

INSIGHT SERIES 9 - JAIPUR

## Synthesis Document: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in Schools

Indian Sanitation Coalition, IRC, and TARU Leading Edge in association with Finish Society organized a dialogue on the 10th of October, 2018 in Jaipur. This discussion specifically focussed on WASH in schools and explored the change in sanitation behavior in Rajasthan through education.



The Jaipur Insights panelists (from Left to Right) - Mr. Suresh Chandra (Additional Director, Rajasthan Council of School Education), Dr. M.A Khan (Deputy Director, Department of Minority Affairs, Govt of Rajasthan), Dr. Piyusha Mazumdar (Assistant Professor, IIMR University), Mr. Sushant Chinchkar (Manager CSR, ITC Mission Sunehra Kal, ITC limited) MR. Girish Bharadwaj (State Sanitation and Hygiene Officer, Govt. of Rajasthan), Mr. Joy Mukherjee (Additional General Manager CSR, DCM Shriram), and the moderator - Mr. Saurabh Agnihotri (Head of Projects, FINISH Society)

**WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE (WASH) IN SCHOOLS** has a significant impact on the overall health and well-being of children. WASH secures children's dignity, safety, health and as a consequence improves school attendance. Further, it motivates children to adopt appropriate hygiene behavior and become the agents of change for their peers, families, and the communities at large. Education plays a critical role to initiate this process. Teachers, with the help of school management committees (SMCs), parents, the private sector and the public sector, can play a catalytic role in the process.

In India, central and state governments have committed to ensuring access to WASH facilities in schools. The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) has had a positive influence in propagating WASH in schools. However, there are gaps and challenges that need to be addressed for providing continuous access to basic facilities such as school toilets, safe drinking water, clean surroundings and basic hygiene behaviour.



### DIALOGUE ON WASH IN SCHOOLS IN RAJASTHAN

Indian Sanitation Coalition, IRC, and TARU Leading Edge in association with Finish Society organized the ninth dialogue in the series of Insight sessions on the 10th of October, 2018 in Jaipur. This discussion specifically focussed on WASH in schools and explored the change in basic hygiene behaviour in Rajasthan through education.

This deliberation examined the influence of the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) on WASH in schools. The flagship mission has been useful in generating awareness on the importance of sanitation on a mass scale. The panelists elaborated that the concept of WASH is not new to the people of India and SBM is not the first central programme that is developed to address it. Yet, in its reach and scale, SBM has been unlike any other developmental programme that has encouraged people to adopt an attitude, which is conducive to maintaining hygiene and sanitation.

This engaging discussion had a multi-sectoral panel comprising of representatives from the state government, academia, and the corporate sector. The keynote speaker for this deliberation was Mr. Suresh Chandra (Additional Director, Rajasthan Council of School Education). The other panelists who enriched the discussion were- Dr. M. A. Khan (Deputy Director, Department of Minority Affairs, Government of Rajasthan), Mr. Girish Bharadwaj (State Sanitation and Hygiene Officer, Government of Rajasthan), Dr. Piyusha Mazumdar (Assistant Professor, IIMR University), Mr. Joy Mukherjee (Additional General Manager CSR, DCM Shriram), and Mr. Sushant Chinchkar (Manager CSR- ITC Mission Sunehra Kal, ITC Limited). The participants, including representatives from the civil society, made the discussion extremely interactive and informative.

The success and influence of SBM have led to both, the demand and creation of infrastructure that is necessary for WASH. However, WASH is as much about hardware

as it is about software. The panelists were of the opinion that it is very important to utilize the potential of the mass awareness created by the movement and convert it into long-term sustainable practice. They believed that in this regard schools can serve as agents of change. The positive impact of Swachh Bharat Swachh Vidyalaya (SBSV) initiative was highlighted in this context.

The SBSV initiative was launched by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India in 2014 with the aim to ensure that all schools in India have equitable access to toilets with separate functional facilities for boys and girls. The initiative also lays emphasis on promoting safe and appropriate hygiene behavior among children that can be practiced both at school and at home. The objective of this initiative is to promote appropriate WASH behavior, create a secure and healthy school environment, augment nutrition intake among children by inculcating the habit of hand washing before meals, promote equity by providing suitable amenities for all and enable children to become agents of change for their family and community.

### IMPORTANCE OF WASH IN SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Schools play a vital role in promoting health and enabling behavioral changes. The panelists stated that school curriculum is rich in terms of information on good hygiene practices. Regular demonstration and routinization of theoretical learnings, can augment WASH education, and positively influence inculcation of appropriate WASH behaviour.



**Child cabinets play a central role in maintenance of the school environment.**

**GIRISH BHARADWAJ**



WASH is about Attitudinal and Behavioural Change (ABC), which constantly requires practical input and application. The panelists suggested that co-curricular activities in schools can greatly contribute in bringing about awareness and change. For example, the importance of safe WASH can be promoted through activities like plays and debates which enable better comprehension. Co-curricular activities can also be used to select student leaders and train them to become peer educators. In this context, the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare's (the Government of India) adolescent health programme - Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK)<sup>1</sup> - was mentioned. RKSK is rooted in adolescent participation and leadership and introduced 'peer educators' as an intervention<sup>2</sup>. As in the case of RKSK, in promoting WASH in schools, peer educators can facilitate learning from trained peers, reduce fear or barriers to access information, and foster a support system of peers.

Selection of student WASH ambassadors and training them to spread the message can promote the adoption of WASH appropriate behavior. Child cabinets, as well as school health clubs, can be formed to augment the cause. Further, students can be engaged in monitoring the availability and cleanliness of WASH facilities. However, promotion of WASH in school is a collective responsibility of the students as well as the teachers, the parents and the School Management Committees (SMCs).

### ROLE OF TEACHERS IN PROMOTING WASH IN SCHOOLS

The panelists strongly believe that teachers have a critical role in establishing WASH in schools. They can influence and encourage students to apply the theoretical knowledge available in the curriculum to practical use in their everyday life. In addition to regular education, teachers can contribute by integrating topics of WASH curriculum into daily school activities such as morning assembly. Teachers can demonstrate, supervise and encourage students in terms of use and operation and maintenance (O&M) of drinking water, hand washing, and toilet facilities. They may also be involved in the planning, O&M, and monitoring of the facilities. Further, teachers can support children in taking an active role in keeping up hygiene practices, both in school and at home. They can contribute in the creation of a safe space to discuss issues of menstrual hygiene management.

The panel members emphasized that progress in sanitation would not be possible without the active participation of both the students and the teachers. They shared that in Rajasthan, the schools that were eligible for the Swachh Vidyalaya Puruskar<sup>3</sup> were found to be those in which both parties were collectively involved in promoting and ensuring WASH in schools. However, they noted that the teachers' contribution in this regard depends heavily on their uptake and understanding of the seriousness of the issue. Thus in Rajasthan, a programme is carried out



**Qualitative education and behavior change is only possible through teachers.**

**DR. M.A. KHAN**



specifically for teachers - to train them on sanitation, hygiene, and health.

### NEED FOR COLLABORATION TO MAKE SCHOOL WASH A SUCCESS

WASH in schools cannot be successful with the efforts of the students and teachers alone. Parents and the SMC have an equally important role to play, particularly in terms of planning, installation, O&M, and monitoring of the WASH hardware in schools. Additionally, they can encourage children's school attendance. Further, by installing WASH facilities at home they can facilitate adoption of the WASH appropriate behaviour among children and in the community at large.

The discussion also brought to the fore the vital role played by the private sector in facilitating WASH in schools. The private sector, through their funding, can help in the installation and maintenance of WASH facilities. Apart from that, they can also support behavior change communication campaigns and capacity building of stakeholders. The private sector by partnering with multiple agencies, including the state government, multinational agencies, civil society, and the UN bodies, can seek support for schools in need of WASH facilities.

The representatives from the private sector shared that their priority is to create equitable, safe and accessible infrastructure for all, with a special focus on girls, in schools. Schools often vary in terms of available sanitation infrastructure and the ensuing challenge for them is to establish uniform and basic sanitation standards. Along with the standardization and infrastructure installation process, efforts are made to develop ownership to ensure long-term maintenance.

To develop ownership, community engagement is crucial. In this regard, civil society organizations through advocacy can help make WASH a priority on the agenda in schools as well as the community. They can coordinate with multiple stakeholders to make sure that the WASH programmes



**"The key to behaviour change is to connect sanitation to health in the mindscape."**

**JOY MUKHERJEE**



are not only reaching scale but also are sustainable. Additionally, they can encourage children to participate in sanitation promotional campaigns and become agents of change for their siblings, their parents and the community at large.

## THE WAY FORWARD

Great strides have been made to safeguard the well being of children by building infrastructure and providing access to sanitation facilities. However, challenges continue to plague the ecosystem. In the discussion, the panelists examined the gaps and based on their experience offered certain recommendations to make WASH a success in schools.

There is a strong need to focus on quality education. Educating students on WASH in schools must, therefore, move from theoretical knowledge to practical activities. The appropriate WASH behavior must be demonstrated in addition to students being asked to practice the same. This will not only facilitate learning by doing as well as encourage students to inculcate the practice in their daily routine. The dire need is to move from literacy to education, which is vital for causing behavioral change.

Teachers play a critical role in the quality of education that is delivered. Teachers in government and government-aided schools are often overburdened with many responsibilities. The teacher to student ratio is extremely low in such schools, consequently, teachers are responsible for multiple classes. In remote areas, where the literacy standards are extremely low, teachers have to work extra hard. They are, additionally, expected to implement government schemes and collect data for the same. These added responsibilities eat into their precious time, as a result, the quality of education suffers. These challenges hinder WASH implementation in schools. A teacher's fundamental task is to teach and facilitate the inculcation of positive behavioral attributes. Even if there is available funding for hardware and software, WASH in schools will be a success only if the objectives are aligned with particular roles. It is, thus, important to be clear of the tasks expected of teachers. If need be, funds made available through CSR should be utilized to hire a qualified

human resource to perform the additional duties that are expected of a teacher.

For the sustainability of WASH initiatives in schools, it is very important to build ownership. WASH in schools is often considered the responsibility of the government, and not that of the students, the teachers, or that of the community. This gap needs to be bridged with all stakeholders taking ownership of all school-related activities. An active and effective SMC, comprising of all teachers, all parents, and elected representatives of the local government in the ward, in the school is a step taken towards this end.

In schools where WASH initiatives are funded through CSR, ownership needs to be created by involving the SMC financially in sanitation initiatives. For instance, one of the panelists from the corporate sector explained that they work only with those schools that have a functional SMC. The SMCs are not only engaged in the planning process but are also expected to cover 25% of the total costs, while the corporate takes care of the remaining 75% of the cost. Additionally, a part of the total fund (corporate + SMC) is saved as a corpus to cover the O&M costs.

Sustainability of WASH in schools is largely dependent on the capacities of the stakeholders. Thus, it is very important that investments are made in building capacities. The panel stated that exposure visits can be extremely useful in this regard. Further, in schools where the funders are involved, some degree of hand-holding must be part of the exit strategy to sustain WASH initiatives even after the latter's withdrawal.

## CONCLUSION

WASH in schools has gained significant momentum with SBM. However, its success depends on efficient implementation. This requires active participation of all the stakeholders and their acknowledgment of it being a collective responsibility. To facilitate the process it is critical that students are educated and made the agents of change, the teachers are adequately trained and capacitated, and the community is made aware.

[1] RKSK was launched in January 2014 with the aim to address nutrition, reproductive health, substance abuse, and other health related issues of adolescents. It envisions to enable adolescents to realize their full potential by making informed and responsible decisions related to their health.

[2] In the programme, selected girls and boys, trained and supported by the teachers and community based workers (ASHAs, ANMs, etc.), are mobilised to reach out to their peers.

[3] The Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar was instituted by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India in 2016 to recognize, inspire and celebrate excellence in sanitation and hygiene practice in schools. The explicit purpose of the awards is to honour schools that have undertaken significant steps towards fulfilling the mandate of the Swachh Vidyalaya Campaign.

For more information on the "Insights" knowledge series visit the India Sanitation Coalition [website](#).

This document is a product of the Insights Series; developed by IRC, India Sanitation Coalition and Taru Leading Edge.

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