

WASH in Schools Minimum Standards dissemination commences

The WASH in Schools (WinS) National Minimum Standards for Infrastructure and Implementation Models are ready for nationwide dissemination to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sector stakeholders across all levels and beyond. This follows a successful validation and subsequently, national level dissemination in Accra during the forty-second edition of the National Level Learning Alliance Platform (NLLAP 42) which came off on Thursday, 27th March, 2014 at the Coconut Grove Regency Hotel, Accra.

NLLAP 42 was under the joint auspices of the Resource Centre Network (RCN) Ghana, the Water Directorate of Ministry of Water Resources, Works and Housing, Environmental Health and Sanitation Directorate of Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and School Health Education Programme (SHEP) Unit, Ghana Education Service (GES) of the Ministry of Education (MoE). The GES, with the technical and financial support from UNICEF, led the discussions under the chairmanship of Mrs. Cynthia Bosumtwi-Sam, Director for Curriculum Research and Development Division, GES. The theme for this edition of NLLAP was, "WASH in Schools: National Minimum Standards and Implementation Models". This brief is meant to share with the wider WASH community the most burning issues from NLLAP 42.

The SHEP-GES, lead for the WinS process, announced at NLLAP 42 that it was ready to oversee the dissemination of the Models at the regional, district and school levels. Also, Madam Kate Opoku, Director for SHEP-GES, revealed plans to undertake training sessions for School Health Clubs in non-UNICEF supported regions and districts to foster effective implementation of the models.

The basis for Models

According to the latest data of the Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for Water Supply and Sanitation (by UNICEF/WHO), Ghana has achieved the Millennium Development Goal for water supply (86% access), but it is seriously lagging behind in sanitation (14% access). For the rural population, improved sanitation coverage is as low as 6% owing mainly to the wide-spread (app. 58% of the population) use of community/shared toilets.

At the school level, an average of 10,000 public basic schools (Creche/Nursery, Kindergarten, Primary Schools and Junior High Schools) lack toilet facilities. Notably, WinS in Ghana has been delivered as part of traditional water, sanitation and hygiene promotion projects in communities. Presently, 62% of schools have toilet facilities and 65% have access to water onsite.

The SHEP Unit since its establishment in 1992 has spearheaded the implementation of the health education programmes at the pre-tertiary level. One of the component areas of SHEP implementation falls under Safe and Healthy School Environment which captures activities under WASH in Schools (WinS).

The GES, under whose responsibility WinS falls, has had some challenges in coordinating and harmonising WinS interventions mainly due to the project-based approach which often has little recourse to the GES for direction. Many of those projects have been temporary and without full involvement and ownership of SHEP. As a way of providing leadership and direction for WinS implementation, the GES-SHEP with the support of UNICEF, through its CIDA and DGIS funded GoG-UNICEF WASH project, has developed National Standards for WinS and an Implementation Models for holistic WinS programming.

Prior to this, the GES developed the *School Health Education Programme (SHEP) Policy and Strategy Framework* in 2010 to offer general direction for school health programming and to provide a good context for WinS programming.

This is conceived against the backdrop that improvements in WinS provide safe drinking water, build good sanitary facilities and establish appropriate hygiene habits. The impacts of such improvements include: Improved primary school attendance, health and cognitive development; Positive hygiene behaviours that may last for life; Outreach to families and communities, through the participation of pupils in hygiene promotion; and Greater girls' participation in school.

With the focus on WinS in Ghana increasing, the GES has sought to provide further leadership and direction by developing the *National Standards for WinS infrastructure and Implementation Model* for WinS programming.

Overview

During the recent dissemination of the *WinS National Minimum Standards and Implementation Models* at NLLAP 42, Ing. Harold Esseku, one of the model development consultants mentioned, in an overview of the Model that in the process of developing the standards, several separate documents have emerged. These include:

- National Implementation Model for WASH in Schools
- Technical Guide for WASH in Schools Facilities (including technical drawings and Bills of Quantity)
- WASH in Schools Facilities Planning and Management Guide
- WASH in Schools Facility Management Plan
- WASH in Schools Checklist
- Education Guide WASH in Schools
- Guidelines for the implementation of school health clubs
- Children's Role in Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) Implementation
- Children and Youth Ambassadors for WASH

and Menstrual Hygiene Management Manual (UNICEF/Right to Play).

In a presentation on *National Implementation Model for WASH in Schools*, Mr Esseku indicated that having the bigger document split into several parts was helpful. "The key thing is that one experience that I've had is that when you get a document, which is very big it is scary to start looking at. But different people have different areas that they will be focusing on, so we have everything documented as individual separate documents," he said.

He mentioned that the objectives for developing the Implementation Model are:

- Creating overall awareness on the importance of WASH in Schools,
- Stimulating a positive environment to advocate and implement improved WASH in Schools, and
- Changing social norms making unhealthy and unhygienic schools unacceptable.

In terms of features, the Models are meant to "Be child and gender-friendly and promote quality delivery and sustenance of WinS services through processes that ensure adequate planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, training and capacity building, child participation and community involvement." Other features of the Models are to: Serve as a reference for all future WinS projects/interventions in Ghana; enable the GES to coordinate and harmonise interventions in schools; and contribute to the implementation of the Child Friendly Schools (CFS) Framework developed by the GES.

The Models also provide detailed roles and responsibilities for different stakeholders such as SHEP-GES, Environmental Health and Sanitation Directorate of Ministry of Local Governance and Rural Development, Ministry of Health, Community Water and Sanitation Agency, Regional and District level SHEP offices, Development Partners, communities, private sector, schools and pupils.

In a separate presentation on the *Technical and Planning Guide for WinS*, Mr Esseku indicated that at the minimum, every WinS intervention must include:

- Hand Washing and Hygiene
- Water Supply
- Toilets and urinals
- Menstrual Hygiene Management
- Solid Waste Disposal and Drainage

Specific to toilet facilities, the consultant emphasized among others that separate blocks for boys, girls and teachers must respectively be provided and toilet should be designed for maximum 50 pupils per drop hole. Also, toilets must be accessible to all including small children and physically disabled. Furthermore, main doors to toilet block must face towards the school block and "Communities **MUST** be discouraged from the communal use of school toilets."

Children in hygiene education

Mr Vincent Tay, another Consultant on the project, took his turn with a presentation on *Hygiene Education and Children as Agents of Change*, detailing that effective Hygiene Education thrives on three principles, which are:

- Children as AGENTS of CHANGE
- Activities should be doable by the Children with very little supervision
- Activities should not take all of the Children's time

The total software component of Hygiene Education, according to him, could be delivered in accordance with the four main sub-documents, namely Education Guide for WASH in Schools; Guidelines for Formation and Running of School Health Clubs; Guidelines for Children's Participation in Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS); and Guidelines for Implementation of Children and Youth Ambassadors Scheme.

The *Education Guide for WASH in Schools* is a document that provides guidelines for integrating a package of WASH Education in Basic Schools, while *Guidelines for Formation and Running of School Health Clubs* documents the processes and procedures for forming and managing School Health Clubs. On the other hand, the *Guidelines for Children's Participation in Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS)* provides guidance for involving Children in CLTS Implementation (in CLTS communities) whereas the *Guidelines for Implementation of Children and Youth Ambassadors Scheme* documents how to use children as Agents of Change to facilitate WASH behaviour change (under WASHSPASH).

Way Forward

After a very interactive session, participants of NLLAP 42 came up with the following as the way forward:

- Ensure that the dissemination of the Models cuts across all levels – national, regional, district, communities, schools and individual stakeholders such as circuit supervisors.
- Government must lead a process to develop a strategy for financing WinS which details the costs and identifies sources for financing the provision of standard facilities for every school everywhere
- The WinS approach should incorporate integrated water management concept by ensuring, for instance, that waste water from handwashing facilities can be used for washing away urine
- Parents should support in the purchase of sanitary materials
- School Health Clubs should be instituted in all schools
- Capacity building on the implementation of the models should be well-structured and not based on piece-meal approach
- Consider a revision of the 50 pupils per squat hole limit for toilets to 75 pupils per squat hole
- A combination of private cleaners and students should be explored for cleaning WASH facilities in schools effectively.

The NLLAP is a WASH sector multi stakeholder platform with the overall goal of improving sector learning and dialogue. It is hosted by the Ghana WASH Resource Centre Network (RCN). The platform offers learning and sharing opportunity for sector players as one of the practical approaches to improving sector engagements/sharing with the long term aim of achieving a knowledge driven WASH sector that delivers quality and sustainable services in Ghana. NLLAP meetings take place on the last Thursday of every month and opened to all interested parties. The discussions of each NLLAP meeting are summarized and shared with the wider WASH community. The topics of upcoming meetings are decided on by the RCN secretariat and a list of upcoming meetings can be found on the RCN website www.washghana.net.

If you are interested to propose a topic for a meeting please contact us on,
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