

LINKING QUALITY WATER AND SANITATION SERVICES IN SCHOOLS TO QUALITY EDUCATION IN ZAMBIA

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CHALLENGE

In Zambia, with the advent of free primary education, primary school enrollment increased by over 60% in just 6 years. Although many new classrooms have been built, school water and sanitation facilities are often not sufficient to cope with the increase in enrollment. Pupils and teachers alike are exposed to risks of disease due to inadequate water and sanitation and the impact this has on hygiene practices¹. The lack of water and sanitation affects the learning environment in schools, increases absenteeism of both pupils and teachers through illness, and contributes to higher dropout rates, especially among girls.

Pupils attending many schools in Zambia use water from contaminated sources, or walk long distances to fetch water from safe sources. In many cases this is because water facilities, especially boreholes with hand-pumps, either do not function or have poor yields. Sometimes facilities with safe water are simply not there. In a recent survey it was found that out of 8,596 schools in Zambia, 1,349 did not have water facilities while 502 schools did not have toilets², affecting over 1,000,000 and 500,000 pupils respectively. Of the schools that have sanitation facilities, 54% rely on unimproved pit latrines³. Government alone cannot cope and, more and more, local government, non state actors and communities are working together to develop solutions to such problems. SNV Netherlands Development Organisation facilitates such responses through building capacity of key actors, at national, intermediate and local levels to address the need for better water, sanitation and hygiene in schools.

CLIENTS

Since 2004, SNV has worked with the Ministry of Education to improve education governance and management and increase stakeholder participation in education service delivery. In January 2008 a new MoU was signed which focuses on decentralized education service delivery and improving the learning environment in schools to increase access to good quality education services. Improved water, sanitation and hygiene in schools is an integral part of the MoU that aims to improve delivery of water and sanitation services to schools through encouraging joint action, increased resource allocation, evidence based lobbying and policy dialogue. SNV has facilitated strengthening of collaboration between the Ministry of Local Government and Housing as a Ministry that is legally mandated to supply water and sanitation and the Ministry of Education. SNV has ensured that a Committee involving both Ministries is constituted and functional. It is through this committee that SNV has supported the Ministry of Education analyse its data on water and sanitation coverage levels in schools, draft an Issue Paper indicating evidence of the service level gaps and facilitate a multistakeholder process (MSP) to ensure joint action on issues affecting delivery of water and sanitation in schools such as policy gaps and low resource allocation to school WaSH. Thus through advisory services, facilitation of institutional linkages and MSP facilitation, Ministry of Education plans have considerable room for WaSH in schools.

¹ In a 2007 survey of Northern and Western Provinces, the Zambia Bilharzia Control Programme recorded high hookworm prevalence of above 70% at 2 schools in Western province and alarming Malaria prevalence of 98%.

² EDASIST MOE

³ UNICEF 2008 Report on WASHE and Primary School Efficiency

Invest in School facilities

"A good learning environment has a significant impact on school attendance and learning outcomes. Adequate school facilities which include desks, blackboards, electricity and water and sanitation contribute to a stimulating and healthy learning environment and have a positive impact on pupil attendance and learning achievement."

(Remarks by Zambia's Chief Education Officer during launch of School Health Month)

A way to start

In February 2008 the Ministry of Education [School Health and Nutrition Programme] approached SNV and submitted a proposal requesting support to their Personal Hygiene and Sanitation Education (PHASE) initiative. Thereafter, an exchange of notes between SNV and MoE clarified mandates and identified possible areas of support to the school health and nutrition programme.

At the national level SNV and the Zambian Ministry of Education (MoE) are engaged in policy dialogue and institutional strengthening to improve collaboration between institutions mandated with provision of water and sanitation services to schools. Since water supply and sanitation are not the MoE's core function, SNV has facilitated dialogue with local government institutions which together lobby for increased prioritization of water supply and sanitation in schools in planning and resource allocation. It is as a result of this that the MoE mobilized funding of over 50,000 United States Dollars from USAID, UNICEF and other partners especially towards implementation of the School Health Month.

SNV and the Ministry of Education started with a baseline assessment of the service levels of water and sanitation in schools. Data from the Education Management Information System was validated at school level in selected districts. The assessment revealed that infrastructure development projects have not comprehensively encompassed construction and rehabilitation of water and sanitation facilities in schools. As a result the number of pupils using one toilet of whatever type was too high- 70:1. In view of this, SNV facilitated discussions between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Local Government and Housing (MLGH). The resulting issue paper highlighted water and sanitation requirements in schools and identified the related service gaps. It is this Issue Paper that provided evidence for joint action amongst various actors in the water and sanitation sector and the Education sector.

In a drive to address the service gaps, a range of short, medium and long-term solutions was formulated and is now under implementation. In the short-term, raising awareness and increasing the profile of water and sanitation in the ministry's planning processes is ongoing. Water and sanitation formed key components of the national school health month campaign launched by the Minister of Education in July 2009. SNV assisted the ministry to articulate and conceptualise water and sanitation issues for school health month implementation. School health month activities included hygiene promotion, maintenance of water and sanitation facilities, school feeding and de-worming in 720 schools benefiting more than 35,000 pupils in 72 districts.

With SNV capacity development support the Ministry of Education has been able to lobby for increased support to the sector improve institutional collaboration, promote hygiene education and foster a multi stakeholder process for joint action and learning on water and sanitation in schools.

OUTCOME

Some schools have received increased allocation of funds for infrastructure development including water and sanitation facilities. For example, the MoE 2009 budget includes an allocation to construct 100 toilets in 50 schools compared to last 2008 when only 12 toilets were budgeted for and funded. Moreover SNV has assisted MoE to mobilize funds from sources other than government allocations for water and sanitation in schools. Over 50,000 United States Dollars was mobilized by the Ministry from USAID, UNICEF and other



actors. MoE has realized the importance of ensuring that it takes leadership and provides guidance to all stakeholders including NGOs and CSOs on its water and sanitation service provision principles including infrastructure designs and health and hygiene promotion. As a result, SNV further assisted the Ministry develop an actor mapping framework and the MoE is using the framework to map all stakeholders supporting water and sanitation in schools in order to build information on resources available for meeting school water and sanitation needs. This will ensure that all stakeholders participate in planning and management of water and sanitation programmes and are accountable, transparent and responsive in delivering water and sanitation services to schools.

Lobbying and awareness efforts have influenced the Ministry not only to increase resource allocation to WaSH in schools and mobilize more resources from other support agencies, they have also resulted in the identification of need to review the school health policy to ensure that it includes issues water and sanitation in schools. This is one of the key aspects SNV and the Ministry will work on in 2010 assignment.

LESSONS LEARNED

- 1. Engagement:** Thoroughness, patience and consistence of focus during engagement adds to smooth execution of assignments. The engagement with MoE took almost a year and that has contributed to the establishment of a solid relationship with the client
- 2. Leadership:** As much as possible, let the client lead most of the assignment activities especially when it's a public sector client. The principle of leading from the centre can be realized when an Advisor has enough patience to take a low profile
- 3. Pulling together:** Advisory services alone are sometimes not enough to effectively influence change. One needs to blend with other service packages. Collaborating with other government institutions and UNICEf added value to achievement of results.
- 4. Reality Supporting Interventions:** The clarity of interventions from internal plans and strategies provide good window to work on real needs. The focus on influencing change leads to the realisation of real results than vice-versa.