



School sanitation - UNICEF's experiences in Pakistan

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BALOCHISTAN, WHICH CONSTITUTES 44 percent of Pakistan's area and 5 percent of its population, is the least developed province of Pakistan. Compared with national average literacy rates of 32.6 percent for females and 56.5 percent for males (1998 estimates), it has an average literacy rate of 15 percent and 36.5 percent for females and males, respectively. The female literacy rate in rural areas however is 2 percent. The infant and under-5 mortality rates of 190 and 235 live births (LB) per 1000 in the province are also considerably higher than the corresponding national average values of 101 and 140 per 1000, respectively.

In order to "contribute to child survival, protection and development" by provision of adequate water and sanitation facilities in girls primary schools and imparting health and hygiene education, the Government of Balochistan launched the UNICEF's assisted Primary Environmental Care in Girls Primary School (PECGPS) Project in selected areas of the province in 1998. Considering the fact that lack of drinking water and sanitation facilities is one of the main reasons for low enrollment and high drop out rates in the girls primary schools in Balochistan, it was also envisaged that the project would result in an increased female literacy rate through decreased primary school drop out.

This paper summarizes the experiences of the work carried out in two divisions i.e. Kalat and Zhob up to December 2000.

Project strategy

The project strategy is based on active community involvement in order to ensure sustainability and a strong sense of ownership. It stipulates that:

- (i) UNICEF will provide hand pumps, material for latrine construction and hygiene education kits to the selected schools;
- (ii) The communities of the partner villages will be motivated to share the cost of digging of wells, and construction of new or repair of existing pour flush latrines; and
- (iii) The communities will be provided technical support in installation of hand pumps and their nominated representatives will be imparted training in installation and operation of hand pumps and construction of latrines.

Project implementation

A local NGO, Society for Community Support in Primary Education in Balochistan (SCSPEB), which has a rich experience of implementing community oriented educa-

tion projects in rural areas of Balochistan, was engaged to implement the project. The project implementation strategy was evolved after an extensive consultation process involving all the stakeholders including Provincial Education Department (PED), Local Government and Rural Development Department (LG&RDD), Public Health Engineering Department (PHED), SCSPEB and UNICEF. The implementation of the project included:

Collection of background information

Meetings were held with the representatives of PHED, LG&RDD, PED, Bureau of Hydrology, Irrigation Department and other relevant agencies. Information was gathered regarding socio-economic conditions, ground water table, existing sources of drinking water and its quality, hygiene practices, common diseases, current status of schools and mobility in the area, in respect of target divisions.

Orientation of the officials

Meetings were held with the heads of line departments and they were briefed about the project. The main objective of these meetings was to keep the district heads of the departments current about the project and ensure effective cooperation of their subordinates during its implementation.

Site visits

A total of 206 schools were visited in both the divisions, with a view to gather data about the number of students, number of students absent due to illness, status of school building, water table in the village, current hygiene practices, existing source of drinking water and its distance from school, and the socio-economic situation of surrounding villages. Moreover, meetings were held with the existing community organizations such as village education committees (VECs) and parent teachers school management committees (PTSMCs), which were formed under various projects implemented earlier for development of education. The issue of community contribution towards digging of wells, construction of latrines and operation and maintenance (O&M) of hand pumps was discussed with them.

Selection of schools

Based on the data gathered during the site visits, complete profiles of schools and the surrounding villages were prepared. Partner schools were then selected for implementation of the project based on the technical feasibility and willingness of the communities to contribute to the project.

Signing of MOU

A number of meetings were held with the representatives of community organizations with a view to motivate and mobilize them to participate actively in, and contribute to, the project activities. Consequently they were asked to sign an MOU (memorandum of understanding) regarding their willingness to undertake digging of wells, construction of latrines and O&M of hand pumps.

Following the signing of the MOU, the responsible VECs and PTSMCs started collecting the contributions from the community. For this purpose, meetings of the parents were organized in schools wherein they were asked to pay the contribution. In many cases, however, teachers were requested to ask the students to get the requisite contribution from their parents. The latter approach proved to be quite effective.

Training of community organizations

Special workshops were organized for the activists of the community organizations with a view to educate them about basic health and hygiene practices and need for clean drinking water and latrines. Roles and responsibilities of community organizations with regard to various project activities were also defined in these workshops and detailed implementation plans chalked out.

Digging of wells and installation of hand pumps

As soon as enough funds were collected, the community members started digging the wells. The site for the well was selected either inside the school or within a distance of 100 to 200 meters from the school boundary wall. In any case, it was made sure that this site is also accessible to the community women all the time.

When the water table was hit, the community members informed SCSPEB, who with the assistance of LGRDD installed the hand pumps. The installation was undertaken in the presence of nominated community members with a view to impart them hands-on training. These community members were also trained in O & M of hand pumps.

Training of teachers

Training sessions were also held for schoolteachers and district female education officers. The main topics covered during these sessions included health and hygiene, causes and prevention of common diseases, environment, hand pumps, latrines, teachers roles in water and sanitation, how to incorporate hygiene education within the existing set curriculum and time table and site visits. The teachers were also provided hygiene education kits to be used for teaching and demonstration purposes.

Repair/construction of latrines

Most of the schools had pour flush latrines that were constructed under various projects implemented earlier but were no longer useable. Under the current project, these latrines were made useable by undertaking necessary repairs. In addition, new latrines were also constructed

where no such facility already existed, and local masons were provided on-the-job training in latrine construction. The project provided, where required, material including a pan (Indian commode), P-trap and a pipe. The remaining cost was contributed by the community.

Hygiene and environmental sanitation competitions

In order to motivate the students and teachers to promote good hygiene and health practices, hygiene and environmental sanitation competitions were organized at individual school level as well as at tehsil (sub-district) level. At school level competitions, students observing best hygiene practices were judged and awarded special prizes. At tehsil level competitions, the schools that excelled in maintaining clean and healthy school environment were awarded a shield and prize.

Monitoring and evaluation

At the end of the project, follow-up visits were made to each of the partner school and hygienic conditions were assessed and VECs/PTSMCs were provided feedback accordingly. Although, such visits are no longer made, VECs/PTSMCs get in touch with the SCSPEB on need basis and are provided required technical assistance and guidance.

Achievements

The main achievements of the PECGPS project can be summarized as follows:

- As a result of the project interventions, adequate drinking water and sanitation facilities were made available in 184 primary girls schools of the target divisions. This will, in the long run, contribute to improved health of the students, and increased female literacy rate through increased girls enrollment and decreased drops out.
- A total of 400 teachers and 370 community members were trained during the project. These activities have resulted in the capacity building of community organizations and increased public education and awareness about safe health and hygiene practices.
- The project has resulted in promotion of better health and hygiene practices among the students through teaching and demonstration and their involvement in the project activities. Considering that the girls children are helping hands of their mothers, they would act as agents of change and result in motivation of parents leading to better household sanitation.

Lessons learned

The PECGPS project is currently underway in other areas of Balochistan. The following main lessons, however, have emerged from implementation of the project in Kalat and Zhob divisions:

- Communities, due to poverty, are not able to pay their contribution in one go. Consequently, collection of community contribution towards project activities is a

time consuming process. This factor is likely to increase the project implementation time and needs to be given due consideration during the planning stage of the project.

- In addition to the community organizations, all efforts should be made to involve local influential and philanthropists in the project activities. This can significantly contribute to generation of funds for digging of wells and construction of latrines.
- Compared with the schemes constructed by the government without any contribution from the community, water and sanitation facilities provided under PECGPS projects are working satisfactorily to date. This shows that the community participation approach is more successful than the subsidy approach.

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