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LOCAL ACTION WITH INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO IMPROVE AND SUSTAIN WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE SERVICES

### Lessons from WaterAid's multi-country WASH in schools programme

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*WaterAid conducted a School Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programme funded by the H&M Foundation from 2013-16. The programme launch gave an opportunity to test the school WASH approaches and provided space for the WaterAid's Country Programmes to innovate and integrate successes into programme design. WaterAid capitalised its experience from this programme through learning workshops and end of programme evaluation. This paper summarises the key lessons and recommendations to enhance the quality of the programme design. The key learning from the programme focusses on deepening partnership within the sector, cross-sector engagement, translating policy into practice, sustaining hygiene behaviour change, and increased capacity of government to support sustainability of the intervention. These lessons have influenced our programme design including WaterAid's new Guidelines for Sustainable and Inclusive School WASH.*

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#### **Background**

School settings are key for investing in a child's future by providing a safe, clean, learning environment and instilling good hygiene behaviours that they will take forward for the rest of their lives. However, half of the schools in low-income communities lack adequate water and sanitation facilities and suffer from poor hygiene conditions. (UNICEF, 2015).

#### **WaterAid H&M Foundation programme**

In recognition of these challenges, WaterAid has increasingly worked with the education sector (WaterAid, 2017). The WaterAid-H&M Foundation programme was designed to deliver results at various levels, including both direct improvements in access to WASH for students, and by contributing to more long-term changes in national policies and in the international development agenda.

**Primary goal:** to change the lives of students by delivering water, sanitation and hygiene education in schools to improve health and education, thus transforming children's futures. Deliver immediate and long term transformational change; changing lives of students and influencing policies at national and international levels.

**Result #1:** 250,000 students to have access to adequate WASH in schools;

**Result #2:** National policies in five countries (Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, Pakistan and India) to have WASH in schools integrated into education policies supported by sufficient resources and concrete plans for implementation;

**Result #3:** Globally, influencing the post-2015 framework and UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to include a goal on water and sanitation, with one of the targets being for all schools to have safe WASH. The programme will enhance progress on the target by inspiring national and international stakeholders to take active part in realizing the target by 2030.

### **Mechanisms for capturing lessons**

In 2015 and 2016 WaterAid conducted iterative learning events designed to identify key lessons emerging from the programme. The WaterAid Global School WASH Learning Workshop in 2016 was attended by School WASH programme staff from 12 countries, two regional teams (East Africa and South Asia) and WaterAid federation members from Sweden, Canada and the UK. Lessons learned focused on supporting an enabling environment for School WASH, quality implementation and sustainable management. A learning paper, *What a child needs to learn: Lessons on embedding safe water, sanitation and hygiene into education* was subsequently drafted capturing six overarching lessons from the programme.

The purpose of the end-of-programme evaluation was to determine the extent and quality to which the programme achieved its intended outcomes. The evaluation assessed relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and partnership, provided an independent assessment of the quality and success of the initiative and identified significant opportunities for learning and accountability.

### **What we learnt and future opportunities**

Through the length of the programme, WaterAid has identified 6 key lessons which will inform how we implement future WASH in Schools programmes. These lessons have helped us identify missed opportunities, what went well, and what we should consider when designing future School WASH programmes.

#### **Lesson 1: deepen partnership with the education sector**

*“Working with the Ministry of Education from the beginning helped us to get credibility and to more easily achieve our influencing work.”* (WA Ethiopia staff member)

Engaging closely with the education sector is critical. The approaches used for working with this sector are different from the tried and tested approaches commonly used when working within the WASH sector. Key findings within this lesson include:

- Look beyond WASH stakeholders and engage with the education sector to advocate for higher prioritisation and coordination of school WASH. Use new opportunities presented by the SDGs to engage with the education sector on goal 4 by using WASH as a measurement of a quality school environment;
- Proactively influence government education policies and monitoring frameworks for school WASH by supporting the development or roll-out of national guidelines;
- Promote better inter-linkages between government departments that have a stake in school WASH (e.g. education, gender, nutrition, WASH, disability rights)
- Advocate adequate and targeted financing and cross-sector coordination between education, health, WASH and other stakeholders, and
- Target the most marginalised and excluded students with appropriate strategies and demonstrate to others how this can be successful.

In future, WaterAid will aim to identify more opportunities for wider influencing and engagement. Several countries noted that they had struggled to sufficiently engage teachers beyond their role in supporting hygiene education and behaviour change activities. WaterAid Pakistan for example, noted they could have fostered greater participation of teachers in data collection and monitoring; a role that was typically left to the school administrator. Country Programmes also recognised that more could be done in the future to engage with teachers' unions or associations to activate or strengthen their advocacy efforts and support for better school WASH facilities.

#### **Lesson 2: translate rights and policy directives into practical action**

*“The Right to Education has given us a clear structure for our intervention and for the work of the team.”* (WA India staff member)

The programme articulated how rights can be operationalized in context by finding ways to ensure the day-to-day participation of children as rights-holders and to demonstrate the value of children's inputs and opinions. These practices can help foster interest in and stimulate discussion of further ways to promote inclusion at schools. Key findings within this lesson include:

- Support the education sector by purposefully linking school WASH advocacy and practice with SDG 4, the Right to Education and the Convention on Child Rights – translating these rights into practical actions provides an entry point and leverage for extending school WASH to all children and for societal change regarding the reduction of discrimination and inequalities;
- Challenge cultural issues and norms by using local accountability mechanisms (such as scorecards and other children's groups) to demonstrate the value of children's inputs; and
- Ensure government authorities (at all levels) are aware of their responsibilities as duty-bearers of rights.

WaterAid recognises that promoting rights, equity and inclusion is a long-term process and a lot of work needs to be done to maintain momentum and deal with cultural challenges. In some countries, WaterAid found that some partners lacked the necessary school WASH capacities or rights-based approach awareness so capacity building also became a feature of these relationships. This was the case for India for example, where partners typically had more of an engineering focus and required support and coaching in order to understand how the programme could fit into the Right to Education and Child Rights discourse. In Uganda also, WaterAid developed a tripartite agreement between BAU, CSBAG and the district authorities to encourage joint planning, working and knowledge sharing. This was particularly focused on developing their capacities to understand and use the Human Rights to Water and Sanitation – for example, a plan of action was developed for duty bearers (government / LGAs) and another for the rights holders (children, community, etc.). In future, WaterAid will focus on fostering such synergies amongst partners not only to build their capacity but to also maximise bottom-up influencing with national level lobbying.

### **Lesson 3: support cross-sector engagement and collaboration**

Relationships at all levels, from community to national and international levels, with government and relevant stakeholders have enabled WaterAid to extend the reach and influence of its work, to maximise synergies and to foster participation of multiple stakeholders in decision-making on school WASH. Key findings within this lesson include:

- Build and develop partnerships at all levels for school WASH and across different sectors such as health, education, nutrition and gender. If feasible, link to and coordinate with their existing programmes in schools;
- Use stakeholder analysis to identify key targets and allies for programmatic influence as well as for enhancing the likelihood of sustainable change through engagement with local organisations; and
- Harness private sector potential for school WASH by: 1) tailoring approaches to different types of private sector relationships; advocating for private sector operation and maintenance (O&M) and software support rather than providing funding for hardware alone. 2) aggregating relationships by exploring partnerships with chambers of commerce and national multi-sector fora 3) lobbying for and supporting government to develop good governance frameworks for private sector partnerships in WASH 4) thinking creatively about engaging different or new partners (e.g. the media and design agencies to support behaviour change campaigns).

Several Country Programmes recognised that potential opportunities for wider cross-fertilisation of partners' ideas and sharing knowledge resources were not maximized. This was a missed opportunity and in future WaterAid will aim to convene implementing partners, promote cross-learning, and canvass partners for additional skills relevant to the programme.

In India, it was challenging to promote frequent interactions amongst partners that were operating in different Indian states so WaterAid was responsible for cross-state learning. WaterAid Pakistan also highlighted that beyond annual partner meetings – which provide opportunities to share ideas and troubleshoot problems – there were limited options to support exposure or exchange visits to partner sites and to learn more about national level issues facing implementing partners. Several implementing partners highlighted that they had different or additional skills and capacities (such as influencing provincial government) that WaterAid could have explored had there been more scope for engagement beyond focusing on programme objectives.

#### **Lesson 4: sustain hygiene behaviour change**

*“Hygiene behaviour change is difficult to sustain during the dry season when there is scarcity of water but during the rainy season, the students are active in maintaining hygiene and following what they have been taught on both personal cleanliness and environmental hygiene.”* (Tanzanian local government authority)

To encourage improved hygiene practices and behaviours, clean toilets, handwashing facilities with soap and menstrual hygiene management (MHM) rooms (where girls can safely and privately deal with menstruation) are all instrumental. But it is only by engaging stakeholders, such as children’s groups, teachers, local administrations and local non-governmental organization (NGO) that long-term health, safety and dignity benefits of changed behaviours can be promoted.

Many factors constrain MHM practices at schools including cultural taboos, insufficient menstruation education, limited availability and use of commercial and disposable sanitary pads and low family income. (WaterAid 2016). This programme used knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) surveys to understand what cultural beliefs and barriers may exist and to design appropriate and responsive approaches to tackle such issues. Key findings within this lesson include:

- Use child-friendly approaches with messages that tackle cultural norms and taboos.
- Provide information in different forms for children with different learning abilities, as well as for those with visual and hearing impairments.
- Consider sustainable supply chains – plan for a continuous water supply for handwashing and MHM as well as local supply chains for soap, sanitary pads and other hygiene-related products.
- Systematically promote programmes and approaches where hygiene product supplies and services are considered together.
- Design advocacy and influencing work to lobby for the inclusion of WASH-related hygiene behaviour change in national teaching curricula and monitoring mechanisms.

In the future, instead of hygiene education alone, WaterAid will focus on more innovative and creative behaviour change interventions. For example, by identifying behavioural determinants and emotional (and cultural) drivers of hygiene practices and using them to motivate people, and using more social marketing methods. WaterAid will also clarify and use more appropriate indicators for monitoring behaviour change, so that proxy indicators (such as counting the number of handwashing facilities or the number of children reached with hygiene messages) are phased out and replaced by proactive engagement with children through school WASH clubs, to observe and understand better how messages are ‘heard’ and new behaviours adopted.

#### **Lesson 5: facilitate targeted system strengthening to enhance sustainability**

*“We have got quarterly teacher changes... which brings in new teachers totally unaware of school WASH work in the schools that we have been working in. So, an extensive training programme for the whole district is what is needed, rather than merely the targeted school. We have trained around 400 teachers but we need to train many more.”* (Key Information- Evaluation Interviews)

To strengthen school WASH management structures, systems and mechanisms holistically, key gaps in school WASH delivery need to be properly identified and understood. Piecemeal WASH service delivery alone will not have a systemic impact. For this purpose, bottleneck or other similar analyses can be used. Key findings within this lesson include:

- Ensure that school WASH support systems at community, district, town and city levels are functional and robust;
- Support relevant institutions to be accountable and continue to play their respective roles for school WASH planning, implementation and monitoring; and
- Engage teachers through their union representatives or professional associations – this could be a valuable entry and influencing point.

The context of the school environment can also compromise efforts for sustainability – for example, many Country Programmes highlighted the extremely high turn-over of teachers which necessitates more frequent and extensive hygiene education and behaviour change training. Country Programmes reported that there is still a low awareness amongst teachers, parents and School Management Committees (SMCs) in general on

the importance of hygiene or their respective roles and responsibilities for school WASH. In future programmes, WaterAid will work with partners to identify approaches for addressing high teacher turnover and how it can deepen teacher's awareness and engagement of hygiene issues (for example, by influencing the teacher training curriculum).

### **Lesson 6: Support ownership and long-term management at school and community level**

Government authorities and formally mandated School Management Committees (SMCs) are ultimately responsible for ensuring the human rights to water and sanitation for all, including children. Throughout the HMF programme, WaterAid has showcased efforts to ensure inclusive and long-term outcomes for school WASH interventions. Key findings within this lesson include:

- Understand how the different units of a school community (e.g. pupils, teachers, non-academic staff, Parent-Teacher Associations, SMCs and other local community organisations) interact and ensure that each is aware of its specific roles and responsibilities within the wider school WASH system;
- Link school WASH to other community WASH solutions (such as small-scale piped systems at village or town level) as this has a mutually beneficial impact on service levels, O&M and user satisfaction;
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of SMCs and PTAs dependent on whether they have a government mandate or are elected more informally at school level – different tactics would be used to ensure safe WASH is at the top of their agendas and to build their capacities in each case. For example, to influence SMCs with a government or formal mandate, WaterAid focuses its advocacy on local/regional education officers rather than at school level.
- In the future, WaterAid will continue to find locally appropriate ways to support and/or strengthen SMCs and PTAs to be able to more actively focus on school WASH and its sustainable financing. WaterAid also aims to further strengthen the links between community/school-based groups and district and national government actors to ensure adequate support mechanisms and structures are in place (see Lesson 5) as schools and communities will struggle to maintain WASH in schools on their own.

### **Conclusion**

To achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, world leaders must step up to fund, implement and account for progress towards the goals. We call on decision-makers to increase investments, and concerned stakeholders to plan and act in cooperation – so that all children go to a school with sustainable and inclusive water, sanitation and hygiene facilities.

We hope that fellow development actors and others working in the school setting will feel inspired to learn from this experience and support policy and practice changes with the aim of inclusive and sustainable school WASH being integrated into education policies.

The provision of safe water, sanitation facilities and improved hygiene in school settings should be the responsibility of the education sector, in collaboration with the WASH sector.

The role of the WASH sector should be to offer support in the design of analysis tools, technical designs and infrastructure, and hygiene behavior change packages, and to build capacity and provide operation and maintenance guidance for the education sector to take the lead.

The education sector needs to have school WASH standards, so that no school is built without inclusive and appropriate facilities. It also needs to secure funding for the provision of sustainable services and maintenance.

And the WASH and education sectors should work together to develop a school WASH policy or strategy that includes school WASH standards, building improved sanitation and hygiene behaviours into the school curriculum, as well as a plan for regular monitoring and maintenance.

Sustainable Development Goal 4 (quality education) can *only* be achieved with the successful attainment of Goal 6 (water, sanitation and hygiene).

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