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Rural Water Supply in the 21st Century: Myths of the Past, Visions for the Future

Title: Promising ways of dealing with emerging challenges

Long Paper

Title: Creating favorable environments for school children through school water sanitation and hygiene promotion: The case of Clean Water For Schools (CWFS) project in primary schools in Katooke Sub County, Kyenjojo District, Uganda

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Abstract/Summary

A safe environment in schools influences children’s health and wellbeing. Water and sanitation facilities are increasingly recognized as fundamental for promoting appropriate hygiene behavior and children’s wellbeing. However, many schools experience unsanitary conditions that vary from inappropriate and inadequate sanitary facilities to the outright lack of latrines and safe water for drinking and support to hygiene promotion. This paper attempts to analyze the importance of providing adequate water, hygiene and sanitation services to creating a favorable learning environment to pupils in primary schools. The case is derived from implementation of clean water for school project in 6 primary schools in Kyenjojo district in Western Uganda. The paper examines the context of school WASH in Uganda with particular cases from Katooke sub county in Western Uganda, the effort in place to improve school WASH, key interventions by JESE/WaterCan, key lessons drawn and recommendations.

Introduction and context

While the country seems set to achieve the Universal Primary Education goal of ensuring that all boys and girls complete primary education by the years 2015, the school water, sanitation and hygiene goal may not be achieved. This goal calls for governments to educate 80% of primary school children about hygiene and equip every school with facilities for WASH by 2015.

In Uganda attempts to improve education standards are looked at in terms improving pupil teachers ratio, pupil desk ratio, pupils text books ratio, pupil classroom ratio, etc with little attention to school WASH as a key factor in improving education standards. In 2009/10, education sector was allocated 17.3% of the national budget, of this 55% was spent on construction of classroom blocks, purchase of scholastic materials and less priority to establishment of WASH facilities (background to the budget 2010). It’s not surprising that between 2007-2009 primary school completion rates declined from 62% to 49% despite increased government funding (NDP 2010). In the lower local government like Kyenjojo district, the school facility grants (SFG) releases are planned to fund project like classroom block constructions, desks, books, and in rare cases latrine blocks, provision of water is left to existing NGO’s or private sector. In the few schools where government funding has directly gone to provision of water their emphasis has been on hardware oftenly resulting into poor management and consequently breakdown. During our baseline survey in 2009 in 3 schools in Katooke sub county, it was evident that pupils were travelling daily to a distance of 3 kilometers to fetch water for the school from a nearby up protected community water source this negatively impacted on the performance of the children in class as a lot of time will be spent to fetch water.

A severe shortage of toilets in many public primary schools is undermining the efforts to provide quality education. Since the introduction of free primary education in 1997, national primary school enrolment has tripled from 2.7 million children in 1986 to 8.2 million in 2009. In 1997/8 Uganda received the highest pupils stance ratio at 700:1, although this has significantly reduced to an average of 83:1 in districts like Kyenjojo (Kyenjojo district development Plan 2010-2015), in other
areas like Apac, the coverage is 143:1.

To improve this situation, Joint Efforts To Save the Environment (JESE) in partnership with WaterCan have intervened in increasing access to of water, supply of sanitation facilities (latrines), solid waste (rubbish) management, promotion and transfer of Hygiene knowledge and trainings. This aims at creating a child friendly education environment for pupils and school staff in the hope that the skills and practices shared can be learned by the target beneficiaries within the school environment and later transferred to the community households using the children who act as agents of change.

- Water coverage in UPE schools

Over 80% of primary schools in rural Uganda lack a source of safe water to supply the school though out the year, 90% do not even have the simplest hand washing facility (UNICEF baseline survey 2008). There is plenty of water during the wet season, but the quality of this water is more oftenly compromised. Head teachers reported that roof catchment offers the most viable option for a majority of schools. Presently rainwater harvesting and storage capacities are inadequate for large pupil populations. Children spend the time that should be spent learning in fetching water from unimproved sources in the neighborhood. Often they carry water from home. Schoolchildren need water for cleaning toilets, hand and face washing, preparation of lunches and wiping or reducing dust in the earthen classroom floors. These habits are known to reduce and even eliminate skin and eye diseases, diarrhoeas, intestinal worms and typhoid.

- Sanitation provisions

The Ministry of Health recommends a minimum of 40 pupils to share 1 toilet stance. In Kyenjojo district, the pupil stance ratio is averaging at 93:1 which is many points above the national average. In most schools, the toilets for girls and boys are semi-separated (back-to-back design), shared or constructed close together. Experience shows that when girls reach puberty, they drop out of school due to the embarrassment of having to share latrines with boys, or because the facilities do not give them privacy and dignity. During a JESE/WaterCan baseline survey in 3 schools in Katooke sub county in 2010, 2/10 girls miss classes during menstrual periods because of lack of supportive environment and facilities at school. In many schools there are also problems associated with poor management and use of the toilet facilities which also contributes to poor standards in education.

- Pupils hygiene standards

In 2010 baseline study conducted by JESE in partnership with WaterCan in three primary schools in Katooke sub county Kyenjojo district revealed that hygiene and sanitation promotion is not emphasized and teachers are not sensitized on these issues, 78% of the children reported that they ate without washing their hands, partly because of ignorance and partly for lack of hand washing facilities. They also reported that they do not wash hands or cleanse their anuses after latrine use.

Our experience:

The CWFS project targets a total population of 6493 Project beneficiaries of which 5904 are children, 325 are women, and 264 are men within the localities of six primary schools (CWFS, Phase III baseline report November 2010).

Problem statement

Baseline survey information(from findings of CWFS-Phase III baseline report ,November 2010) on the water situation for primary schools in Katooke sub-county shows these to be the problems faced by the schools:

- Continuous water shortage in spite of water harvested from heavy rainfall periods. This arises from increased water demands both by the school and from community members living near the school grounds that have no nearby protected ground water source within the neighborhood and thus pressurize the school to share the water from the school tank.

- Prevalence of poor WASH related diseases and habits because of poor personal and environmental hygiene habits such as not washing hands after latrine use, repetitive
wearing of unwashed clothes, poor garbage removal and disposal.

- Inadequate latrine coverage with pupil to stance use ratio in schools like Nyakisi, Mukole and Rwamukora at 58, 98 and 55 pupils per 01 stance respectively. Also, in some cases, there are no separate latrines for teachers who have to share the available latrines with the pupils.
- Long distances travelled in order to access water. Most children (both male and female) are obligated to collect water for home use before departing for school in the morning and also during school hours to meet the school water demands. Pupils report to school late and have to also lose class time hours (of an average of an hour) in walking about 1km to the nearest water point to line up for water for school needs. This means that the pupils’ productivity and enrollment patterns in the long run (especially for the girl child) are greatly affected by water demand.
- Promotion and provision of appropriate technologies using unsuitable materials (like plastic mobile toilets and rain water harvesting tanks) within the water stressed rural setting. Most of these plastic facilities have been and are still prone to vandalism (displayed by cutting them open, piercing them, setting them on fire, intentional breakage by communities around the school.
- Negligence in learning by parents and Communities around the schools who perceive schools as independent institutions which are of relevance to only their children’s education (as per the school syllabus) and do not see the connection other sectors such as water, hygiene and sanitation play in improving the lives of the school community which can also be transferred to individual households within the community.

Description of the initiative;
JESE with funding from WaterCan and in collaboration with the District education office and sub county office sought to improve the water and sanitation situation within selected schools. This will be done through the following interventions:

1. **Improving access to clean water**
   This will be done by tapping into the available resources like heavy rainfall seasons and roof catchments on the classroom blocks at the schools. Analysis of the school water demands showed that water is required for general cleaning of classrooms, drinking, washing hands after latrine use and also for bathing. In order to meet these demands three separate Ferro cement rain water harvesting tanks will be provided.
   - One of 17,000 liter capacity tapping water from the classroom blocks will provide water for:
     - general cleaning
     - drinking water
     - hand washing needs
   - Another of 900 liter capacity tapping from the girls latrine block will provide water for:
     - the girls washroom
   - The other of 250 liter capacity will provide storage for:
     - water for hand washing
   Storage containers of 20 liter capacity fitted with a tap are also provided in each class to cater for drinking water.

2. **Providing water to improve sanitation**
   This will be done by construction of 2 latrine blocks, one for boys and the other for girls. The latrines will improve the sanitation situation at the school with the roofs of these blocks providing future catchments to harvest water used for cleaning the latrines on a daily basis.

3. **Providing water for environmental use**
   Excess / Overflow water from the tanks can be channeled to other storage and be used for watering school gardens in cases where water demands are high. Otherwise some water from general
cleaning needs can be allocated for this purpose thus improving on food needs, the external environment and appearance of the school.

4. Providing water for community developmental needs

During periods when the school is closed for holidays. The communities living around the schools can responsibly make use of available water in the tanks. This water is collected and used for general home use, drinking needs of animals. The use of this water is governed by a water sharing agreement between the school and the community.

Description of the Case Study – Approach and technology

The Child to child approach in schools is used. When the project is introduced to a benefiting school, this school must form a school health clubs. Children who are members of this school health club get training in good WASH behavior practices and skills which once learned should be transferred from them to the other pupils within the school and also to communities around the school and also where the pupils reside.

The school health club is managed both a male and female patron who receive WASH trainings and training materials from which they draw lessons used to teach the pupils in the school health club and to manage the club activities.

The concept is that water supply is used as the entry point into the school and community. This is integrated/combined package including good hygiene and sanitation knowledge and facilities working through a three step process where ‘We learn, practice, share and bring others on board’.

‘Learning’ is carried out within the club members on good WASH practices in relation to water and sanitation facilities supplied to the school.

Appropriate ‘Practicing’ behavior is first of all agreed upon within the club after which a Health and sanitation action plan and duty roster is drawn up showing duties and responsible persons from both the school management and the pupils. The club members then undertake these duties with support from the other pupils and school management at the school. General hygiene and sanitation issues from the school science syllabus are also incorporated so as to enhance adoption and relate practical aspects of WASH.

‘Sharing’ is depicted in in-reach and outreach programs of the club using a series of WASH activities which regularly blend club members, other pupils, school management committees and the community together.

The in-reach activities are meant to boost awareness and practice of good WASH practices within the school pupils and staff. These activities include

- **Weekly school parade sensitization and monitoring**

  Health parade is held every week during which the members of the school health club sensitize the other pupils on good and bad health, hygiene and sanitation habits. They may teach using visual aids (hand drawn artworks and sketches) or messages written on the talking compounds for the school. In the event that there is a WASH theme being advocated for at national level then this theme will be promoted during this time.

  The monitoring and assessment of pupils personal hygiene follows thereafter with the help of the teachers on duty. Here the pupils are individually checked in accordance with acceptable personal hygiene standards. Areas to be checked include clean short hair, clean short nails, washed uniform, bathed body, skin infections, and cleaned teeth.

  Remedies for low hygiene standards include cutting long hair and nails, provide soap for washing dirty uniforms, providing soap and water for un-bathed pupil to take a bath, provide local remedies (ointments) for treating skin infections

- **Termly school inter-class Hygiene and sanitation competition**

  Here each class presents poetry, music and drama on water, sanitation and hygiene. This is to emphasize comprehension of hygiene and sanitation messages for each participant.
Ranking is done and the individual best performers awarded. General trophies are given for boys and girls to encourage total participation of all.

- **Creation of artwork materials (sketches and drawings)**
  These depict good and poor hygiene and sanitation situations drawn as the children see and understand. Sketches are collected and submitted to a professional artist who interprets the concept therein and draws similar works with multiple messages. The artists' drawings are then incorporated in promotional materials used for WASH.

- **Provision of soap, bathing materials, sanitary pads and changing uniform**
  This is done by the school in order to improve the hygiene and sanitation environment for all pupils. Sanitary pads and changing uniform are for girl child.

The outreach activities are meant to create awareness and practice of good WASH practices outside the school setting (also referred to as the community). These activities include:

- **Community visitation and presentations**
  Here the school health club members report on the hygiene and sanitation situation within their villages and surroundings. Any one location with poor hygiene and sanitation conditions is chosen and the club organizes a visit to this community or a school therein there where they present songs, drama and messages on hygiene and sanitation.

- **Participation in sanitation week**
  Sanitation week is an annual event where the District education department invites schools that have been exposed to hygiene and sanitation programs to prepare music and drama presentations that highlight appropriate hygiene and sanitation practices that can be promoted in schools by children.

- **Participating in Radio talk shows on WASH**
  Here the club patrons and members showcase benefits, lessons learned and challenges within their clubs as well as sharing hygiene and sanitation messages via the radio.

### Main results and lessons learnt

Increase of water supply to schools must incorporate how to deal with water demands of communities living near them who will also want a share of this water. This can be by favorably working out a water sharing agreement dependent on the water demands of the school. Availability of water at the school ground reduces occurrence of poor WASH related personal and environmental practices, reduction in the time wasted in collecting water for school demands. Benefits are reflected in better time usage and shorter distances walked to access water by the school staff and pupils. This has led to improved productivity of pupils and teachers situation at the school for all.

Ferro cement tanks are sustainable for schools within rural setting because they are cheaper to construct can be of greater volume and are less prone to vandalism from community members. Lessons from our Partners- UNICEF and the first three intervention schools showed us that giving out plastic water tanks is not suitable for water stressed rural communities. A lot of sensitization and protective measures are required for them to perform.

Provision of water needs to be integrated with related aspects like sanitation and environment issues in order to have communities appreciate how inter-related these are to education. These latrines provides sheds which can also be utilized for rain water harvesting ensuring that the girl child does not miss school because she is having her periods and has to worry about hygiene conditions and appropriate sanitation facilities while at school. This has greatly improved the girl
retention rates as substantiated by the district education office in the case of Kijwiga primary school.

School outreach programmes are now better appreciated by communities in and around these schools. Most parents appreciate and attend the interclass hygiene and sanitation competitions, listen in to the radio programs.

Sanitation week has acted as a learning point for other schools to adopt good practices and behaviors, a case in point is during the 2009 sanitation week, Iraara primary school presented her work in promotion of hygiene and sanitation and a sister school (Mweri Primary school) adopted the practices and established basic standards such as hand washing with soap, providing washroom for girls and provision for cleansing materials in the latrine stances.

Each school has been able to form clubs with others causes drawing lessons of empowerment from the child to child model. Iraara primary school has developed a scouting club while the others have environment clubs which use excess water collected and compost for maintaining school flower gardens.

The National development plan (2010) identifies socio-cultural practices, attitudes and perceptions as well as inadequate physical infrastructure like water and sanitation as issues which affect the performance of the education sector. Intervention strategy 3 thereof aims at reduction of social cultural barriers to girls’ school attendance in order to reduce gender disparity in primary education. JESE does appreciate that supplying water to schools can have tremendous results in the hygiene and sanitation situation of the school and communities while improving the education standards in the region.

Conclusions

Construction of more toilets and water points alone does not bring the desired health benefits. Hygiene promotion, aimed at bringing behavioral changes, must go hand-in-hand with the development of physical facilities.

Children can act as effective agents of change when organized in School health clubs which are an effective method to pave way into and create awareness into community water and sanitation situations.

The provision of water and separate latrines for boys and girls appeared to have a strong, positive impact on keeping adolescent girls in school. This indicates that some of the activities most effective in promoting the retention of girls are not directly educational activities, but related to the physical infrastructure of the school itself. (David W. Chapman et al)

Recommendations

- Various government ministries, development partners, private and civil society organizations have a stake in school sanitation and hygiene. However, there is no structured and sustained national programme to co-ordinate and consolidate their efforts, inter-sectorial coordination of school sanitation and hygiene is paramount.
- WaterCan should continue to focus on funding school WASH projects for they have proven to be effective entry point for change in rural communities.
- The Government of Uganda should continue to encourage and collaborate with the private sector players in improving the education sector through provision of physical water and sanitation infrastructure.
- National and regional WATSAN networks should continue to organize learning forums and provide capacity building for implementers of WATSAN projects.
- Other implementing NGO’s should endeavor to focus on provision of facilities to improve children’s health and sanitation situation as these will provide sustainable entry points.
into the community for implementation of WATSAN projects. Communities are willing to encourage their children, more so the girls to learn and adopt good hygiene and sanitation practices because they are the futures mothers of tomorrow who will be responsible for the health welfare of their respective households and communities.

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Figure 1 picture showing sanitation action plan, duty roster and sketches for good hygiene and sanitation practices

Figure 2 Iraara P/s at an outreach function
Figure 3 pupils performing at an interclass hygiene and sanitation competition

Figure 4 pupil washes hands with water