



Sustaining and Scaling School Water,  
Sanitation, and Hygiene Plus  
Community Impact



# Importance of Keeping Latrines Clean

## Attitudes and Use of School Latrines Among Rural Primary School Pupils

### Question

We have very little information on how primary school children in rural, developing areas negotiate latrine use, and how poor latrine conditions impact students' hygiene behaviors.

Investment in WASH infrastructure is necessary to facilitate improved behaviors; however, **does simply having a latrine at schools in rural areas lead to students using it?**

### Research

A research team in collaboration with Emory University, Great Lakes University of Kisumu, and University of Florida collected baseline data from students in rural Kenya at schools involved in the SWASH+ led by CARE. In 2006, baseline student survey data was collected from nearly 4,000 students. Additional qualitative data was collected in 2009 via 12 focus group discussions with boy and girl students and two in-depth interviews with teachers.

### Findings

The lack of cleanliness of school latrines and poor conditions were the main motives for why students were not comfortable using sanitation facilities. Students cited the foul smell, dirty conditions, presence of flies and 'full pit' as primary reasons for their discomfort.

This research revealed that students are not likely to use a latrine if it is dirty. Basic hygiene behavior education can be undermined if school latrines are not maintained properly and poor facility maintenance makes students much less likely to use their latrines.

### Adapting Behaviors

- Students admitted they would either *defecate in the open, find another place to go, or simply wait, if the conditions of the latrine were too dirty.*
- The youngest students reportedly practiced open defecation most frequently on the school grounds

and were responsible for 'messing' the latrines.

### Cleaning Latrines

- Students had negative attitudes towards cleaning latrines if they had poor supplies or inadequate personal protection.
- Some students were positive about cleaning latrines if they were then able to use latrine in a clean condition.
- Schools lack proper supplies for cleaning latrines.

### Recommendations

These findings suggest that funding should be budgeted in order to provide supplies for cleaning and maintenance of latrines.

*Strong institutional examples of clean latrines* should be provided in order to set a standard of cleanliness. Maintenance and cleanliness of latrines will provide students opportunities to put into practice hygiene and sanitation-related behaviors they are taught.

Future interventions and research may focus on teaching students how to clean latrines and introduce new strategies to maintain hygienic latrines at schools.



*At most schools it is the student's responsibility to clean the latrines. Dirty latrines are less likely to be used by students.*

SWASH+ is a five-year applied research project to identify, develop, and test innovative approaches to school-based water, sanitation and hygiene in Nyanza Province, Kenya. The partners that form the SWASH+ consortium are CARE, Emory University, the Great Lakes University of Kisumu, the Government of Kenya, and formerly the Kenya Water for Health Organisation (KWAHO), and Water.org. SWASH+ is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Global Water Challenge. For more information, visit [www.swashplus.org](http://www.swashplus.org).

