

## A package for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Education for Schools The Oxford Roundtable Statement

Every girl and boy has the right—and responsibility—to drink safe water, use clean toilets and practice personal hygiene, including washing hands with soap. School sanitation and hygiene education (SSHE) supports the children and adolescents of today to develop healthy behaviours that will be sustained when they grow up to be the adults of the next generation. SSHE improves learning and increases school attendance, particularly of girls. SSHE also reaches out to promote household sanitation and hygiene practices. SSHE is a critical element in the international effort to achieve the MDGs by 2015, especially for MDG 2 on universal primary education, MDG on gender equality in education, and MDG 7 on environmental sustainability.

Scaling up SSHE, while retaining quality, is the focus for the crucial 10 years till 2015. Many countries have developed relatively small-scale SSHE initiatives. Some countries are making remarkable efforts to take these pilot SSHE projects to a larger scale. The challenge is to meet the institutional and

capacity requirements for scaling up SSHE with quality, country by country and community by community. Quality means that the SSHE programme is effective and produces sustained improvements, on a large scale. Without quality, the SSHE programme would slide into failure as facilities fall into disrepair, or are no longer used.

*Voices of Youth: The “minimum package” should include...*

- ◆ *child participation from the beginning, design stages;*
- ◆ *strong advocacy budget, public recognition, and leadership opportunities;*
- ◆ *involvement of young people in monitoring processes;*
- ◆ *water, sanitation and hygiene education for schools is not a technical issue – it is part of the social world of students’ lives at school and needs to be recognised for linkages to child protection and child rights.*

### Elements of the SSHE package

SSHE seeks to help all children and teachers to practice hygienic behaviours in school and at home and to take their knowledge to homes and communities. Five key components of SSHE are:

- ◆ The provision of safe drinking water and adequate water for hygiene throughout the year, using low-cost, community-owned solutions, including rooftop rainwater harvesting where appropriate.
- ◆ Sanitary facilities that are regularly used and maintained. This implies that technologies will be child/adolescent/teacher-friendly, gender-differentiated (separate for girls and boys), culturally and environmentally appropriate and sustainable.
- ◆ Handwashing with soap before eating, after using the toilet and before preparing or serving food.
- ◆ Hygiene education, based on a life skills approach, with outreach to homes and communities.
- ◆ An enabling policy environment and adequate institutional arrangements.

### *Other important elements of SSHE are:*

- ◆ Deworming of children as a component of the school health programme.
- ◆ Food hygiene, especially where schools provide meals or snacks.
- ◆ Health check-ups, with follow-up for those children that need it.
- ◆ Facilities and counseling for menstrual management.
- ◆ Waste water and solid waste disposal management.
- ◆ Water quality monitoring.

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### Main strategies for scaling up a package for SSHE Participation

At the **school and community** level, schoolchildren and young people will inform and participate in decisions and actions pertaining to water, sanitation and hygiene behavioural change. Specific elements of participation by children and young people include: (1) participation in school sanitation improvement planning, including learning about and deciding on designs; (2) involvement in children's hygiene/health clubs, with support/rewards/incentives to achieve tangible results; (3) (where the school cannot afford to pay for toilet cleaning) helping to keep toilets and urinals clean; (4) monitoring the quality of construction, use and cleanliness of facilities; (5) reaching out to homes and community with hygiene practices. SSHE also involves teachers, parents, school committees, governmental and non-governmental, community-based organisations. At **provincial, district and sub-district** levels, inter-sectoral SSHE teams involve staff of education, water, health, municipal and local government departments. At **national** level, SSHE programmes need financial, policy and regulatory support from inter-sectoral leaders and donors.



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### Effective management

Strong commitment is needed to establish effective management at sub-national levels, which are responsible for training, management, monitoring, and, ultimately, the success of scaling up SSHE. Priorities include: (1) one lead agency in government to coordinate inputs from all other sources; (2) separate budget lines and adequate allocations for SSHE in government budgets; (3) agreed roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders; (4) investment in capacity development and quality educational materials; (5) a common and accurate database for SSHE planning and monitoring, with indicators agreed and used by all stakeholders in regular monitoring; (6) a team approach where appropriate

departments and groups collaborate and optimise the number and quality of contacts with the school; (7) establishing locally-approved norms for boys and girls in different age groups.

### Education and capacity development

The education components of quality SSHE include: (1) use of life skills approach for hygiene education which results in sustained improvements in hygiene practices; (2) learning/teaching and training materials that are culturally appropriate, gender-responsive and relevant; (3) training/orientation with refreshers for school management groups; (4) teacher training, including hygiene education and the involvement of children in the maintenance of toilets and urinals; (4) integration of SSHE into the school curriculum and/or examination syllabus; (5) outreach to homes in culturally relevant ways to motivate household sanitation/hygiene.

### Technology, design, use and maintenance

Water supplies, toilets, urinals and washing facilities in school need to be appropriate to girls and boy children of different ages. Separate toilets and urinals are needed for girls and female teachers, and boys and male teachers, in adequate numbers (especially for girls). Designs should take account of the special needs of girls, related to protection, privacy and suitability for menstrual management, as well as the needs of children with disabilities. Design and technology should also allow for environmental sustainability, easy use and simple cleaning.

The School Management Committee (or equivalent) is responsible operationalising an effective system for the operation and maintenance of the water and sanitation facilities. Where a school cannot afford to pay for toilet upkeep, the daily cleaning of the toilets and urinals will be done by the teachers, boys and girls. Each school should arrange a budget for recurrent expenditures for soap, sanitary and cleaning materials according to the local context.