SDG 6: WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH)

2021

Importance of WASH facilities in ensuring a better learning atmosphere at schools

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Executive Summary

The provision of safe drinking water, sanitation and handwashing facilities is an essential component of a healthy physical learning environment. If school children have access to appropriately designed clean toilets, functioning handwashing facilities with soap, sufficient and safe drinking water and have developed adequate hygiene skills, they are more likely to stay in school and perform better as well as influence a generational change in hygiene practices. Recent interventions by the current government have increased its focus to inculcate WASH practices in everyone's daily routine through various mass awareness campaigns and programmes like the Swachh Bharat Mission.[1] To work exclusively on WASH facilities in schools, the government launched its aspirational programme 'Swachh Bharat Swachh Vidyalaya' at the national level. The concerted efforts at the national level have led to overall decrease in the dropout rate of children due to improved water and sanitation facilities at the school level.

This section of the report discusses about the importance of WASH facilities in ensuring a better learning atmosphere for children at schools. It focuses on the various provisions and programmes undertaken by the government to ensure adequate WASH facilities in schools and how development agencies/organisations are supporting the government's efforts to achieve the set targets. The section also emphasizes on the current progress of schools in improving WASH facilities in order to address the issues of vulnerable groups attaining education in government schools of the state-such as tribal children, adolescent girls, children with special needs. There are various activities and campaigns undertaken throughout the year to bring behavioural change among children to practice hygiene habits and are discussed at length in this section.

Context of the Study

Children spend a significant portion of their day at school where WASH services can improve educational opportunities and decrease the potential for disease transmission between students. Low quality of drinking water, sanitation and hygiene leads to poor health, poor nutritional outcomes for children, as well as gender inequality due to the unequal burden of drudgery of water collection on women and girls, insecurity of open defecation, and hinders education when schools do not have safe, private toilets. Lack of sensitization among girls as

[1] *SBM: Swachh Bharat Mission is a Government of Jharkhand programme launched in 2014 to eliminate open defecation through-out the nation through individual household toilet construction while focusing on other sanitation related activities like solid-liquid waste management.*

well as boys on Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) related issues led to increased hesitation among girl students to manage their hygiene in school and hence increases the dropout rate. Appropriate health interventions relating to water, sanitation and hygiene education significantly reduce the mortality rate and incidence of sickness and disease in children under five.

There have been significant efforts taken at international and national forums to address these issues in the process of ensuring better learning opportunities to children, but have not been able to keep that pace to maintain their sustainability. One such initiating step in this process was the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) aimed at combating poverty, hunger, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women. The two MDGs that addressed WASH were "Reduce under-five child mortality rate by 2/3 between 1990 and 2015" (MDG Target 4A) and "By 2015 halve the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation" (MDG Target 7C).The second Millennium Development Goal (MDG) to achieve universal primary education by ensuring that all boys and girls complete primary education by the year 2015 was also dependent on adequate WASH facilities in schools to increase the student enrolment, especially of girl child. While MDGs were highly aspirational and extensively contributed in the development of various indicators, they somehow lagged behind in addressing the WASH issues particularly for children in schools. It has been observed that there continues to be many gaps in coverage with significant inequalities, especially when it comes to women and girls and those in vulnerable situations. Another striding effort was taken under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE), 2009 which emphasises the importance of free and compulsory education for children between 6 and 14 years under Article 21a of the Indian Constitution. The RTE Act instructed certain standards for adequate and quality Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) infrastructures in schools. Reinforcing this mandate, the Supreme Court in 2011 directed the Union and State governments to provide basic infrastructure, including drinking water and toilets, in all schools by the start of the academic year in 2012. However, the 2011-12 District Information System for Education (DISE) report highlighted that only 81.14% of schools had separate toilets for boys and 84.48% for girls, and 94.45% of schools had drinking water facilities. Moreover, there was no mention about actual usage and functionality of the existing services. The government adopted various steps to comply with the recommended standards, but certain quality issues were far from being addressed.

After the advent of Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) in 2014, the focus was largely spread on WASH facilities not only at the household level but also at institutions such as schools, health centres and other public places. Till 15th August 2015, the GoI declared 100% sanitation coverage in all schools of India. Undoubtedly, significant progress has been made to ensure that functional toilets exist in schools and that separate toilets are available for male and female students. Yet, experiences from the field suggest that the construction of toilets alone were insufficient to end open defecation and promote hygienic behaviour in schools. While

water and toilet facilities may exist in many schools, the functionality of such facilities, as well as their sustained use by the student community must be examined to understand if targets have been achieved.

In recognition of the importance of WASH in this setting, WASH in schools is implicitly and explicitly captured in the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The terms "universal" and "for all" in Targets 6.1 and 6.2 implicitly highlight the need for expanding WASH from household level to non-household settings, such as schools, as we progress from the MDG to the SDG era. Target 6.2 also calls for special attention to the needs of girls and those in vulnerable situations. Target 4.a includes WASH in schools, explicitly, with an associated indicator of the "proportion of schools with access to basic drinking water; separate sanitation facilities; and basic handwashing facilities". The inclusion of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in schools as part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) necessitates the development of national, regional and global estimates of WASH in school's coverage to track progress over time. While many countries have national coverage estimates for water and sanitation in schools, indicators often vary between countries, limiting cross-country comparability and regional or global aggregation.

India was one step ahead in contributing to the global Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030) as the Honorable Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, launched the 'Swachh Bharat Mission' on 2nd October 2014 for improving the level of sanitation and cleanliness in the country with a vision to create a Clean India by 2019. In 2014, The Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India launched 'Swachh Bharat Swachh Vidyalaya' (SBSV) initiative to ensure that all schools in India have access to separate functional toilets for boys and girls. The Swachh Vidyalaya initiative has defined the essential elements of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools which are categorized under Water, Sanitation, Handwashing with Soap; Operations and Maintenance; Behaviour Change Activities; and Capacity Building. To recognize, inspire, and celebrate excellence in sanitation and hygiene practice in schools, the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India launched Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar in 2016 to encourage the schools at national level. The explicit purpose of the awards is to honour schools that have undertaken significant steps towards fulfilling the mandate of the Swachh Vidyalaya Campaign. India's strong commitment to providing schools with adequate water, sanitation and hygiene facilities is championed by the Honourable Prime Minister and also supported by the Right to Education Act (2009) which necessitates ensuring drinking water and sanitation facilities in schools. The national flagship programmes, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and the Nirmal Gram Puraskar also support this requirement. Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV)- which aims at ensuring access and quality education to girls from disadvantaged groups belonging to SC and ST population by setting up residential schools at upper primary level- also supports the cause to ensure WASH facilities to children from marginalised groups studying in schools. The national SBM guidelines of the Ministry of

Drinking Water and Sanitation (MDWS) provide additional sanitation facilities in schools, including incinerators for menstrual hygiene management.

While percolating the national initiatives at state level, the states have also put significant efforts to roll-out the programme with more innovative and ambitious approaches. Analyzing the strategic steps of four states- Odisha , Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand- in order to meet the national and global targets to achieve the WASH standards for schools gives a variety of unique steps to be taken forward. The states have formulated their own working mechanism to address the local issues and meet the national as well as global targets under aspiring SDGs. While comparing to the national situation, the mentioned four states represent different political affiliations-Orissa has Biju Janta Dal (BJD), Bihar has National Democratic Alliance, Chhattisgarh has Indian National Congress (INC) and Jharkhand has Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM)which denotes the least intervention of saffron government in in the three states except Bihar. four states. Despite this fact, the 4 states are giving an overwhelming response to achieve the SDGs while meeting the WASH standards in all aspects focusing on vulnerable, marginalized sections of the society with access to equitable and adequate WASH facilities for all. Orissa government has launched its own **Odisha Swachh Vidhyalya Puraskar (OSVP)** to award the government schools performing well in meeting WASH standards. Awards will be given to the winners at block, district and state level. At the Block level the winner will get Rs 2,000, at district level Rs 5,000 and State level the winner will get a cash award of Rs 10,000.

Jharkhand has intensified the national efforts of Swachh Vidhyalaya Programme for improving WASH in schools through its state-owned **Swachh Vidyalaya Swasth Bacche (SVSB)** initiative for benchmarking schools to bring behavioural change among children thereby enhancing the quality of WASH facilities in schools. **Mukhyamantri Swachh Vidhyalaya Puraskar (MSVP)** is a Government of Jharkhand (GoJ) programme launched to reward the excellence of schools in Jharkhand and create a repository of the database by benchmarking of WASH standards in schools. Through this initiative, WASH facilities in all government, govt.-aided and private schools will be monitored and the awards will be given at state-level to five-star graded schools. GoJ has also launched Swachh Vidyalaya Swasth Bacche (SVSB) App which is state-specific, user-friendly mobile application developed to create repository of database by benchmarking of WASH standards in schools of Jharkhand.

MSVP (2019-20) received an overwhelming response in the state as compared to SVP (2017-18) as the participation increased from 20164 schools in SVP (2017-18) to 44441 schools in MSVP (2019-20). The schools which participate in MSVP undergo certain kind of rating from one-star to five-star on the basis of WASH facilities in schools. While rating schools, it was found that there is an overall decrease in 1 and 2-star schools in MSVP and the schools which were ranked in 2-star and 1-star category during SVP 2017-18 have improved their WASH facilities and now moved to 3, 4 & 5 star categories respectively in MSVP 2019-20. Under MSVP 2019-20, **928** schools came in five-star category, **5668** schools in four star-category, **27951** in three-star category, **6917** schools in two-star category and **2977** schools in one-star

category. (Date source: MSVP Baseline survey report by DoSE&L, GoJ through technical support of UNICEF and ASCI)

Backdrop of the Study

WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) plays a significant role in determining the attendance, attrition, concentration and performance scores of the students. Poor sanitation causes diarrhea, the second biggest cause of death in children under five years of age. Recent studies show strong evidence that lack of proper sanitation facilities leads to malnutrition, resulting in stunted growth in children. Children weakened by frequent diarrhea episodes are more vulnerable to malnutrition and opportunistic infections such as pneumonia. Schools are the nodes for disease transmission and unsafe schools pose risks for the health and development of adolescents and children. Absence of adequate WASH facilities in schools hampers the learning capabilities of children and often leads to increased dropout, especially among vulnerable groups like children with special needs and adolescent girls. In the absence of menstrual hygiene management, adolescent girls prefer to skip school leading to absenteeism. Unavailability of inclusive WASH facilities for children with special needs in schools may hinder the mobility of children to use the facility and practice the required hygiene at school. In worst cases, this might even increase the dropout rates. The need of universal WASH access is recognized in Sustainable Development Goals – 4A, 6.1, 6.2 which talks about inclusion of all in education and WASH facilities. Therefore, schools should ensure safety and also provide basic amenities and facilities which not only groom the intellectual capabilities but also result in the overall development. Availability of MHM facilities in KGBVs and upper primary and high schools, act as a catalyst for girls to attain their higher education. Gender-appropriate and inclusive WASH facilities, that caters to the need of younger children, adolescent girls and children with special needs (CWSN) ensure the maximum attendance and retention of students in schools.

Scope and Purpose of the Study

The study on WASH scenario in schools of 4 states will present an overview of the current situation while identifying the gaps that were addressed through the various programmes started by the state government. It will help to identify the loopholes in the current implementation strategy and pose various possible ways to address the gaps while learning from the previous experiences. It will contribute in understanding the changing trends and patterns while formulating various policies and programmes for WASH in schools. Learning from another states offers the opportunity to explore more innovative ways that can be feasible to be implemented at grassroot level depending on various social and administrative situations.

The state of Odisha and Jharkhand identified the need to benchmark WASH facilities in schools of the state while Bihar is in process to replicate the benchmarking model in its state. State of Chhattisgarh created a pool of resources for trainings on WASH, like State Resource Groups and District Resource Groups, who will further train other stakeholders associated with WASH in school at various levels.

The main purpose behind the WASH in School (WinS) intervention programme of Jharkhand in 7 districts is to ensure a better learning atmosphere to children in schools while providing them adequate WASH facilities and hence contributing in their overall growth of children. GoJ has planned to bring 10,000 schools to atleast 3-starcategory by 2021. In 2019, 3000 schools were planned to be covered to achieve the target. The partnership of LEADS[2] with UNICEF will support 7 districts of Jharkhand to create enabling environment for WASH in 2340 Schools, as well in 700 Aganwadi Centres (AWCs) in project districts.

LEADS supports UNICEF in implementation of WASH in schools, WASH in AWCs and MHM programme in 7 districts. This partnership of LEADS intends to improve the star rating from 1 & 2 star to atleast 3 star and above in 2340 schools from 7 districts (Hazaribagh, Simdega, Latehar,Khunti, East Singhbhum, Gumla&SaraikelaKharsawan). Project will also support all KGBVs and 1000 schools to create awareness on MHM.

Methodology

The report has been prepared as a result of review of various national and international programmes undertaken to work on the cause while also analyzing the various programmes and guidelines initiated by four states to meet the set targets. Field research and interventions in view of practice and sustainability of WASH services and Social Behavior Change and Communication SBCC models in schools of 7 districts of Jharkhand has been done. Study of the documents of Jharkhand and other states was done in order to understand the strategic models and analyze the gaps in various schemes and programs ongoing for WASH in schools.

The targeted 2340 schools from 7 districts for WASH in school intervention are selected on the basis of their ranking in Mukhyamantri Swachh Vidhyalay Puraskar (MSVP) 2019 results. The schools which attained 1 and 2-star in the MSVP survey have been identified from the government's SVSB portal. Based on MSVP baseline survey 2019, the gaps related to WASH facilities in these schools are identified and will be worked on throughout the year by district teams. Furthermore, an online google form to collect Swachhta Action from all the government schools of these 7 districts has been shared through digital sources amid COVID-19 lockdown situation. The online Swachhta Action Plan is a step to identify the lagging WASH

[2] *Life Education and Development Support (LEADS) is a trust established by a committed group of professionals on 14 December 2005 for the development and empowerment of poor and unorganized people of rural area and urban slums in Jharkhand.*

facilities by schools and an estimate over the fund requirement to complete these facilities. This in result will give an overall budget to the district for improving the required facilities in schools so that various sources like 15thFinance Commission, Corporate Social Responsibility CSR, can be explored as per the need.

WASH in School

Implementation of WASH in school

The performance of schools in aspects of WASH standards has been improved due to implementation of some state-specific initiatives like capacity building of Nodal teachers; promotion of pad bank, soap bank, celebration of Swachhta Diwas and MHM day while also conducting Swachhta Matdaan in schools. All these initiatives are implemented at grass-root level through CSOs and UN agencies like UNICEF which are partnering with NGOs to support the cause at district levels. LEADS is also one of the partner organisation supporting government in bringing maximum number of schools in three, four and five star category under Mukhyamantri Swachh Vidhyalaya Puraskar (MSVP).

The MSVP awards are given in two categories - rural and urban where more schools are taken from rural category. Under these two categories also, there are categories of class I-V, I-VIII, VI-VIII, I-X, I-XII, VI-X, VI-XII, IX-XII, Special Category School, Residential School and Private School. The award money for the wining schools of **I TO V is 50,000/-** in rural areas and **1,00,000/-** in urban areas, for **I TO VIII & VI TO VIII is 75,000/-** for rural and **1,50,000/- for urban. In I – X, I-XII, VI -VII & IX-XII prize money is 1,00,000/- in rural and 2,00,000/- in urban;** for **special categories** it is 2,00,000/-, for residential schools is 2,00,000/- and for private schools is 2,00,000/-.

The total of **119 schools** have been selected under **nine different categories** to receive the state level awards under MSVP 2019-2020. Amid COVID-19 emergency situation, the best performing nine schools from each category were awarded **byHon. Chief Minister** at state-level. The third-party assessment and evaluation of the identified schools was conducted by UNICEF through BIT Mesra, Ranchi. The screening of these schools was done in front of the State level committee and the final list of the 119 schools was generated. Out of the 119 schools, maximum number of schools selected are from East Singbhum district for the awards.

Extent of Implementation of SDG 6 in alignment with Target 6.2

The inclusion of WASH in schools in the Sustainable Development Goals (targets 4.a, 6.1, 6.2) represents increasing recognition of their importance as key components of a safe, inclusive and effective learning environment and as part of universal WASH access, emphasizing the need for WASH outside of the home. After achieving ODF status under SBM–G, Drinking Water and Sanitation Department (DWSD), Government of Jharkhand with a shift in focus on

maintaining the ODF status is now implementing ODF+ activities where MHM is one of the critical components envisaged by the Department. To take forward the initiative, Government of Jharkhand developed ODF sustainability action plan, where MHM has been taken as a key agenda for ODF+ plan. The key strategy mentioned in ODF sustainability plan is raising awareness and capacity building on importance of safe MHM among key stakeholders and adolescents. Jharkhand has formulated its State MHM Action Plan (2018-2022) identifying the needs of adolescent girls and women in the state. The WASH in school package has defined all the essential elements of WASH, categorized component wise including MHM. Inclusion of MHM in Clean schools program has implied for the availability of separate toilet facility for girls to manage their periods in privacy, ensure availability of sanitary napkins and incinerators for its safe disposal in schools. Improved WASH facility in school has led to reduced drop-out of girls and also led to several innovations like initiation of 'pad banks' & 'soap banks' to maintain the stock of soaps and sanitary napkin.

Various activities to promote social behaviour change and communication practices at schools has been initiated by the state to promote a continuous practices for inculcating good habits like celebration Global Handwashing Day through campaigns like Swachhta se Poshan Saptah (Nutrition through Hygiene Week) to promote Handwashing habits among children; Chuppi Todo Swasth Raho Abhiyan to break the silence and disseminate right information associated with menstrual hygiene management among girls; Celebration of SwachhtaDiwas on 19th of every month to regularise WASH related activities in schools and many more.

State-wise target reflection of the most marginalised communities

Jharkhand:

Government of Jharkhand has launched Mukhyamantri Swachh Vidhyalaya Puraskar to award the excellence of schools for their better performance in WASH standards. A total of 10,000 schools are aimed to be brought in five-star category in 3 years by the GoJ. To address the menstrual health and hygiene needs of adolescent girls and those from marginalised sections, state has launched *Chuppi Todo Swasth Raho Abhiyan* which is a month-long campaign from 28th May to 27th June to conduct various activities for dissemination of right knowledge and practices associated with menstrual hygiene and ensuring availability of adequate facilities at school and public places for MHM needs.

Sub-Section 6.3.2 – Bihar:

The state of Bihar is abiding by the national guidelines to maintain the status of WASH facilities in schools and is in the process of launching its own Clean Schools Award following the national Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar by developing some state indicators to assess the performance. Few districts of Bihar have been selected on pilot basis to prepare Swachhta Action Plan of schools and further it will be adopted state-wide. Currently, IPC guidelines for WASH in schools in the state have been formulated and the orientation on this are given by the Cluster Resource Centre Coordinator who works as a master trainer to build capacities of head masters who further train the other stakeholders for WASH programme in schools.

Odisha:

The state of Odisha has been taking concerted efforts to improve the status of WASH standards in school. However the statistics shows that the state has been lagging behind in providing inclusive WASH facilities to promote equity based services to all children. The report of NITI Aayog's School Education Quality Index (SEQI) poses questions on the state government's stand on 'equity in education' as the report mentions that not a single school in the State has provided aids and appliances to Children with Special Needs (CWSN). The study findings from the 960 schools of the state also reveal that 238 schools out of 960 which accounts to around 25 per cent have no ramps for the special children. Also, more than 70 per cent of schools do not have toilet facility for children with special needs.

To overcome the existing challenges in the state, Odisha Swachh Vidhyalaya Puraskar (OSVP)has been instituted by Government of Odisha to award state govt. schools for improving WASH facilities and practices in their schools. All the state government schools have been targeted under this programme.

Chhattisgarh

Chhattisgarh is putting efforts to improve the WASH status of schools through capacity building of various stakeholders associated with development of WASH facilities like teachers and child cabinets. The state has developed its own training modules to strengthen the capacity of the stakeholders to maintain and sustain the WASH practices in schools for longer run. State has put efforts for dedicated funds and action from Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) to provide schools with safe drinking water in areas affected by poor water quality, and to undertake regular water quality testing and remediation in areas with poor water quality. In Chhattisgarh, UNICEF supported the development of draft guidelines for the school composite fund utilization for school WASH and O&M of WASH facilities, which will support schools for the preparation, funding and implementation of Swachhta Action Plans (SAPs). UNICEF also supported the development of a workbook/ guide to prepare SAPs which was used in almost 1,500 one- and two-star schools.

Recommendation

There are few activities that can be undertaken at state, district as well as at school level.

1. Monitoring actions to be initiated at school level by building capacities of existing stakeholders like nodal teachers, child cabinets, School Management Committee (SMC) members.
2. Assigning roles and responsibilities to stakeholders after orientation on following WASH standards in their respective schools.
3. Convergent efforts should be taken among departments to ensure various facilities like water facilities from PHED, Handwashing and incinerator facility from Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) dept., sanitary napkin supply from health dept. etc.
4. Strengthening capacities of school stakeholders like Nodal teachers, SMC members, MDM cook etc on improved performance in WinS indicators.
5. Formation of adolescent groups at school and community level for encouraging discussion on MHM and other WASH practices.
6. Strengthening the capacities of child cabinets to involve them more in conducting various WinS related activities like celebration of SwachhtaDiwas, cleanliness drive, soap banks, pad banks, peer groups for MHM discussion and other innovations.
7. Identifying local solutions to address the issues associated with operation and maintenance of developed WASH facilities in schools. For instance, assigning sanitation worker/sweeper by SMC for daily cleaning of toilets and waste collection and paying them from school development fund.
8. Replication and peer learning from other states to adopt good practices like utilization of 15th FC fund for WASH facility improvement in schools, construction of low cost cemented incinerators, soap banks and pad banks for stock availability of hygiene material.
9. WinS monitoring data and programme information should be displayed on online dashboards forproper documentation and to create repository of the activities conducted.