



Managing WASH in Schools: Is the Education Sector Ready?

A Thematic Discussion Series hosted by GIZ and SuSanA

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1 WASH in Schools and SDG indicators

The direct links between WinS and SDG3 (health), SDG6 (water and sanitation) and SDG4 (education) pose the chance for increased inter-sectoral cooperation (For more information see [SDG-homepage](#)). Particularly, the education sector's leadership and management are critical to the broad-scale implementation and success of WASH in Schools (WinS). Yet, how is the education sector bringing WASH on board and how can the sector manage it? What does the reality look like in schools around the world? How can WinS be better managed? What shifts/changes are necessary to improve the sanitation situation in schools?

In the first half of 2016, tremendous work has been done to formulate indicators for WinS. In the process seven core indicators focusing on drinking water, toilets and hand washing facilities as well as 23 expanded indicators have been developed.

Monitoring of the indicators will mainly be done by the education sector. Currently, Ministries of Education around the world are integrating the core indicators into the Education Management Information System (EMIS) to aggregate data at the national level. This in turn constitutes a chance for the WASH sector to embark on a collaboration with the education sector to assist the latter with the implementation as this is a novel process for them.

Water (drinking)

Advanced service
Available when needed, accessible to all, free from contamination
(to be defined at national level)

Basic service
Water from an **improved** source is **available** at the school

Limited service
There is an improved source (piped water, protected well/spring, rainwater, bottled water), but not available at time of survey

No service
No water source or unimproved source (unprotected well/spring, tanker truck/cart, surface water source)

Toilets (sanitation)

Advanced service
Safe, clean, accessible to all, of adequate quantity, MHM facilities
(to be defined at national level)

Basic service
Improved facilities, which are **sex-separated** and **useable** at the school

Limited service
There are improved facilities (flush/pour flush, pit latrine with slab, composting toilet), but not sex-separated or not usable

No service
No toilets or latrines or they are unimproved (pit latrines without a slab or platform, hanging latrines, bucket latrines)

Hygiene

Advanced service
HW facilities available at critical times & accessible to all; MHM education & products provided
(to be defined at national level)

Basic service
Handwashing facility with **water and soap** available to students

Limited service
Handwashing facility with water, but no soap

No service
No handwashing facilities at the school or handwashing facilities with no water

Illustration 1: JMP service ladders for monitoring WinS in the SDGs: advanced, basic, limited, no service. Each with regard to three areas: access to water (drinking), toilets (sanitation) and hygiene. Source: WHO, UNICEF (2016). [Meeting report: expert meeting on monitoring WASH in schools in the Sustainable Development Goals.](#)

2 WinS and SuSanA's Working Group 7

The issue of WASH in schools is also at the core of SuSanA's [working group 7](#) "Community, rural and schools (with gender and social aspects)" which attempts to raise general awareness for community and rural sanitation by creating discussion fora, enhancing networking opportunities as well as publishing research. Led by Claudia Wendland and Belinda Abraham, working group 7 (WG7) operates on the premise that communities themselves need to get deeply involved in sanitation initiatives and take leadership of their own sanitation projects and programs, including for example school sanitation, in order to ensure sustained sanitation services and to link sanitation to communities' livelihood programs.

In addition, the web page of the working group provides links to recent publications on the topic of WASH in schools, as for instance (in order of appearance) "Teacher's Guide to Integration WASH in Schools", "Water, sanitation and hygiene in health care facilities" and "Monitoring drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene in non-household settings: priorities for policy and practice." Moreover, working group 7 maintains a [wiki](#), which contains a collection of sustainable WASH in schools stories among others.

The [Sustainable Sanitation Alliance \(SuSanA\)](#) is an open international alliance with members who share a common vision on sustainable sanitation and are dedicated to understanding viable and sustainable sanitation solutions.

It links on the ground experiences with an engaged community made up of practitioners, policy makers, researchers, and academics from different levels with the aim of promoting innovation and best practices in policy, programming and implementation.

sustainable
sanitation
alliance

sustainable
sanitation
alliance
forum

2a Working Group 7 meeting during the Stockholm World Water Week 2016

During the Stockholm World Water Week 2016, working group 7 hosted a meeting on the topic of WASH in schools, followed by a two-week online discussion on the SuSanA forum. Kicking off the meeting in Stockholm, facilitators Belinda Abraham and Bella Monse presented Volumes I and II of the recent publication "Making WASH in Schools more Sustainable" which showcase various approaches, both practical and innovative, to providing sustainable WASH solutions in schools around the world.

Indeed, WASH in schools poses a special challenge since many criteria have to be fulfilled to positively impact students' and teachers' lives and to some extent also the surrounding areas. Therefore, the publications highlight the most important sustainability criteria identified by SuSanA.

Sustainability criteria for sanitation

1 Health and hygiene include the risk of exposure to pathogens and hazardous substances and improvement of livelihood achieved by the application of a certain sanitation system.

2 Environment and natural resources involve the resources needed in the project as well as the degree of recycling and reuse practiced and the effects of these.

3 Technology and operation relate to the functionality and ease of constructing, operating and monitoring the entire system as well as its robustness and adaptability to existing systems.

4 Financial and economic issues include the capacity of households and communities to cover the costs for sanitation as well as the benefit, such as from fertiliser and the external impact on the economy.

5 Socio-cultural and institutional aspects refer to the socio-cultural acceptance and appropriateness of the system, perceptions, gender issues and compliance with legal and institutional frameworks.

For details on these criteria, please see the SuSanA vision document "[Towards more sustainable solutions](#)".

Both the working group's meeting during the Stockholm World Water Week as well as the thematic discussion on "Managing WASH in schools: is the education sector ready?" focused on criteria no. 5, particularly the institutional aspects necessary to making WASH in schools more sustainable. Overall, the aim of the discussion was to gain a better understanding of the challenges and needs of the education sector to successfully manage WASH in schools.



Illustration 2: Covers of "Making WASH in Schools more Sustainable", [Volume I](#) and [Volume II](#).

2b Online Thematic Discussion on WinS

Running from September 19 to October 5, the online discussion on WinS picked up where the SuSanA WG meeting during the Stockholm World Water week left off. The discussion was structured around two themes:

- (1) Policy Issues on the Regional and Global Level and
- (2) Implementation Level

Belinda Abraham kicked off the first theme by raising the following questions: (a) How is the education sector bringing WASH on board? (b) How can the WASH sector support the education sector? (c) What does it take for better-managed WinS? (d) What shifts/changes are necessary to see the situation improve?



Theme II, on the other hand, focused on learning about examples of WASH in schools from around the world, which were provided by forum participants. Tackling the controversial question whether WinS simply needs more money to solve familiar problems like mismanagement, lack of institutional accountability, liability and responsibility were of particular importance. The guiding questions here were: (a) If the education sector is to fully take on the management of WASH in schools, is it only about the money? (b) Why is it easier to build new facilities than working with appropriate institutions like the education sector to manage what already exists? (d) What shifts are required to get from a dirty, broken or inoperable sanitation facility to one that is clean and working and that children are willing to use? (e) Is the WASH sector promoting mismanagement in schools by building new facilities instead of focusing on operation and maintenance? (f) Who is to blame? Donors, teachers, parents, engineers and/or governments?

The two themes ran concurrently on the SuSanA forum and show many interconnections that the synthesis aims to address. In the following, the main issues published during the discussion are presented. Doing so, the synthesis does not necessarily express all the standpoints that came up in the discussion nor can it take up all the issues raised during the course of the debate. If you are interested in participants' postings in closer detail, please refer to the brief summaries posted in the discussion threads or the individual posts as referenced by the post number.

3 Issues Debated During Thematic Discussion

Lack of inter-sectoral collaboration

The issue of a lack of collaboration between different sectors and its negative impact on WinS came up repeatedly during the online discussion. Jacques-Edouard Tiberghien from Partnerships in Practice, for instance, emphasized that the promise of inter-sectoral collaboration with regards to the SDGs has clear implications for WinS. In addition, the current work of development agencies to better integrate WASH-health and food security, notably in schools, shows a growing trend to aim for collaboration among sectors (#19161). Still, collaboration oftentimes falls short. While it is normal for education policies to focus on educational aspects, the education sector tends to minimize or forget other aspects which are equally important to the educational achievements of children, for example, health, nutrition and sanitation.

Lack of cooperation between schools, communities and different levels of government

Krischan Makowka noted that stronger collaboration between schools and their local communities is needed given the fact that, particularly in small villages, schools oftentimes constitute the community's main infrastructure. Therefore, they play a vital role in daily community life and should not be seen as a separate structure managed by the education sector only (#19049).

Moreover, cooperation between local WASH in school initiatives and their communities is an important factor to guarantee the success of these initiatives, Philip Purnell from SEAMEO INNOTECH stressed. Community-partnership efforts help build the capacities of school heads in critical competencies related to school-based management such as school-community partnership-building, resource

mobilization, school-improvement planning, learning environment management and holistic child development, among others (#19064).

Collaboration between local governments and schools should also be aimed for with regard to the provision of sanitation services. As Krischan Makowka noted, it would help if local governments actually had a mandate to supply schools (from the outside) with water and sanitation services. Yet, this would have to go hand in hand with the school administrators having a simple way of paying a small monthly fee for these services at the local level (#19133). Generally, however, there is a lack of collective planning, Remigius Mdetele from Rujewa Integrated Efforts to Fight Poverty (RIEFP) wrote (#19184).

As Krischan Makowka stressed, the semi-official cooperation between school employees and local government structures adequately. However, as soon as an attempt is made to scale up WinS projects, cooperation is jeopardized due to bureaucracy, particularly with regard to budget responsibility (#19049).

Lack of leadership

As Jacques-Edouard Tiberghien noted, there is an urgent need for leadership with regard to WinS. This does not only apply to top down leadership from the Ministry of Education, but also includes a kind of pervasive leadership amongst the school, community and district level stakeholders in order for WinS to work (#19161).

School-based management (SBM)

School-based management (SBM) is a management approach where the school head in partnership with the local community, is empowered to make decisions regarding contextualization of the curriculum, school improvement planning, resource mobilization and school-level capacity programs for teachers (#19154).

Responsibility to reside at school level

Participants emphasized that a lack of accountability poses a problem for WASH in Schools. While WinS is "owned" by several actors, no single sector holds itself accountable for it. Participants are convinced that the education sector must take the lead in this regard and must come to the understanding that WinS is an issue that is central to achieving its vision, mission, and goals. Instead, however, the education sector has not clearly defined what part it plays while at the same time engaging other players and asking them what role they play in pushing WASH in schools, Alexander Winkscha from GIZ wrote (#19083).

On the other hand, Belinda Abraham also wondered whether the WASH sector is, in fact, expecting too much of the education sector with regards to fully taking on WASH in schools, in particular given that education officials increasingly have to assume more responsibilities (psychological care, child protection, nutrition, health, capacity development, etc.) and are facing higher expectations (#19097).

Both Philip Purnell from SEAMEO INNOTECH and Nicole Siegmund from the GIZ Regional Fit for School Program, however, stressed that WinS absolutely has to be part of the school's responsibility as one of the core accountabilities and expected competencies of school heads is ensuring that the school environment is conducive to learning and holistic child development. Functional toilets, access to (drinking) water

and hygiene material should be part of every school according to this definition. WASH in schools therefore should not be viewed as an external program that school heads must take on as an added burden, but rather as an integral part of their responsibilities as managers of instruction, student learning and development (#19107). There is a critical convergence between health and learning outcomes and the importance of WASH as an education strategy has to be recognized. Since schools are run by the education sector there can be no question that WinS falls under the responsibility of the education sector. That is not to say that help from other sectors and stockholders is not important to support them in this role. However, the education sector has to take the lead in this multi-partnership set up (#19117).

Furthermore, the fact that the responsibility lies at the school level also means that teachers need to be informed about WASH. However, as Dormaringan Napitu from Indonesia noticed, there is limited knowledge and capacity on the side of teachers to promote and endorse tangible benefits regarding the presence of WASH facilities for student health growth (#19054). Thus, there is a need to build teachers' knowledge and capacity in this regard, Consolate Manirambona from Mozambique emphasized (#19155).

Fit for School

"Fit for School" is a regional WASH in schools program implemented by Ministries of Education (MOEs) in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Indonesia and the Philippines with technical support from GIZ and SEAMEO INNOTECH (one of the Regional Centres under the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization umbrella). The primary goal of the FIT program is to support MOEs to take on a leadership role in promoting WASH in schools within the context of a multi-stakeholder partnership involving ministries of health, local governments, the private sector and school communities. The composition of the partnership is in recognition of the crucial impact health has on student learning outcomes and the need for deliberate efforts to promote education-health convergence at all levels – from school to district to province/region to national levels. (For more information see www.fitforschool.international)

Discussing Fit for School

During the online discussion, the Fit for School program was referenced repeatedly and its impact for sustained WASH in schools assessed critically. One issue raised by Belinda Abraham concerned the question of whether Fit for School is indeed a WinS initiative that comes from within the education sector or whether the need for significant external support is essential to the Fit for School model in order to ensure its success (#19094). Philip Purnell took up this question by elaborating on the example of the Philippines. While Fit for School was initially supported with technical assistance from GIZ and an external NGO (which is no longer operational) in a single province, over the past decade the Philippine Department of Education has fully integrated the approach as part of its nationwide essential health care program, he wrote. WASH school-level implementation is institutionalized and scaled-up nationwide and the remaining technical support provided by GIZ is only at the national level and focused on helping the government strengthen its WASH quality assurance mechanisms (#19107).

Secondly, participants assessed whether Fit for School can indeed be considered a successful template for the education sector to employ WinS. As Krischan Makowka noted, the success of the Fit for School model should not be overrated in the case of the Philippines. Where an outside support structure does not exist, schools have been overwhelmed dealing with WASH-related issues and they are faced with inadequate budgets. This is especially true in more rural communities where neither piped water supply nor emptying services for septic tanks exist. Furthermore, operation and maintenance and sometimes even the installation of sanitation services are paid for privately by teachers and parents (#19110). Philip Purnell agreed that limited access to WASH infrastructure is definitely a very real constraint in the Philippines and other countries of Southeast Asia. However, schools which have been successful in addressing WASH in a sustainable manner have challenged traditional assumptions and paradigms about WASH infrastructure, he stressed. There are promising examples of WASH infrastructure models that use simple, low cost, low water consumption alternatives and that are constructed locally using indigenous/locally available materials by school communities. The so-called tippy tap model being one example of a successful and sustainable option (#19129).

The tippy tap model

The tippy tap model that makes use of recycled water bottles and a simple drainage system is an example of such a low-cost alternative for hand washing and tooth brushing. More research and investment is needed in these community-based alternatives parallel with efforts to expand access to piped water and traditional sewage systems (#19129).



Illustration 3: Children using a tippy tap. Photo credit: © Ivan Sarenas/GIZ Regional Fit For School Programme

Prioritizing WASH

Schools have numerous responsibilities and sanitation is just one of many. Nevertheless, participants emphasized that WASH takes priority over some if not most of the other aspects and that prioritizing WASH is in fact crucial. WASH should be at the beginning of all efforts with other aspects only added later. Especially for systems that are rather weak, it is important to focus and prioritize, instead of trying to do everything simultaneously, Nicole Siegmund, for instance, stressed (#19117).

At the same time, participants critically noted that WinS is not a priority for the WASH sector. In fact, the WASH sector has stronger incentives to work at the household level because of existing key performance indicators (KPIs). To be precise:



The key performance indicator of a WASH programme is addressed to the WASH sector rather than the education sector. Yet, access to WASH by “number of students”, for instance, is not accounted for as a global/national WASH target. As a consequence, the WASH sector is focused more on the provision of WASH facilities for the household rather than at the school level, Dormaringan Napitu elaborated (#19054).

Funds: A question of sufficiency, mismanagement or distribution?

Kicking off the discussion on matters of WinS implementation, Belinda Abraham set out with a bold statement: WASH in schools does not need more money! Looking at pictures of run down toilets and wash facilities, Abraham suggested that these images tell an all too familiar story of mismanagement, lack of institutional accountability, liability and responsibility. Thus, the problem is not insufficient funds, considering that new facilities are built. Rather, one has to wonder why it is easier to build new facilities than work with appropriate institutions like the education sector to manage what they already have? (#19043)

Most participants agreed that insufficient funds alone cannot explain certain shortcomings with regard to WinS. While a WinS program will of course have some costs, Steve Mecca, a professor at Providence college wrote, what is needed is not necessarily more money, but more commitment (#19214). Several other reasons are given in this regard: First, a lack of knowledge regarding how to prioritize funds from the government and other stakeholders, as is emphasized by Remigius Mdetele (#19184). Moreover, Krischan Makowka stressed that it is mostly a question of who has the funds and is actually able to use them (#19133). So, for instance, bureaucracy and politics can oftentimes get in the way of a reasonable use of funds (#19133). Bottlenecks at the central and state level to channel funds for facility development exist and they need to be taken seriously, Nicole Siegmund wrote (#19144). Similarly, school administrators are only able to pay a small monthly fee to local governments for supplying the school with water and sanitation services if a billing system is in place (#19133). Finally, problems with inflexible procurement systems also make it hard to repair existing structures instead of building new ones, Makowka noted (#19053).

Importance of operation and maintenance (O&M)

The importance of O&M came up during different points in the online discussion. Several participants noted that operation and maintenance are indeed the major challenge for WinS. Among others, the difficulty with operation and maintenance results from large institutions often suffering from issues related to inflexible procurement systems and various related issues that make it almost impossible (and often more expensive) to repair existing structures rather than build new ones. The institutions operating the schools, on the other had, usually have neither the budget nor the qualified personnel to do actual repair and maintenance beyond the most basic level. Thus as soon as a complex issue arises, the higher level of institutional management is activated, which finds it almost impossible to repair and opts instead to rebuild. And as the allocated budget does not account for dismantling the old broken equipment, the result is the stereotypical new next to old pictures everywhere, Makowka wrote (#19053).

One participant working as a UNICEF WASH State Consultant with the Government of Maharashtra, India, stated that WASH facilities in residential ashramshalas (schools) are

in questionable condition. It is evident that all the old buildings had WASH facilities developed but the major challenge is operation and maintenance. Unless there is constant operation and maintenance in place at the school, even a school which employs the three star approach will go back to poor WASH conditions (#19144).

Three Star Approach

The Three Star Approach for WinS is a new and innovative concept developed by UNICEF and GIZ and first published in 2013. It aims at changing the “traditional” way of programming for WinS. The objective is to facilitate realistic and stepwise improvements in order to make usable facilities and practices in WASH universal features in all schools, even when only limited resources are available. (For more information on the Three Star Approach, see UNICEF; GIZ (2016). [Scaling up Group Handwashing in Schools](#), p. 6)

SHIFTING FROM TRADITIONAL WASH PROGRAMMING	TOWARDS THE THREE STAR APPROACH FOR WASH IN SCHOOLS
INFRASTRUCTURE FOCUS	HYGIENE FOCUS
EDUCATION FOCUS ON INDIVIDUAL HANDWASHING	SKILLS-BASED LEARNING AS A GROUP
HIGH INVESTMENTS	COST-EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS
FACILITIES MEETING NATIONAL STANDARDS	STEPWISE PROCESS TOWARDS NATIONAL STANDARDS
COMPLEX TECHNOLOGY	SIMPLE MODELS
LIMITED REACH	REALISTIC SCALE-UP

Illustration 4: The table summarizes the changes and conceptual shifts that constitute the core of the Three Star Approach. Source: UNICEF; GIZ (2016). [Scaling up Group Handwashing in Schools](#), p. 6.

Two suggestions were made that could be beneficial to better O&M. First, Krischan Makowka suggested that a change in the curriculum towards more vocational training could solve the problem because in this case more teachers and maybe even students might be able to fix problems with WASH facilities. Alternatively, “cooperations” with parents who help out here and there could be formed (#19177).

While arguing for more vocational training constitutes an innovative idea, there was doubt whether it can indeed be implemented. Cécile Laborderie questioned whether a change in curriculum is in fact easily implementable. Also, she doubted that teachers or headmasters would be able to get involved in the technical aspects of WASH, including O&M. Nor should they, she argued. In developed countries like France, daily maintenance of facilities is taken care of at the municipal level, i.e. there is one or several technicians who are paid by the municipality to take care of the school facilities. This is cost effective in terms of human resources, tools and procurement. She cautioned against trying to implement solutions like vocational training to solve the

problem of O&M which in developed countries like France would be unthinkable ([#19186](#)).

A second suggestion made was to outsource building maintenance to a local/private sector organization. Not because privatization is necessarily the best option, but because smaller private enterprises usually have the needed flexibility in their procedures to manage repairs, while being able to bill the school a regular sum that can be easily fit into administrative procedures, Krischan Makowka argued ([#19053](#)). Belinda Abraham wondered whether small-scale, private sector companies or perhaps even NGOs could be beneficial in this regard. Perhaps it is a niche that can be filled by NGOs/private sector as it is in many cases not seen as threatening to government authority and works on a smaller scale, which is closer to communities, she pondered ([#19055](#)).

Importance of monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

Participants agreed that the key to WinS sustainability lies in monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring structures have to be created and reporting responsibilities established, Alexander Winkscha argued ([#19083](#)). In addition, M&E feeds into accountability efforts, which participants regard to be a key for successful WinS. This implies that M&E should be based in the education sector so schools can be held accountable, he wrote.

From pilot to scale

Recounting his experiences from Laos and Cambodia, Alexander Winkscha stressed that while many pilot projects are very successful and inspiring, taking these projects to scale is an entirely different matter. He talks about several problems/dilemmas in this regard ([#19083](#)):

Dilemma No. 1: "From hands-on to Political/more abstract"

Virtually all initiatives start out with models to test and verify their approach and assumptions. For WASH in schools this usually means setting up model schools. This constitutes very hands-on micro-level intervention. Yet when the critical point in time of going to scale comes, initiatives are required to engage with structures and processes on the meso- and macro-level. However, the work at these levels is much less hands-on and much less tangible – harder to understand and harder to advocate. On top of that, suddenly processes do not only follow a different administrative logic but on many levels also a political logic that probably was not present during the model-school phase ([#19083](#)).

Dilemma No. 2: "Dilemma of the individual"

Going to scale means working on structures and processes. But starting with model schools, even with the aim of institutionalization and a parallel investment in strengthening capacities in governmental (or other service delivery) structures from the outset, initiatives in their initial stages are often dependent on sympathetic individuals (sympathetic to the initiative's approach) and interventions often start out with a strong focus on individual capacities through e.g. trainings. When the shift from model schools to strengthening or building up management, steering and monitoring structures occurs, the focus needs to shift away from helpful individuals and individual capacities to institutional processes and structures. But this is difficult. Difficult because the intervention itself has not operated like this so far and the involved staff usually has not worked in such a way to achieve success in the model schools ([#19083](#)). This point is also stressed by Belinda Abraham who wrote that in the process of institutionalizing WinS, we should not speak about individuals but rather about a systematic approach to giving

head teachers or district teams incentives to include WASH in schools in their monitoring or daily affairs ([#19097](#)).

Problem No. 1: Institutionalizing the training of individuals

Through learning exchanges the Fit for School program tries to train individuals and foster exchange and mutual learning between provincial and district offices. This raises the question of individual learning versus incorporating these training in the repertoire of Ministries of Education and thus institutionalizing them, Alexander Winkscha noted ([#19083](#)).

Problem No. 2: Engaging subnational structures

During the scaling up process, subnational structures suddenly take centre stage, yet oftentimes it is not clear how to engage them. Have we already engaged them? Have we thought about their role? The role of these subnational structures has not been well defined and officials may not know what is expected and how to meet those expectations. Oftentimes, the national level does not really know what the subnational roles will be either. Provincial levels often have a hard time (and subnational offices have the added stress of having to engage with local power structures that might follow fundamentally different interests), Winkscha wrote and presents cascading training structures as a potential solution to this problem ([#19083](#) – also see recommendation section).

4 Country Reports

Philippines

Philip Purnell presented the example of the Philippines where the Philippine Department of Education has been seeking to decentralize educational management through school-based management for over 15 years. The Fit for School approach leverages the opportunities provided by school-based management for community-based inter-sectoral partnership in support of WinS [see Example "Fit for School" for more information]. The example of the Philippines (and Lao PDR) shows that decentralized education management can be used as an entry point for sustainable and scalable WASH in school implementation ([#19107](#)).

Lao PDR

Lao PDR, similar to the Philippines, has also implemented the Fit for School approach. In Lao PDR, however, a somewhat different model to scale up of the FIT approach is being supported, Philipp Purnell elaborated ([#19107](#)). While school heads are still playing critical roles in ensuring integration of the FIT approach to WASH in their schools, the scale-up process is being spearheaded by the district level of the Ministry of Education. District level supervisors are acting as catalysts of change and scaling-up using existing structures such as the school cluster system to engage and support school leaders as WASH champions within a Lao contextualized approach to change management. This process is being driven, financed and managed by the Lao Ministry of Education. The limited technical assistance provided by GIZ is focused on helping the MOE strengthen its WASH in school quality assurance system through the Three Star Approach.

Germany

As Valentina Grossi elaborated, in Germany, the city is responsible for availability and maintenance of the facilities in schools, with the city education authority having most of the responsibility. Recounting from a study that she conducted, Grossi wrote that facilities in the examined schools were in



place and functioning and maintenance was reported as efficient. Nevertheless, pupils did not show healthy behaviours: many avoided visiting the toilets, a consistent number did not always wash their hands with soap after using the toilet and/or did not drink enough water at school. The study analysed possible issues behind these results, with an emphasis on the institutional level. In particular, Grossi came to the conclusion that the cleaning plan set by the authorities could be improved, as it cannot always ensure clean facilities, especially in the afternoon and after breaks. In addition, some hindering factors may limit maintenance efficiency, e.g. limited human resources (both for schools and authorities), high costs and fixed budgets as well as a lack of efficient coordination between the various stakeholders. Finally, she recommended that more detailed regulations, like the ones for health-care facilities, could help the current efforts of improving WASH in schools, providing for example guidance on hygiene education (not yet standardised), adequate cleaning, and practical toilets-pupils ratios ([#19203](#)).

India

Several participants referred to the situation of WinS in India. David Croweller, for instance, recounted from his experiences in Tamil Nadu and stressed the importance of teachers promoting hygiene. Based on his experiences, the participant saw no doubt that where the head teacher and staff engage with students regarding WASH facilities, there is better usage and a greater knowledge of hygiene. This in turn greatly impacts the messages children take back to their families ([#19168](#)).

Ranjan Kumar Mallick, on the other hand, focused on the rural areas in Odisha and Uttarakhand. He wrote that schools, which have water and sanitation facilities often suffer from (a) non-existent or insufficient water supply and hand washing facilities, (b) toilets that are not adapted to the needs of the children in particular girls, (c) broken, unsafe water supply, sanitation and hand washing facilities, (d) a situation where children only exhibit poor hygiene and hand washing practices, (e) non-existent and irrelevant hygiene education for children, (f) unhealthy and dirty class rooms and school compounds as well as (g) improper operation and maintenance of the existing facilities. Under these conditions, schools and community environments become unsafe places where diseases are transmitted, he stressed. These compromise children's attendance and performance at school; and not uncommonly, can result in death ([#19050](#)).

Finally, Mathew Luckose argued that – as has been stated with regard to other contexts as well – operation and maintenance constitutes the main problem in India. Support from the WASH sector should therefore focus on maintaining the created infrastructure. There is enough money to invest in constructing new WASH facilities but no money to actually maintain and run them. School management complains about insufficient fund allocation for O&M. The focus should thus lie on finding a solution to ensure WASH security in schools ([#19076](#)).

Lithuania

Jovana Dodos recounted from a study conducted in Lithuania, which found that less than 30% of the students regularly use the toilets in schools. In fact, the acceptability of school toilets is one of the most common problems in the pan-European region. She argued that the input of school children is needed in order to tackle this problem of acceptability ([#19188](#)).

Nepal

Probably the biggest difficulty with WinS in Nepal is access to water, particularly in the rural hill areas, Pamela White wrote. Without sufficient water the toilets will block up and quickly become unused. Therefore, it is critical that school needs are considered when planning new rural water schemes.

In addition, cultural/religious issues, particularly as they affect Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) also pose a challenge. For one, menstruation is considered a taboo issue and until recently schools did not have separate toilet facilities for girls, which resulted in school absenteeism for girls during menstruation. Moreover, as some schools have a shrine on the premises, girls are unable to attend school during menstruation, as teachers believe it to be a sign of disrespect of the gods.

With regard to the national sanitation campaign, teachers and children have played an important role. Children's clubs have been very active in monitoring open defecation and are very important actors regarding behaviour change ([#19159](#)).

Kenya

Rickson Wachira presented photographic evidence of the WASH situation at Kibera Primary School, located in the Southern part of Nairobi. The pictures showed corridors of sanitation blocks that are full of feces and signs of vandalized doors. The status of the washroom is in worse shape than pit latrines in informal settlements, he stated. In fact, teachers who have been working in the school for many years claim that they have never seen a drop of water coming from the pipes ([#19066](#)).

Similarly, Doreen Mbalo wrote that while the Kenyan education sector has made significant progress in the pursuit of universal education through the implementation of free primary education, the development of water supply and sanitation infrastructure has not kept pace with increased pupil enrollment making the current situation unacceptable. Thereby, a number of challenges are faced, for instance (a) while Kenya has a devolved government structure, responsibility for the education sector resides at the national level and is not devolved. As a consequence, responsibility for O&M remains unclear; (b) national data on the status of sanitation infrastructure in schools is not available; (c) insufficient funds are allocated to the construction of sanitation infrastructure by the government, resulting in a huge investment gap. In the past, funding for sanitation infrastructure was largely dependent on development partners; (d) unclear responsibilities and lack of cooperation between sectors (like water, health and education) ([#19111](#)).

Uganda

Prit Salian shared his experiences from a city sanitation project in six small and medium-sized towns in Northern Uganda, including sanitation in public schools and public health facilities. The aim of the project is to improve the capacities of local governments to plan and implement sustainable interventions in sanitation and to improve Fecal Sludge Management (FSM) across the city. He presented a number of the preliminary findings: (a) there is a low level of interest among the school management in improving hygiene in schools; (b) corruption and embezzlement of funds are common practices on the part of the school management; (c) there is a general lack of funds; when a transfer of funds from the district education board occurs, they are used for other, seemingly more pressing, things first and (d) schools suffer from theft and vandalism from members of nearby communities. Overall, he sees the lack of sanitation in school

as a systematic problem rather than a hardware problem or awareness raising issue ([#19253](#)).

To promote WinS on the level of local governments and town councils, the approach of i-San Associates (Integrated Sanitation Solutions for Urban Development) focuses on the following activities: (a) raise the political will for sanitation at all levels; (b) involve head teachers (or representatives) in the Sanitation Task Force for the Town Councils to foster dialogue between the two; (c) enforce the town council's authority to close down schools with poor levels of hygiene; (d) develop a school sanitation plan that describes the roles and responsibilities of all actors involved. The monitoring of the implementation of the plan is the responsibility of the town council staff or the district local government ([#19253](#)).

5 Lessons Learnt

Decentralized educational management (DEM) has proven to provide good opportunities for promoting effective WASH in schools

School-based management – as part of national policy reforms that decentralize educational management – offers the chance for sustainable and scalable WASH in school implementation. DEM helps empower school heads as WASH champions and decision-makers ensuring interventions are contextualized according to local conditions and realities. At the same time the community-partnership efforts supporting these local WASH in school initiatives helps build the capacities of school heads in critical SBM-related competencies such as school-community partnership-building, resource mobilization, school-improvement planning, learning environment management and holistic child development, among others. Thus a mutually reinforcing dynamic at work with highly beneficial results can be observed ([#19064](#)).

Hardware is not enough!

While the claim that “Hardware is not enough!” has been around in the WASH sector for some time, the understanding that “software” issues play a vital part as well has to be truly reflected in the work and approaches of the WASH sector. Approaches have to be implemented that include more than “pseudo software” issues; they have to be integrated in terms of structures and processes and they have to address accountability and ownership honestly ([#19075](#)).

Operation and Maintenance lies at the heart of successful WinS

Several suggestions are made with regard to O&M. Outsourcing building maintenance to local/regional private sectors, for instance, could be a way forward to tackle the problem of O&M. Another suggestion is to include local artisans in O&M trainings, e.g. in the management of water points. The idea is to include local artisans that are engaged in the construction of infrastructure in the training to build their technical capacities in O&M. Finally, the development of an O&M manual for schools which guides the training of the school's board of management on O&M and will be handed over to each school is suggested. This manual is adapted to the situation of the individual school by including a list of local suppliers/providers for needed spare parts and materials or desludging services ([#19205](#)) in order to achieve sustainability.

More commitment is needed

More commitment, rather than more money is needed ([#19214](#)). This includes a constant development of ownership by the various stakeholders within the government system.

6 Recommendations

6a Policy level

Respect traditional practices

Oftentimes, international policy makers neglect traditional and customary rules with regard to health and hygiene, which consequently results in non-compliance. While respecting traditional practices does not mean that policy makers should adhere to customs that rule out sanitation facilities in schools, it means taking local customs into consideration when possible in order to achieve higher acceptance of WASH policies ([#19044](#) [#19060](#)).

The education sector must broaden its focus

The education sector's narrow focus on educational policies has to be expanded to include issues such as health, nutrition and sanitation facilities. These should be included in any education policy ([#19061](#)). The inclusion of Indicators on WinS into the monitoring system of the education sector (EMIS) is clarifying the responsibility for WinS as a school based management task.

Establish a systematic quality assurance system

Deepening the impact of WinS not only requires an enabling policy environment but a systematic quality assurance system (e.g. the 3 star accreditation model) ([#19107](#)).

Distribution and use of funds is critical

The issue of the use of funds is critical for successful WASH in schools. It is not per se about more money (even though there are places where a lack of funding poses a problem for WASH in schools), yet how the funds are used and by whom they can be used are critical questions. Putting a billing system in place to enable schools to pay for the supply of water and sanitation services (by the local government), for instance, is mentioned as one recommendation to guarantee a functioning sanitation infrastructure. Moreover, ministries of education and provincial education offices should use their own budget to pay for trainings such as the Fit for School program. This way, provincial offices will learn how to prioritize. Also, the use of available funds (in many cases funds are available but not used or not used properly) has to be facilitated or feasible models for resource mobilization according to the local context must be developed. Overall, as the discussion showed, the issue of funds is a complex one ([#19144](#) [#19163](#)).

6b Practical implementation level

Have a clear and systematic mobilization strategy

The experience with engaging institutions shows that there is a need for a clear and systematic mobilization strategy that defines the process of stakeholder engagement. A community mobilization strategy should therefore also include a manual on the engagement with schools ([#19205](#)).



Challenge traditional assumptions on sustainable WASH solutions

Challenging traditional assumptions and paradigms about WASH infrastructure can be a successful way forward to address WASH in a sustainable manner. There are promising examples of WASH infrastructure models that use simple, low cost, low water consumption alternatives that are constructed locally using indigenous/locally available materials by school communities such as the tippy tap model ([#19129](#)). Choosing the right technology options (simple, usable, durable and desirable) is key ([#19220](#)).

Support the education sector to strengthen (inter-sectoral) partnerships

Partnerships between the education sector and the subnational and local level (local authorities, communities, civil society and the private sector) have to be strengthened. Successful and sustainable WinS will not be established by temporary programs and outside actors but through enabling government partners and other local partners to take a leading role in these change processes ([#19075](#)).

Prioritize! WASH has to come first

For systems that are rather weak it is important to focus and prioritize instead of expecting that everything will happen at once. WASH should be the first step of comprehensive school health programs, complemented by other aspects at a later point ([#19117](#)).

Keep it simple!

Approaches are needed that offer simple, focused and effective interventions and that do not overwhelm the education sector. Stepwise approaches that start with some doable aspects and build up from there have the potential to overcome a sense of paralysis and dependency on the part of the education sector and instead create a sense of ownership. Interventions on the school level should be simple and not too time consuming ([#19117](#)).

Understanding of the obstacles for the education sector regarding WinS has to be increased

A deeper, shared understanding of the problem of low levels of sustainability regarding WinS and the low impact of most WinS programmes has to be gained. Tacit knowledge about obstacles has to be made explicit. Strategies are needed which address the underlying causes and activate the potential for change ([#19161](#)). This includes the development of a deeper understanding of the education sector overall by the WASH sector.

Constant monitoring is required, located within the education sector

Constant monitoring of the WASH conditions is needed in order to ensure that adequate facilities exist and function. By basing M&E within the education sector, accountability of the education sector is increased. Schools are held accountable for the state of their WASH facilities.

Acknowledge the importance of subnational structure for scaling up efforts

During the scaling up process, subnational structures take center stage. Representatives like province and district offices and officials at this level have to be meaningfully engaged. Cascading training structures, in which provincial officers take responsibility for training district officials and these in turn orient school principals and school communities on the program approach have proven to be a good way to

do so. Given the importance of subnational structures, it has to follow that they are truly engaged and roles and responsibilities are clarified (including O&M).

Focus on systematic approaches right from the beginning

Focus more strongly on system strengthening. Try to have longer program periods to give enough time to put systems in place or remove structural hurdles. Also, plan for the time after the support will end (phase-out periods, exit strategies) in order to avoid a collapse of the program as soon as external support ends ([#19117](#)).

Educate the educators

There is a lack of knowledge and capacity on the part of teachers to promote the benefits of WASH facilities within the school community and to in fact put those facilities in place. ([#19220](#))

Have a clear memorandum of understanding (MoU)

It is crucial to formalise the relationship with all stakeholders present at the school in a clear MoU that defines the roles and responsibilities of each party. The MoU should clearly outline (a) the objective, scope and duration of the project; (b) the results and activities of the project; (c) the commitments of each of the three parties (BoM, government, Caritas or its local partner) signing the agreements; (d) the selected representatives of each of the three parties ([#19205](#)).

Partner with the school management

The Board of Management (BoM) is in charge of the school. Any engagement with the school must therefore start with a meeting with the BoM. It is essential to engage in a transparent dialogue with the BoM about its plans and priorities with regard to WASH already at the pre-assessment stage. This will build a sound basis for a balanced partnership throughout the project implementation ([#19205](#)).

Collaborate with the head teacher

The head teacher is the secretary to the BoM and supervises the day-to-day activities within the school, holding a central position within the school. His/her buy-in is therefore essential to the success of any WASH intervention at the school. She/he also informs the BoM (Board of Management) and the parents of the latest developments and further requirements of the school. In most cases, the head teacher becomes the contact person within the school. The WASH sector therefore needs to engage in an open dialogue with the head teacher from the beginning and involve him/her in key activities such as the training of trainers of CHAST (Children Hygiene and Sanitation Training). Moreover, the WASH sector can support the head teacher in the communication with the BoM, the parents and his staff – for instance by providing a summary of the project objectives and activities, the support required by each group and key hygiene messages ([#19205](#)).

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