season.



THE COMPONENTS OF THE CAMPAIGN: A 360° APPROACH

The SODAS campaign employed a “360” marketing approach, incorporating a mix of channels and tactics to reach a wide swath of urban and rural consumers. From TV and radio; to digital advertising on social media; to the use of door-to-door Community Health Promoters supported through USAID USHA subcontractor BRAC; to billboards and direct sales at hardware stores, bus stops, and other transport hubs; the campaign was a multi-channel effort. Phase I even launched with a theme song, [Squat Stand \(Optional Dance\)](#) by popular local artist Tip Swizzy. The campaign objectives, components, and costs are detailed here:

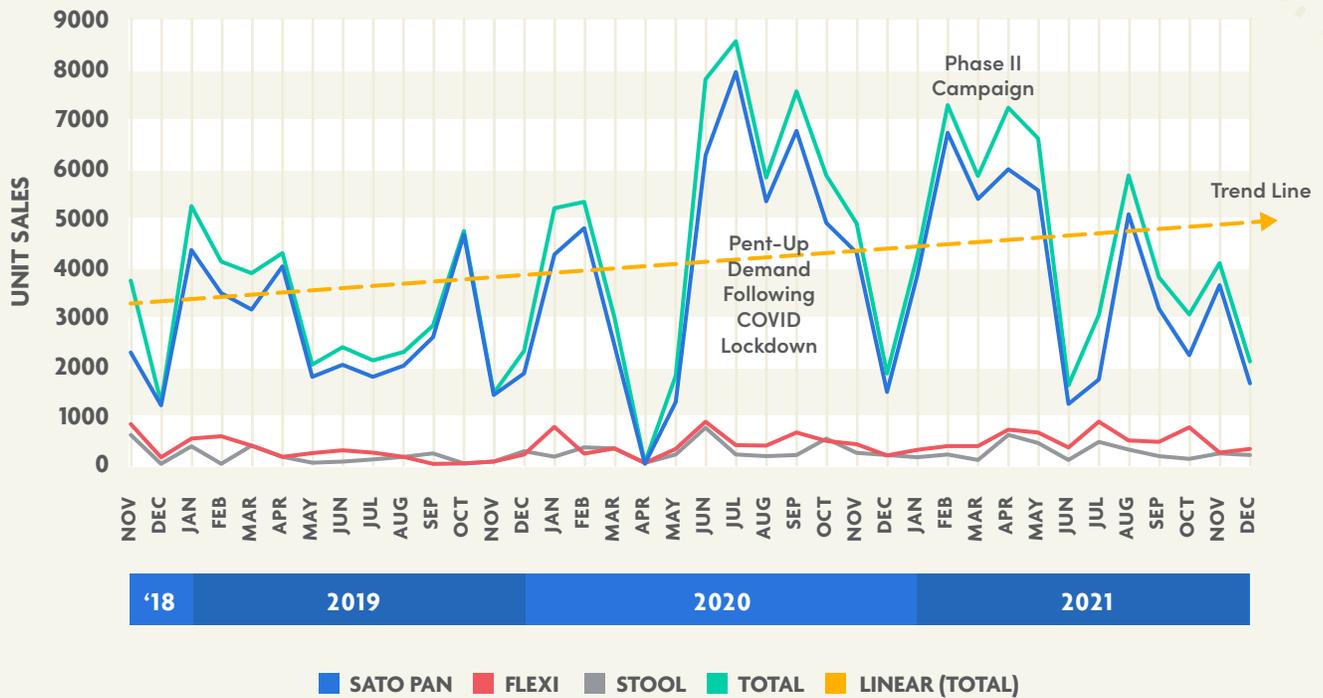
The Campaign’s Stated Objectives:

1. Increase brand awareness for the SATO product line as an effective, low-cost, and easy to install solution to improve household sanitation.
2. Appeal to rural households with seasonal liquidity to invest in constructing or upgrading their latrine, with the possibility of spreading the investment over a longer period using a loan from USAID USHA’s financial partners.
3. Appeal to the urbanites with regular income who travel to the village for the holidays to invest in improved sanitation through construction or upgrades.
4. Appeal to the rural households with sons and daughters in the urban centers to ask them to pay for construction or upgrade of their latrine to improve their rural sanitation experience.
5. Expand the distribution of SATO products in rural areas.

This table provides an overview of the campaign’s Phase I elements and their costs in 2019/20, demonstrating the level of collaboration and the sharing of costs/responsibilities among the key partners:

360 CAMPAIGN ELEMENTS	UGX – INCL VAT	\$US	Financed by
Television Campaign	93,035,920	\$25,000	USAID USHA
Social Media Campaign	106,931,600	\$28,700	SATO/NHOP
Radio Campaign (English, Luganda)	100,000,000	\$27,000	SATO
Experiential Marketing (Christmas/New Year) and production of 5 radio spots, DIY guides	67,703,680	\$18,200	USAID USHA
Point of Sale (POS) Merchandising Materials	24,600,000	\$6,600	SATO
Customer Giveaways – 3-liter jerry cans	10,000,000	\$2,700	SATO
Customer Giveaways – 5-liter jerry cans	25,000,000	\$6,700	NHOP
Customer Giveaways – Exercise books	6,000,000	\$1,600	USAID USHA
TOTAL FOR CAMPAIGN	33,271,200	\$116,500	

NATIONAL SATO SALES TRENDS FROM NOVEMBER 2018 - DECEMBER 2021



During Phase I of the SODAS campaign from November 2019 – March 2020, there was a noticeable and sustained spike in sales of SATO products. The impact of COVID-19 and a nationwide lockdown can be seen in April 2020, with a complete drop in sales, followed by a massive recovery with sales reaching beyond the levels obtained during Phase I. This sustained period lasted from approximately June through September 2020. The USAID USHA project team theorized that the brand awareness raised during Phase I of the campaign had lasting power and created pent-up demand for improved sanitation during this timeframe. At the time of the Phase I launch, SATO products were relatively new to Uganda (outside of pockets in Kampala), and the campaign appears to have contributed to building brand awareness, staying in the minds of consumers such that they continued to buy even after the Phase I campaign activities ended.

As the campaign’s impact on sales started to fade in October through December 2020, Phase II was launched in early 2021, just in time for the Easter holiday season. Again, sales spikes are seen in these relevant months. A second national COVID-19 lockdown occurred in June 2021, as evidenced by the significant drop in sales in June and July 2021.

Notably, the sales trend line tracks upward over time.



Sample campaign digital advertising

DID THE CAMPAIGN MEET ITS OBJECTIVES?

As evidenced by the sales data and upward sales trend line, the objectives of appealing to rural households to invest in upgraded sanitation, and appealing to modern urbanites to bring SATO products home to their families, appear to have been achieved. As well, the SODAS campaign helped expand the distribution of SATO products into rural areas of Uganda. Throughout the five-year USAID USHA project, two of which included the SODAS campaign, the USAID USHA project team onboarded 215 hardware stores and 12 Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCOs) as businesses that promote SATO products. The campaign played a role in driving toilet demand such that these new hardware retailers realized the value of selling SATO products, and these new credit unions also saw the value of offering sanitation loans, eagerly helping customers finance their toilet upgrades.

Determining whether the campaign achieved the objective of increased SATO brand awareness is difficult to assess because no “before and after” surveys were conducted to measure consumers’ familiarity with the brand. Similarly, it is unknown whether rural households asked their urban relatives to pay for latrine construction or upgrades, as no mechanism was in place to measure progress against this objective.

FIVE LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE SODAS CAMPAIGN

Based on interviews with the USAID USHA project team, and on PBL’s analysis of available data, there are numerous lessons learned, particularly surrounding what drove the success of the SODAS campaign and contributed to the increased uptake of improved sanitation in rural areas of Uganda. The top takeaways are:



1. A campaign based on cultural norms and traditions created a distinct, effective emotional appeal.

Basing the SODAS campaign on the cultural phenomenon of young urbanites traveling to rural villages for the holiday and bringing gifts to their older relatives was important for connecting with both its rural and urban target audiences. It built on a well-known cultural norm, was socially

grounded, and therefore, naturally appealed to the young urbanites' feelings of responsibility for giving back to their parents and feeling proud of their homes/villages. With this feeling of responsibility already well-entrenched, it was logical to then tap into the young urbanites' emotions, helping them conclude that sanitation is a valuable gift and is worth the investment. A heartfelt [television commercial](#) featuring a daughter giving a SATO Stool to her elderly father added further emotional connection and cultural resonance for both the urban and rural audiences, thus contributing to brand awareness, increased sales of SATO products, and increased uptake of improved sanitation in rural areas of Uganda.



2. Casting sanitation in a positive light may help increase marketing impact



The topic of sanitation can be embarrassing, fear inducing, and even shameful. However, casting toilets in a positive light is a strategy that should be strongly considered when planning campaign messaging. Warning people they may get sick if they don't upgrade their latrines might inspire behavior change. However, marketing messages that emphasize the pride, joy, and dignity that can result from improving sanitation at the household level may be even more impactful, as evidenced by the SODAS campaign's positive sales results.



Promoting SATO at a transport hub.



3. A 360° campaign is possible when public and private sector partners share costs/responsibilities

The three partners invested \$116,500 during Phase I, while SATO and NHOP invested approximately \$40,000 during Phase II of the 360° campaign. A budget this size, and a project this large in scope, may not be reasonable or achievable for many USAID or NGO projects alone. However, USAID USHA strategically invited two private sector partners with similar sales interests to join the campaign. SATO and NHOP not only contributed funds, but also shared responsibility for the work itself, with USAID USHA supporting TV and purchase incentives; SATO supporting radio, social media marketing, and the provision of POS materials; and NHOP sharing costs for social media advertising and purchase incentives. USAID USHA also contributed additional radio spots and the experiential marketing costs while leading the overall campaign coordination. The sharing of costs and responsibilities was a key factor in not only making the campaign possible, but also in its demonstrable sales success, driven by its broad reach across multiple channels, regions, and audiences.



Marketing activation to promote SATO toilets.

With this type of public-private effort, it is expected that partners will be collaborating and communicating on campaign logistics, but it is difficult to quantify how much coordination it will take to execute a successful marketing campaign. During the pre-campaign period and as the campaign was launching, SATO, NHOP, and the USAID USHA team had weekly meetings to ensure that all efforts

were coordinated and properly managed. While weekly meetings may not be necessary post launch, it is a good benchmark for how often partners should meet to stay closely aligned.

✓ 4. Measuring growth in brand awareness requires a specific approach and a dedicated budget

A stated campaign objective was to increase awareness of the SATO brand. Brand awareness is commonly understood to be difficult to measure without conducting before and after consumer surveys. In the case of the SODAS campaign, which included some national elements (television) and many regional or local-only elements (activations at bus stops or religious centers, for example), no such “before and after” surveys were conducted. Here, evidence of campaign success is the positive sales trend line, which shows SATO sales steadily increased over the two years during which the campaign took place. Is this outcome due to increased brand awareness which, in turn, drove increased sales? Without specific measures, it can only be assumed that the SODAS campaign drove attention to SATO and to improved sanitation on a national scale, engaged both urban and rural audiences, and created an emotional connection between SATO and Uganda family culture and values.

As a recommendation for future USAID projects executing marketing campaigns, if an increase in brand awareness is a key performance indicator (KPI), a plan to conduct before and after consumer brand awareness surveys – and an appropriate budget to conduct the surveys – should be included at the outset. Employing other simple tactics to track brand-building during the campaign is also highly recommended. Such tactics may include establishing a toll-free number for consumers to call (and training customer service agents to inquire and document where callers heard about the brand), working with retailers to ask consumers where they heard about the brand, and asking consumers to complete a short survey at the point-of-sale to identify whether the marketing campaign was a determining factor behind their purchase.



Promoting SATO at a transport hub.

✓ 5. Using consumers themselves as “influencers” can be an effective marketing tactic.

The creative idea of employing consumers as “influencers” appeared to be a winning formula. Unlike more traditional behavior change or marketing campaigns that rely on trusted, reputable individuals living in the community, the SODAS campaign tapped into a new resource: urbanite consumers. The SODAS campaign targeted young urbanites by appealing to their sense of responsibility and inviting them to give their parents, not only the gift of an upgraded toilet, but also the gifts of pride, status, and dignity. This approach could reasonably be used in campaigns for other products, where the largest market may be rural and harder-to-reach, but where an urban, easier-to-reach “influencer” audience exists.

Young influencing old. Urban influencing rural. Modern influencing traditional. This may well be the “secret sauce” for any type of campaign in which the desired outcome is a shift in behavior to upgraded sanitation.





RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE MARKETING CAMPAIGNS FEATURING SATO

Based on the sales data, the review of outcomes against objectives, and the anecdotal evidence of the success of the SODAS campaign, the following are recommendations for consideration by USAID projects and organizations undertaking future sanitation marketing campaigns featuring SATO:

- ✓ Seek out well-aligned partners with similar goals (including those from the private sector) to share costs and responsibilities.
- ✓ Understand the key emotional drivers that will appeal to consumers before strategizing a sanitation campaign. These could be related to health, price/value, aspiration, pride, status, or something else entirely. Regardless, understanding what will resonate with and motivate customers is essential for marketing campaign success.
- ✓ Harness local norms and traditions whenever possible to build cultural resonance and to better connect with potential customers.
- ✓ Build a sanitation campaign that eliminates the fear and shame typically associated with open defecation and unimproved toilets. Instead, include messages framed around pride, legacy, and overall positivity.
- ✓ Consider opportunities for young, modern urbanites to play a role in influencing WASH behavior change, particularly of their rural counterparts.
- ✓ Set clear Key Performance Indicators that can be measured across different media and activations.
- ✓ Establish baselines whenever possible, and plan to conduct before and after surveys of target audiences (to measure increases in brand awareness, for example).
- ✓ Establish ways to track key outcomes against original campaign objectives.
- ✓ Engage the SATO team early and often. The SATO sales, marketing, and partnership teams are eager to help support the ideation and execution of sanitation marketing campaigns, and have materials available for partners to use.