

WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE IN SCHOOLS: WAY FORWARD FOR ODISHA

Synthesis Document: Absolute need for providing infrastructure and regular maintenance for WASH in schools

Indian Sanitation Coalition, IRC, and TARU Leading Edge in association with World Vision India conducted this dialogue to emphasise on equal attention needed for both, infrastructure provision and maintenance for WASH in schools.



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Incorporate age appropriate WASH education in school curriculum
- Empower students to raise their voices
- Advocate partnerships between government, NGO's, and other CSR initiatives for better reach
- For WASH services to be available all the time, it is essential for the school management committee, children cabinets, teachers & parents to work together
- Sharing of evidence on the benefits of adopting WASH practices with all the stakeholders
- Convergence of multi-department towards WASH implementation (such as in the process of School Development Plans and the Gram Panchayat Development Plan)
- Address issues related to providing running water facility in schools
- Pilot initiatives on behavioral changes
- Encourage contribution from philanthropic agencies towards Swachh Vidhyalay Purashkar
- Involve senior citizens in WASH activities (urban)
- Use existing monitoring mechanism efficiently
- Create a forum to promote WASH

AVAILABILITY OF WATER, SANITATION & HYGIENE SERVICES (WASH) in schools is not only essential but also beneficial for a comfortable environment that enhances the health of the children. Research studies over the years have proven that WASH in schools increases attendance, promotes cognitive development, improves girl attendance and also helps augment positive hygiene behaviour. WASH in schools also offers a chance to introduce better practices in families and the larger communities while also assisting in addressing issues of inequity and exclusion. WASH in schools can be a powerful agent for change that has the potential to enable progressive changes in society.

However, children in many parts of the country are unable to benefit from WASH in schools. Even in educational establishments where adequate facilities are in place, equitable access has often proven to be a challenge. There are many barriers to access, which include education, cleanliness and maintenance.



DIALOGUE ON WASH IN SCHOOLS

Indian Sanitation Coalition, IRC, and TARU Leading Edge in association with World Vision India organized a dialogue on May 17, 2018 in Bhubaneswar. This deliberation was the seventh in the Insight series and was immensely successful with a total participation of 59 delegates. This dialogue had a wide representation across all stakeholders that included 9 participants from the Government Department, 7 from the academia, 9 representing CSR, 33 from civil society and a couple of Government elected representatives. The Chief Guest was Shri Bhupendra Singh Poonia, IAS, State Project Director, OPEPA (Odisha Primary Education Programme Authority). The esteemed panel that participated in this key dialogue included Mr. Johnson - WASH Specialist, UNICEF, Mr. Abhay Biswal - Superintendent Engineer RWSS, Mr. Golden Nayak - Manager WASH, World Vision India, Prof. Dr. K. M. Sethy - H.O.D. Geography, Utkal University, Dr. Ambika Prasad Nanda - CSR Head, Tata Steel Limited and Mr. P. C. Misra - Country Co-Convener, FANSA.

In this session, the discussion was focused on the absolute need for providing equal attention to infrastructure provision and maintenance for WASH in schools.

The panel clearly established the context of WASH in schools and also elaborated on what it means to have WASH in schools. Access to sufficient quantities of drinking water, emphasis on personal hygiene, and clean toilets with provision for flush are some aspects of WASH. Just providing toilets is not enough; it is vital to ensure that amenities are adequate and well maintained with



Proper training to students and teachers communities on WASH is important, before handing over responsible to the students in WASH related activities

Dr. Seva Mohapatra



separate areas for boys and girls. Moreover, they also have to be culturally appropriate, child-friendly with hand-wash facilities that allow all children to wash their hands before school meals and after the use of toilets. It also implies availability of personal hygiene materials like soaps, and sanitary pads along with safe disposal of the same. WASH in school also includes hygiene education, and measures to reduce transmission and morbidity of WASH related illnesses.

THE NATIONAL POLICY AND PROGRAMME ENVIRONMENT

This dialogue examined and understood the national policy with respect to WASH. The Indian programme and policy framework has a supportive legal foundation for WASH in schools. Several policies and programmes have been launched over the years that are highly conducive for enforcement of WASH. They include:

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009, which came into force on April 2010, provides for free and compulsory education for children between six and fourteen years of age, under article 21A of the Indian constitution. The RTE Act is a legally enforceable rights framework that lays down norms and standards for school buildings, without which no school can be established or recognized. The norms and standards under this framework clearly specify building standards that include safe and adequate drinking water facilities for all children and separate toilets for boys and girls.

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), launched in the year 2000-2001, is a centrally sponsored scheme that is implemented in partnership with all the state governments. The SSA is India's primary programme for universalizing elementary education. The overall goals for this framework include bridging gender and social gaps in education, providing widespread access while also focusing on retention, and augmenting learning levels among children. The interventions under SSA include, building and creating the right school infrastructure, which is inclusive of providing enhanced drinking water and toilet facilities. This

policy has provisions for periodic teacher training, stipulating academic resource support and ensuring other learning resources for children like textbooks, computers and libraries. It also takes into account identification of children with special needs and offering need-based support like aids and appliances. The SSA policy also encourages monitoring and supervision to make schools more effective while simultaneously also building accountability by engaging with local community based organisations. The other popular programme run by the government to increase attendance in schools is the Midday Meal Scheme. Under this, the school meals are designed to improve the nutritional status of children nationwide. The other important objective is to promote the practice of group hand washing with soap before the midday meal to enhance the overall nutritional outcomes. Under the scheme, state governments aim to institutionalize hand washing with soap before midday meals in all schools by allocating adequate

urinals

- Sources of clean drinking water along with functionality of the drinking water facility.

Another national campaign, which lays emphasis on WASH in schools, is the Swachh Bharat Swachh Vidyalaya. Launched in 2014, this movement focuses on the need for WASH in schools across the country. The objective of this initiative is to promote separate toilets for boys and girls, encourage safe and appropriate hygiene practices in schools and create behavioral change among children.

This program to promote WASH in schools has constituted the Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar in 2016. This award recognizes excellence in sanitation and hygiene practices in schools. The purpose of the award is to honor schools that have undertaken significant steps towards fulfilling the mandate of the Swachh Vidyalaya Campaign. Hence, performance of schools for



time before meals to make sure that every child can wash their hands. This scheme also intends to connect group hand washing platforms with midday meal kitchen sheds.

Apart from this, there are well-established mechanisms that assess the progress of various schools in the context of WASH. The National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration in 1995 released the District Information System for Education (DISE) to create an information system for monitoring the reach and success of education programmes. Over the years the parameters under DISE have increased to enable better outcomes. From the perspective of WASH in schools, DISE has data on the

- Number of toilet seats constructed/available for use for boys and girls
- Number of functional toilet seats
- Number of toilets with water for flushing and cleaning
- Number of urinals for boys and girls
- Availability of toilets for children with special needs
- Availability of hand-washing facilities near toilets/

implementing WASH is evaluated against the following parameters:

- Providing access to safe drinking water
- Availability of water for use in toilets
- Availability of separate functional toilets; urinals for boys, separate toilets for girls and conveniences for children with special needs
- Functional hand washing facilities for use before mid day meal and after use of toilets
- Operations and maintenance facilities including safe disposal of solid and liquid waste
- Cleaning and maintenance of school premises
- Impacting behaviour change
- Capacity building for hygiene education, including inculcating the right practices for the students as well as midday meal cooks

In addition to this, Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) is also an important source of information for WASH. The ASER survey is the largest independent education survey undertaken in India. This annual, nationwide survey provides the status for children's schooling and also estimates the basic levels of learning for rural districts for each state in India. Developed by

Pratham, the survey assesses enrolment, reading ability and arithmetic levels of children in the elementary education system of select villages. Every two years, as per the norms of the RTE Act, it also reports the nature of facilities available in schools including drinking water and the state of sanitation.

Several other organisations also undertake independent assessments for WASH in schools. For instance, data from the Water Aid 2017 base line survey of 2400 schools across 10 states, including Odisha, was shared. According to this data, in terms of access to water, 6% of the surveyed schools did not have any water source, while 2% of the schools were dependent on unimproved source. Additionally, 11% of the schools were found to have the primary source of water outside the school premises. As per the survey, in terms of sanitation, 9% of the schools did not have toilets while 18% of schools had toilets but they were found to be defunct. Additionally, 25% of schools (all girls and co-educational) were found to not have any separate toilets for girls.

The panelists were of the view that even with an enabling policy framework that supports WASH in schools, striking gaps remain. Cognizant of these gaps, it fostered moving from Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As per the MDGs, approximately 70% of schools in India have reached basic water and sanitation targets. However, the challenge is to move from up on the development ladder from providing just the basic facilities to creating improved standards.



WASH is the big black hole that need to be addressed. We need to give the best to our students at all times.

Dr. Ambika Prasad Nanda
CSR Head, Tata Steel Limited



UNDERSTANDING THE GAPS AND CHALLENGES

WASH in schools is implemented to provide a healthy and comfortable environment that aims to improve children's health and boost attendance in schools. Despite WASH in schools, children are unable to benefit because of a number of challenges. This discussion highlighted some of them; the significant one was related to infrastructure and the practices connected with it.

The problems typically for WASH in schools are in terms of – the hardware i.e. the functionality, and the software i.e. the practices associated with the infrastructure. The trials faced in establishing the hardware are often relegated to lack of adequate funds. However, it was stated that in addition to the annual funds earmarked under SSA for toilets and drinking water facilities, schools (through Gram Panchayats) could easily tap in to other sources – such as the Fourteenth Finance Commission (FFC) funds.

Poor financing is a result of poor planning, which is most evident in the differences between the two types of existing plans- the School Development Plans (SDPs) and the Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs). The GPDPs are prepared by panchayats, who consult with the local community, on where and how to spend the funds (including FFC) available to them. This discussion highlighted that the GPDP process provides the space and opportunity to fund school WASH infrastructure, including resources needed for maintenance. With the presence of elected representatives in the School Management committee (SMCs), who are in-charge of preparation of the SDPs, and in GPDPs, the scope to converge is institutionally available. However, on ground there is hardly any collaborative effort and consequently there is no convergence between SDP and GPDP.

The panelists deliberated on the amenities that fall under WASH in schools and were of the opinion that the various Government schemes and Corporate Social Responsibility programs may have facilitated





the construction of a number of toilets. The challenge lies not in construction of toilets but in their sustainability, as maintenance is often poor. Poor condition of school WASH infrastructure can be attributed to a large extent on the availability of certain basic services- such as water. In the discussion, the indispensability of running water was brought up in the context of providing uninterrupted access to drinking water as well as for toilet operation and maintenance. Often shortage or lack of water, it was stated, leads to school toilets remaining unclean, unused and unmaintained over time, rendering them to be non-functional eventually.

The problem of poor condition of WASH infrastructure has a lot to do with the software issues of a school WASH i.e. the practices associated with the infrastructure. On several occasions, the users of school WASH amenities are first generation users, who are unaware of appropriate user behaviour like to flush after every use. In some cases, the design and location of the infrastructure pose challenge to its usability. The discussion highlighted that usually the infrastructure is implemented in a top – down manner, without taking in to consideration the perspective of the users. For instance, studies have found that toilets are constructed 50-100 meters away from the main school building, which compromises the privacy and safety of the user. Hence, these toilets are rendered unfit or even unsafe to use.

The panelists believe that the one of the biggest challenges associated with WASH in schools is the lack of ownership towards maintaining infrastructure. Although, the SMCs are best institutions for the betterment of schools and students, they are comprised of guardians with a significant number of women. The SMCs are the ideal bodies that can work towards establishing ownership and accountability for schools to consistently deliver on WASH services. In practice, however, the discussion brought to the forefront that few people with vested interests control the SMCs. Often the guardians have no say in

the deliberations of the SMC meetings, and may even be unaware of the discussions and decisions taken by it. On many occasions it is reported that in meetings the attendance of the guardian members of the SMC is very low. This is in spite of providing information and notice to attend. The involvement is low in the monthly SMC meetings because poor parents have to give upon earning their daily wages in order to participate. Due to these fundamental challenges, SMCs tend to be ineffective for WASH services. Hence, like many other services increased enrolment or attendance of students remains low.

Gender was identified as a key aspect in obtaining adequate access to WASH. The panelists reiterated that the absence or shortage of separate toilets for girls in schools preventing them from using the toilets and comfortably practicing proper hygiene. In many cases, even though separate toilets were built, poor design, lack of privacy and inadequate maintenance barred usage. The panel agreed that any dialogue on WASH in schools is incomplete without discussing menstrual health management (MHM). Typically, MHM is reduced to distribution of sanitary napkins. The newly launched scheme from the Govt. of Odisha – Khushi – was mentioned, wherein, the state intends to provide free sanitary napkins to 17 lakh girls studying in Classes 6 to 12 in both government



We need to scale up Pilot Models, focus on key elements of Swacch Bharat and ensure maintenance of WASH infrastructure in Schools. It is imperative to strengthen local School body, that is SCM when it comes to WASH related activities. Make every School know which Indicators they will be measured and encourage Star Rating for every School in WASH related achievement

Mr. Johnson - WASH Specialist, UNICEF





and government-aided schools. The purpose of this scheme is to promote health and hygiene among adolescent girls and also promote school attendance. However, provision of sanitary napkins is only part of the problem. Distribution schemes or drives do not address the monumental waste disposal problem that would emerge post use of the sanitary napkins. This pervading problem requires culturally appropriate low – cost technology solutions that will help reach the last mile.

Further, MHM trainings in schools are usually restricted to girls. The experts were of the opinion that there is a dire need to broaden the reach of such training programs by including male students and teachers to sensitize them on MHM. Sensitization is required to foster an enabling environment for girls to voice their needs and share specific challenges with respect to WASH. Receiving such feedback helps decision makers gain perspective and also better understand their requirements.

THE WAY FORWARD

Policies that apply to WASH in Schools already exist, most of which acknowledge the need for, and supply provision for, equitable access. However, it does not always result in equitable environments on the ground, as there are many barriers to access – including maintenance and cleanliness of facilities. Although, significant progress has been achieved, especially with regards to sanitation, further improvements in WASH infrastructure and hygiene behaviors are required

According to the panel, the way forward is to strengthen local institutions like the SMC. The recommendation is to conduct regular training for SMC members that integrate the key aspects of water and sanitation in the context of schools, the Swachh Bharat Mission and Swachh Vidyalaya. There is also a need for capacity building for members and officials on understanding budgets and sourcing along with fund management for WASH in schools. With probable congruence between SDP and the GPDP with the elected representatives serving on both, this form of training can help schools source

the requisite funds from the FFC for operations and maintenance.

The panelists reiterated that there is an increasing need to monitor the functioning of SMCs. The Odisha government's has issued revised guidelines for the composition and function of SMCs. A Standing Committee on Education is to be constituted at the Gram Panchayat (GP) level or at the urban local body level, with the responsibility to monitor the functioning of the schools in the area as well as the SMCs therein. This committee will comprise of members that include elected representative, ward members, and the head mistress/master of all the schools in the area, a nominated educationist, anganwadi worker, health worker, and others. The committee will function as the local authority that oversees development activities in the areas of school education, health, sanitation, public works, etc. in the local jurisdiction. The panelists stressed on the need to make the standing committee more effective to ensure that the SMCs function appropriately.

To create strong SMCs, it is vital to provide an enabling environment for the members to participate. Hence, it is imperative to schedule meetings at convenient time for the guardians of students who will not have to forego their daily wages to attend. Additionally, with at least 50% of the member guardians being female, it is critical that the meetings provide a supportive ecosystem for them to raise their concerns.

An enabling environment in school for students, especially girls, will allow them to voice their



It is important to sensitize everyone about WASH as this will increase participation and will result in increase in civic responsibility across every school community.

Prof. Sisira





Marseibor S Lyngdoh, Associate Director - PMO, World Vision India, Bhuvneshwar

challenges with respect to WASH. Sensitization of the male members in schools on issues of MHM will make it easier for the girls to access WASH. Further, since the students are the actual users of WASH, it would be advisable to include them in the design and implementation of the infrastructure and services, for it to remain user friendly and are safe to access.

Another pertinent issue with WASH is user behaviour. The panelists opined that provision of infrastructure without any support on the practice and usage would be detrimental in the long run. Thus, it is critical to impart sanitation knowledge on a regular basis, with the updated content that incorporates new programmes and changing ground realities. This knowledge is important to inculcate appropriate user behaviour, including how to avoid wastage of natural resources. Trained children can also serve as motivators that advocate appropriate practice behaviour within their local communities. These children can also serve as monitors of WASH in their respective schools.

The discussion highlighted that several organisations are working in the field of WASH in schools with some of them running successful

pilots. However, when it comes to scale, there are no real success stories to report. Therefore, it is vital that organisations must collaborate their efforts to attain better outcomes. The panelists discussed the significant role the corporate sector can play. There could be better outreach if the corporates could offer support not only for building infrastructure but also providing skilled manpower for the maintenance of the infrastructure. The dialogue also brought to the forefront the need to reach out to the partners from the education sector and mainstream WASH.

CONCLUSION

WASH in schools is marked with persisting challenges. While there are concerns on availability of adequate infrastructure, there is greater challenge in the operations and maintenance of existing infrastructure. The dialogue brought out the need for a more integrated approach and specific actionable points to address the challenges. Collaboration and convergence of organizations working in this field is needed to take replicate the small successes of pilots to programmes of scale. This becomes especially important when reaching the last mile and to maintain parity in the quality of services reaching the end-user (providing the marginalized sections of the society the same level of services as the rest of the population). However, this will only be possible with the support of the government, which plays a pre-dominant role in the sector.

Keeping the bigger picture in perspective, it is important to acknowledge that the poor condition of WASH amenities, particularly that of toilets, whether in schools or in the community, is a direct consequence of the stigma associated with cleaning toilets. There is need for a larger movement to remove the disgrace associated with to effectively address challenges related to WASH in schools.



Water is life and sanitation is the way of life. So, we need to sensitize the parents, the communities and also help them to acquire and have accessed to basic WASH requirements.

Dr. B. M. Das



For more information on the “Insights” knowledge series visit the India Sanitation Coalition [website](#).

This document is a product of the Insights Series; developed by IRC, India Sanitation Coalition and TARU Leading Edge.

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