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New Accessible Toilet Inspires Ugandan School Authorities



Praise from the government: Ms Rose Abila (in red) prepares to open the Ogul toilet

Government officials from the district of Gulu in northern Uganda have praised a new accessible toilet at a remote rural primary school (photo above) and predicted that it could be a model for the future.

The toilet was installed at the Ogul Primary School on August 8 after weeks of hard work by parents and the community, with support from The Advocacy Project (AP) and the Gulu Disabled Persons Union (GDPU), a leading advocate for disability rights and AP partner. Funding was provided by the [online giving marketplace Givology](#).

The government's enthusiastic reaction could signal a greater investment in Gulu's rural primary schools, which are struggling to improve crumbling facilities and retain students.

"I am very satisfied that GDPU is supporting a mainstream school in our district," said Rose Abila, the Gulu district secretary for education and health, at the opening of the Ogul toilet. "We now have a role model. (Our) officials will be required to visit Ogul before installing new toilets in other schools."



Hand-washing is now a must at Ogul school

Other government speakers promised more facilities for Ogul and praised the low cost of the new toilet (\$6,000). Robinson Obwok, the inspector of Gulu schools, asked for GDPU's help in identifying future projects. "I am pleased with this work. We must emulate it and identify similar schools in need," he said.

The new toilet signals a turnaround for the Ogul community. Until this summer, Ogul was one of 48 primary schools in Gulu district with substandard sanitation facilities. Ms Ayuma Oyella, the school principal, told AP in June that this was to blame for a [30% drop in enrollment](#).

AP also found that the Ogul parents were frustrated after being asked to cover school fees, uniforms, and meals. They said they were getting no help from the local government, which had received no funding for school construction from the federal budget.



Stakeholders: The new toilet will prioritize 13 students with a disability

But the mood changed after GDPU and AP committed to the new toilets. Parents joined in to dig the deep pit, and the toilet was completed just in time for the August 8 opening. The last-minute challenges [were described in this blog](#) by Lauren Halloran, an AP Peace Fellow who worked at GDPU and helped to raise funds for the project.

The sturdy structure contains four stalls. Two will be used by girls, and two have accessible ramps that can be used by boys and the 13 students at the school with a disability. AP has also bought paper, soap, and brooms to keep the facilities clean.

Principal Oyella was overjoyed at the transformation. "I wanted to transfer from Ogul, but now that our school has infrastructure I will be happy to stay and encourage students to remain in school!" she told the August 8 ceremony. All of the school's 375 students attended, and some performed a traditional Acholi dance.



The monitor: Patrick Ojok from GDPU checks up on the Tochi toilet, installed in 2015

* [Click here to donate to our Uganda toilet appeal](#)

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AP's support for Ogul will last until December, when the school and parents will take over maintenance of the toilet. In the meantime Patrick Ojok from the GDPU, the project manager, will monitor the attendance and hygiene of students at Ogul. Principal Oyella hopes to see enrollment recover in 2018.

Mr Ojok will also check in at a second school, Tochi, where AP funded a first accessible toilet in 2015 (photo). AP hopes to fund a third toilet in 2018.

The Ogul success could herald a closer partnership between GDPU and the district government, as well as strengthen GDPU's advocacy. With this in mind, AP and GDPU have recruited an associate, Marypaul Lakot, to help Mr Ojok with project administration.