

Enhancing hygiene practices at schools

The case of the School WASH programme in Dar es Salaam



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Background

School WASH is a strategic approach that is concerned with water, sanitation and hygiene in schools. It has been widely established that child-friendly water, sanitation and hygiene in schools improves health, boosts education achievements, and has a positive impact on communities. However, most schools in developing countries including Tanzania lack the basic necessities of a WASH programme. The data from a study conducted by UNICEF in 2009 in 16 districts in Tanzania, reveals that 84% of schools have no functional hand washing facilities, 34% have no water supply in the school premises, and 52% have no doors on girls latrines. Additionally, in the city of Dar es Salaam, there was found to be an average ratio of 215 boys and 187 girls per latrine. Reading this data, it shows how poor the provision of water, sanitation and hygiene is in many schools. School water, sanitation and hygiene contribute to children's learning, reducing days missed from school, providing more time for learning, and increasing dignity and safety. Because of inadequate school WASH, many children are not meeting their learning potential.

The CCI School WASH programme started in 2013 as a response to the needs of Dar es Salaam schools. The implementation of this project is part of a large community led project which CCI is implementing with support from Reall (UK based organisation) and grants from DFID. The programme has been implemented in five schools; Bokorani, Mtoni Sabasaba and Keko Mwanga in Temeke Municipal, Manzese in Kinondoni Municipal and Hekima in Ilala Municipal. These schools had no access to clean water, the toilets were in bad condition; they were dirty, had leakages and were hence not safe, had no hand washing facilities, and lack of privacy as some toilets doors were no longer functioning. The toilets smelled and didn't include special rooms for girls to change during their menstrual period. These conditions led to some students missing school, especially girls during their menstrual periods. The absence of water meant that pupils had to carry water from home.

CCI School WASH interventions focus on:

- Promoting hygiene practices among primary school pupils. The aim is to ensure that pupils are able to change their hygiene behaviour. This is by using school clubs (a team of pupils) who are trained to train fellow pupils. School clubs are a catalyst for change on hygiene practice at school, at home and in the entire community.
- Providing water and improved sanitation infrastructure as a means of enhancing hygiene promotion.

How the School WASH programme is being implemented by CCI



Combination of hardware and software in hygiene promotion: CCI developed a mechanism for enhancing hygiene knowledge by combining both software and hardware. The software is approached through the provision of training on hygiene knowledge to pupils and teachers in selected schools, while the hardware involves the provision of water and sanitation infrastructures at schools. The combination of both has highly enhanced hygiene promotion in schools.

1. **Formulation of school hygiene promotion clubs:** Selected pupils from each school are trained on hygiene promotion practices, in order to transfer the knowledge to fellow students. School club members act as champions of hygiene promotion at schools. More than 600 pupils in five schools have been trained on hygiene promotion, including menstrual hygiene. For enhancement of hygiene promotion activities, cleaning equipment such as dustbins and brooms, and tanks for installing drinking water for children have been given by CCI to all 5 schools as initial equipment for promoting hygiene.
2. **Build capacity on menstrual hygiene management for adolescent girls:** CCI has conducted training for adolescent girls on menstrual hygiene management in all five schools. Moreover the school toilets constructed were built to accommodate a special room for girls which is being used to allow for specific needs for privacy space, washing and correct disposal of menstrual pads.
3. **Provision of water and sanitation infrastructure at schools:** Toilet improvement has been undertaken in five schools; Mtoni Sabasaba, Bokorani and Keko Mwanga (Temeke Municipal), Hekima (Ilala Municipal) and Manzese (Kinondoni Municipal). Additionally, water connections have been installed in the schools, providing water inside the toilets and around the school compounds for easy access to teachers and pupils.
4. **Conducting exchange visits among pupils and teachers:** This is a learning method which aims to provide wider opportunities for teachers and students to learn from others implementing similar programmes. Visits provide the opportunity for both teachers and pupils to be challenged in best practices, motivates them to improve the way they undertake hygiene promotion activities, and provides a chance for networking, planning and implementation on common grounds.
5. **Promoting the establishment of school sanitation funds:** Schools currently depend on the government to provide support for developing school activities, including the construction and maintenance of infrastructure. With limited resources, most schools have failed to develop and maintain already existing infrastructure, including those for water and sanitation. This has led to poor water and sanitation services in many schools. This situation made CCI think beyond just improving the infrastructure, but to make sure even after the end of the project, the existing and newly developed infrastructure will be sustainable. This led to the establishment of School Sanitation Funds.

How things have changed since the establishment of the project



A lot of changes have been noted since the establishment of this programme in 2013;

1. Pupils are now washing their hands and encouraging one another to do so after using the toilet, which was not the case before. The allocation of hand washing facilities around the school compound has facilitated and encouraged pupils to practice hand washing. An interview with Mrs Loya Said, the health teacher at Manzese Primary school, revealed how the project has resulted in a tremendous change within a short time; *“Previously we did not have access to safe and clean water and hand washing facilities, the toilets were in a very bad conditions. We used to have many cases of stomach ache and diarrhoea from our pupils. Now with access to water, improved toilets and hygiene promotion through school clubs, these cases have decreased, there is no solid waste, especially papers, around the school compounds, and pupils even encourage one other to use the dustbins There is an improvement in school attendance, and school is very clean. Indeed a lot has changed.”*
2. There has been an increase in student attendance at school. The pupils now feel happy to be at school because of the conducive environment, e.g. clean school environment, access to water and improved toilets. In the past, pupils had to get drinking water from nearby shops or within the community, and in many cases were not returning back to classes. Girls during menstrual period were not attending school. Keko Mwanga Primary School has noted an



Pupils washing hands at the installed hand washing facilities

increase in the number of pupils attending classes and an increase in the number of pupils sitting the final national examination, from 198 in 2013 to 241 in 2014.

3. Training on menstrual hygiene for girls has enabled them to gain knowledge on what to do during menstruation, has increased their attendance at school and has helped to create a bond between teachers, pupils and parents. Culturally parents are not very open to talking to their children about reproductive health issues, and girls often find that they also can't talk to their teachers about this. The training was eye opening for parents and teachers on how much support their children need. Through this project, female health teachers have been identified to provide support to girls on issues related to menstrual hygiene. In



Mrs. Jane Brown, a health teacher at Keko Mwanga Primary School in a changing room and showing special towels (pads) which are provided to girls while they are at school.

addition, two schools have created special rooms for changing and the provision of sanitary towels (pads). The cases of girls missing school during menstrual period have decreased from approximately 10-15 a month to no more than 4 in each school. Girls now are more confident about talking to teachers and parents when they need support.

4. The participation of school pupils in hygiene promotion activities through drama, hygiene campaigns and school competitions, has enhanced their capacity and confidence in sharing their skills with fellow pupils, parents and the community.
5. The programme has influenced pupils, teachers and school committees to be active and creative in responding to the challenges and needs of the schools. One of these challenges was collection of solid waste, and one school has started to recycle the solid waste produced on its grounds by making fertilisers for school gardens, and producing briquettes made of papers. Before this the school had to wait for the government to respond, which is challenging due to the limited finances available.



The photo on the left shows the composting of solid waste for the production of fertiliser. The one on the middle shows the charcoal briquettes produced by students, and on the right is a photo of a school garden where fertilisers from solid waste have been applied.

Lessons learnt so far



1. **Combination of software and hardware in promoting hygiene at schools is more effective in realising behavioural change:** Many schools lack both the knowledge and facilities of water and sanitation. The combination of the two provides an opportunity for effective learning and hygiene practice.
2. **Hygiene promotion at schools influences the behaviour of pupils to act differently:** Pupils have been noted to improve performance in classes, which could be because of the availability of child friendly environments for studying, improvements in school attendance, increases in self-confidence, and competition among pupils on both cleanliness and class performance.
3. **Exchange visits among pupils and teachers help enhance learning experiences:** Exchange visits involve pupils who belong in school clubs, along with their teachers and school committees. These groups visit other schools involved in the CCI School WASH programme, along with other schools which are implementing similar programmes with support from other organisations. This has enabled pupils to learn from other children on how to make hand washing facilities, along with how they have been able to influence and control food hygiene from community members who are selling food to pupils around school compounds, and increased confidence of students. Similarly, school committees have learnt about their role in influencing parents to support pupils in hygiene promotion. Previously parents in school committees felt that their role was minimal in promoting hygiene; it was seen as the work of pupils and teachers instead. These exchanges have also resulted in the establishment of feedback meetings between teachers, pupils and parents on project progress. This usually involves pupils speaking on what they have learnt on hygiene promotion, and what support they would like to get from parents.
4. **School sanitation funds can help ensure that infrastructure is maintained and reduces school dependency on government:** Many schools depend on government for developing school facilities and sustaining them. However, with limited resources, this has led to the poor condition of school facilities in water, sanitation, classrooms and other areas. The introduction of this fund is designed to reduce the dependency of schools, and result in them taking a leading role in identifying opportunities available to fundraise in order to support the school needs on water and sanitation. The fundraising involves different stakeholders, including community members, institutions and organisations close to schools, industries, private people and politicians. Making community members part of the process helps to develop a sense of responsibility, ownership and belonging towards school facilities. The development of this funding is in progress, and the plan is to have a fund in place at each school involved in the project. This will ensure the sustainability of the current available water and sanitation facilities, and the new ones. Currently one school (Keko Mwangi Primary School) has already begun by fundraising USD \$2,381 in an event attended by community, school alumni, and organisations working on water and sanitation. Additionally,

during this event other well-wishers were able to provide support beyond water and sanitation by providing iron sheets for roofing some classrooms which were leaking during rain.

5. **Government engagement at national and local level is crucial:** This is particularly the case for influencing resource allocation, improving communications, monitoring, networking, sharing experiences and implementing the project based on national school WASH guidelines. The government has been involved at all levels of the project, from planning to implementation. It has been very useful to engage the government at all levels because of the knowledge and experience they have in implementation of such projects. Examples of the support offered by government officials at the settlement and ward levels is to engage in mobilization of fundraising, facilitating hygiene promotion training by municipal officials and monitoring. Those at the ministerial level have offered knowledge through their wide experience, advice on implementation in accordance with national school WASH guidelines, and networking with different organisations working on the same programme.

