

## *A partnership approach in improving school sanitation and hygiene in Kenya*

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### **Summary**

A partnership of 7 organisations in Kenya has completed a successful 9-month pilot project to enhance the state of sanitation and hygiene for Kenya's schoolchildren through improved access and use of information. The pilot has demonstrated that partnership is a practical approach to resource mobilisation and project implementation. Under the auspices of the Resource Centre Development (RCD) initiative of the IRC Water and Sanitation International Centre (Netherlands), the 7 core partners rallied around a common theme of School Sanitation and Hygiene Education (SSHE). This paper discusses some of the partnership dynamics observed during the piloting process as well as the pilot project itself.

### **Introduction**

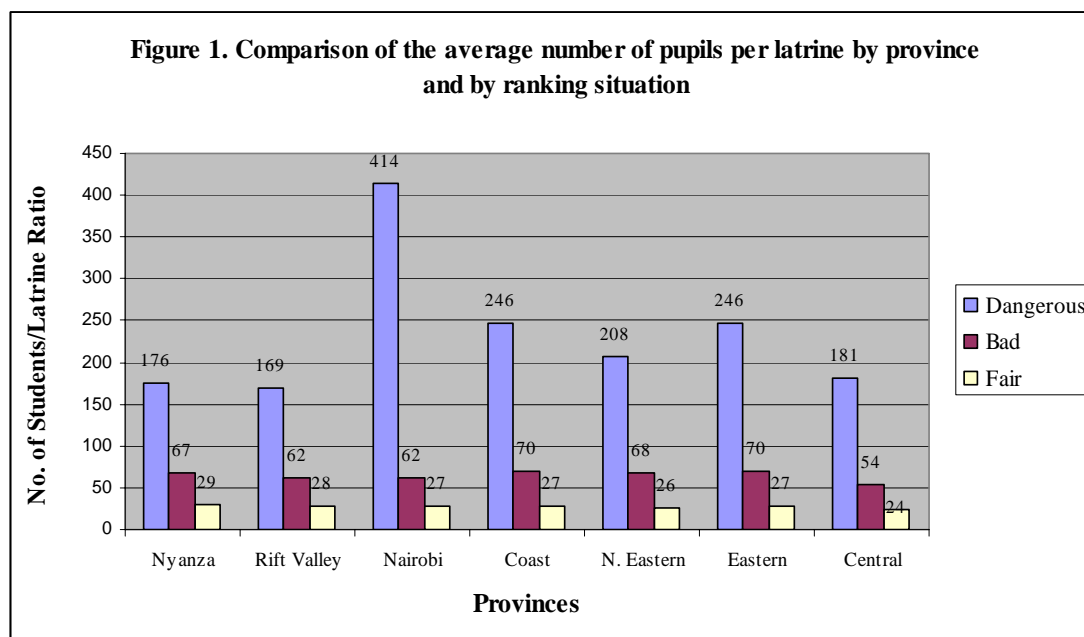
#### **The Pilot theme: School Sanitation and Hygiene (SSH) in Kenya**

In the recent past, government ministries and various organizations have carried out surveys to determine the school sanitation and hygiene situation in Kenya. The surveys, conducted at various times by Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MOEST), Ministry of Water and Irrigation, Ministry of Health, UNICEF and NETWAS International among others, all revealed the following alarming facts:

- Latrine coverage is grossly inadequate with an average 75 pupils/toilet - recommended government ratios are 25 girls/toilet and 30 boys/toilet
- Most latrines are unsanitary and poorly maintained
- There are hardly any hand-washing facilities in place
- The burden to provide water at school frequently falls on pupils. They often travel long distances to fetch water sometimes resulting in stress which affects attendance and performance
- There is a low hygiene awareness among pupils; few can adequately make the link between faeces and disease transmission
- Hygiene as a subject is lumped together with other activities deemed low-priority

In January 2003, the government implemented a Free Primary Education (FPE) policy. This saw an estimated 1.3 million children, who were previously out of school, enrolled, raising the national primary school population from 5.9 million to 7.2 million. Provision of water and sanitation was not a component of government grants in the free primary education support.

Subsequently, there has not been a corresponding expansion of physical facilities, further compounding the existing problem of inadequate sanitation facilities in schools. Figure 1 shows that the situation in the majority of schools is categorised as "Dangerous". Nairobi is the hardest hit with an average of 414 pupils/latrine in the worst schools.



Source: Ministry of Water and Irrigation survey, August 2003

Attempts to tackle the challenges identified in school sanitation and hygiene have been greatly hampered by poor information flow and use. Knowledge and information sharing has been poor, uncoordinated and often inexistent. In addition, stakeholders have decried the absence of a co-ordinated national focus of resources to address the problem of water, sanitation and hygiene at school level.

#### Box 1: Rationale for SSH as pilot content theme

There were several underlying reasons for the choice of thematic area:

- Implementation of a Free Primary Education (FPE) Policy in 2003. This raised the school population from 5.9 to 7.2 million, with no corresponding expansion of sanitation facilities
- As a result, SSH has received more attention from government and donors
- In response to the SSH challenges, UNICEF – Kenya Country Office and the Government of Kenya organised a high level workshop that recognised the importance of information sharing
- NETWAS has been actively involved in School Sanitation and Hygiene Education over a long period, including pioneering work in the PHAST (Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation for Transformation) methodology
- NETWAS had identified the role of “information broker” as a niche for itself in this sub-sector

## Resource Centre Development Project

The Resource Centre Development (RCD) project is an initiative of IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre, based in the Netherlands. Its main objective is to improve the sharing and use of information in the Water and Environmental Sanitation (WES) sector. The project seeks to build the capacity of IRC partner Resource Centres in the South to enable them to play a leading role in improving water supply and sanitation for the un-served. Twenty countries are currently involved in the RCD project. These include Kenya, South Africa, Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Colombia, the Philippines, Nepal and Bangladesh, among others.

In Kenya the initiative has been promoted by a Core Group comprising of 7 organisations: Network for Water and Sanitation (NETWAS) International (current secretariat), UNICEF Kenya Country Office (UNICEF-KCO), Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MOEST), Ministry of Water and Irrigation (MoWI), Ministry of Health (MoH), Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG) – Eastern Africa and Maji na Ufanisi (Water and Development).

## Improving Information Sharing

With about 20 organisations actively involved in school sanitation and hygiene programmes, there exists a broad knowledge base on the subject in Kenya. However, in practice, there has been little information sharing in the country, between sector professionals on one level, and with schools (teachers and pupils) on another level.

During a school sanitation and hygiene workshop organised by UNICEF – KCO and the Government of Kenya in 2003, stakeholders acknowledged the need for coordinated information sharing, as a vehicle towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In the second phase of the RCD project, NETWAS saw an opportunity to develop a pilot based on its experience as an “information broker” and its expertise in school sanitation and hygiene education. The pilot would seek to demonstrate that improved access to information on school sanitation and hygiene would greatly enhance benefits to all stakeholders.

## Pilot Process

### Development of the concept

Once the thematic area was chosen and a pilot activity identified, the pilot objectives, activities and methodology were drawn up. Activities were intended to be practical and to generate substantial results and outputs in a short space of time, namely the initial 6 month pilot period. The overall goal of the pilot would be to demonstrate that implementing an information and communication strategy benefits all stakeholders involved.

#### **Box 2: Pilot objectives**

- To improve awareness on the importance of good hygiene practices at school and promotion of solutions
- To improve access by teachers and school administrators to available information (vertical information flow)
- To improve information sharing between professional organizations and professionals (horizontal information flows)
- To formulate recommendations on scaling-up the information strategy for the WATSAN sector

The pilot was to be undertaken as a joint, collaborative effort. A partnership approach was envisaged as the best way forward, to secure sector-wide ownership of the concepts of information sharing, seen as crucial for success of the pilot.

Seven organisations would constitute a Core Group to steer the pilot. A wider Interest Group would be identified once the Core Group was constituted. The Interest Group would be composed of organisations with an interest in School Sanitation and Hygiene Education (SSHE) but not directly involved in SSHE programmes. The assumption was that the Interest Group could be called upon to support future SSHE activities, especially during scaling up. The Interest Group would be kept informed of the pilot’s activities, and participate in the final dissemination workshop.

The pilot would develop as a “process” rather than a project, allowing for joint formulation of a strategy of implementation acceptable to all and not just some members. The “process” methodology would also allow for flexibility of the strategy during implementation. A short concept note outlining the pilot and a PowerPoint overview of the pilot and methodology were the final outputs of concept development.

## **Identification of potential partners**

Selection of potential partners for the pilot was made possible through:

- NETWAS interaction with WESCOORD members (networking) during meetings
- NETWAS database on SSHE actors
- Access to UNICEF database on SSHE actors

Criteria for selection of potential partners required that organisations have active SSHE programmes and be nationally recognised as key players in SSHE, for credibility and acceptance. They also had to be committed to information sharing and be willing to dedicate some time and resources to the pilot.

## **Interest building among potential stakeholders**

Interest building was carried out in a number of ways: through physical visits to key officials of identified organisations; dissemination of the concept note to Water and Environmental Sanitation (WES) stakeholders; visual presentation of the proposed pilot overview at key meetings of the Water and Environmental Sanitation Coordination (WESCOORD) group, a body of national water and environmental sanitation players. The aim of this exercise was to present the RCD pilot project for the purpose of creating awareness and stimulating interest and commitment to join/support the core group or the wider interest circle.

## **Formation of Core Group and selection of Interest Group**

Formation of the Core Group was crucial to the success of the pilot. The Core Group had to be small enough to ensure pilot implementation was relatively fast and smooth. The consistent number had to be big enough to ensure adequate representation of key sector stakeholders. A total of 7 organisations, including NETWAS, to spearhead the process were agreed on.

The role of government in ensuring success of the pilot was essential, hence the decision to incorporate 3 key Ministries in the Core Group. Commitment to join the Core Group was secured by targeting senior/top-level officers during the interest building exercise. These were officers with authority to make decisions on behalf of their organisations.

As mentioned earlier, the member organisations had to be actively involved in SSHE and be nationally recognised as key players in SSHE, for credibility and acceptance. It was also pertinent that the Core Group be composed of organisations that would bring a blend of skills and expertise to the pilot. Every organisation would have its unique expertise in SSHE increasing chances of the pilot's success.

The seven organisations that formed the Core Group are UNICEF – Kenya Country Office, Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MOEST) Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Water and Irrigation (MoWI), Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG) – Eastern Africa and Maji na Ufanisi.

The Interest Group was identified jointly by the Core Group during the first planning workshop held to develop the pilot Log Frame of activities. The Interest Group comprised of actors drawn from the public and private sectors.

## **Building ownership and commitment**

The seven Core Group members attended an initial planning workshop to discuss the pilot, define the partnership and map the way forward. During the workshop the initial pilot document was reviewed and amendments made to incorporate interests of all members. The workshop also served as an informal launch of the pilot and the partnership. The group also developed a Log Frame of activities to guide implementation of the pilot. This initial workshop was crucial in laying the foundation for a “coalition of the willing”, a term coined by group members to signify commitment to the pilot in the absence of a formal memorandum of understanding.

Regular meetings and workshops, telephone and email dialogue, focus group discussions, all formed the basis for trust building and commitment to the pilot. In addition, all members had a common agenda, SSHE. They saw the pilot as an opportunity to advance their agenda, which further cemented the partnership.

As a result of the trust among members, there was regular and open information sharing, especially with regard to information that would normally have been accessible only within respective organisations. The regular meetings and dialogue ensured a regular flow of information which in turn increased trust among members.

## Pilot Activities

The Core Group developed several activities for the realisation of pilot objectives. The guiding factor for selection of activities was they had to be achievable and practical. The group jointly developed the strategy for implementation of activities. Initially, a draft project document on the pilot was prepared by NETWAS, for the purpose of informing members and providing a primary road map. During the first planning workshop, the document was modified by members and a Log Frame of activities developed. Members divided responsibilities and roles among themselves. This proved crucial for the smooth implementation of the pilot and facilitated accountability.

From the onset of the pilot, there was room for adapting the implementation strategy – it was not set in stone – a factor that allowed for “learning by doing”. To cite an example, the expansion of the pilot area from the original Nairobi district, as initially proposed by NETWAS, to include Machakos and Kajiado districts. Members felt restricting the pilot activities to Nairobi would not be adequately representative of the national SSH situation.

## Summary of activities and outputs

A summary of the activities undertaken and completed are listed as follows:

**Needs assessments:** field visits to schools to determine SSH situation and identify practical information needs

**Desk studies:** Short desk study of existing information on school sanitation and hygiene, including policies, bye-laws and guidelines on SSHE.

**Workshops and meetings:** with core group members, to review pilot progress and ensure regular information sharing among members.

Development of communication materials: video, briefing notes, newspaper articles

**Dissemination workshop:** to share pilot findings with policy makers and the Interest Group, as well as launch a video highlighting the school sanitation situation in Kenya’s public schools.

**Evaluation workshop:** to evaluate the pilot, draw-up recommendations for scaling up and plan for continued collaboration beyond the pilot period.

### Box 3: Pilot Outputs

- I. **Video:** an advocacy documentary depicting the situation in Kenya public primary schools. The audience during its launch included the headteachers of the schools where the video was shot. Each school that participated in the video production will be given a copy free of charge
- II. **Briefing Notes:** three in number targeting policy makers and teachers respectively
- III. **Newspaper article:** for publication in the local daily and meant to inform and raise awareness. The article targeted policy makers and the national population at large
- IV. **Bulletin articles:** for publication in organisational newsletters. These were for the purpose of informing sector professionals about the pilot and its progress

The pilot products have served to raise general awareness on the school sanitation and hygiene situation, not only among policy makers but also among sector professionals and teachers. The products, especially the video, communicate the gravity of the situation. Many stakeholders are aware that the sanitation and hygiene situation in schools requires improvement. However, many have been

ignorant of the magnitude of the challenges experienced by public primary schools. The products present a concise overview of the situation, as they merge previously fragmented and isolated information from various sector actors.

The pilot products, launched at the RCD Dissemination Workshop, have been instrumental in focusing government and donor attention on sanitation and hygiene. Two months after the Dissemination Workshop, MOEST has launched a 1.2 billion project to improve learning in schools. The funds will be used to provide water and improved sanitation in selected primary and secondary schools. In another development, donors have stated their willingness to support government water and sanitation projects, lauding the Ministry of Health's communication and co-ordination of events. The two developments were captured in separate articles in a major local newspaper.

The Dissemination Workshop resulted in Ministry of Health recognition and support of the Core Group's activities. Plans to formally endorse the group as the national School Sanitation and Hygiene Technical Group (SSHTG) are already at an advanced stage. This will enable the group to develop and implement a national SSHE co-ordination strategy, a mandate given by the Ministry of Health during the Dissemination Workshop.

Development and sharing of pilot products has provided important lessons for the Core Group:

- The group has gained experience in the dynamics and challenges of information sharing and communication
- Joint ownership of products guarantees greater credibility and acceptance
- The group has gained experience in information products development, packaging and dissemination
- The pilot facilitated better understanding of which information products are the most appropriate for different stakeholders/target groups

The scaling-up phase will lean heavily on the experiences of the pilot. A key activity of the phase is the development of Terms of Reference for the SSHTG. This will be followed by a workshop organised by the Ministry of Health to formally present the group to key sector stakeholders. Other main activities will include development of advocacy materials and information packages for district level policy makers and the launch of a national sanitation week, in collaboration with the WASH movement in Kenya, to name a few.

## **Resource Mobilisation**

Certain conditions had to be in place for effective resource mobilisation. Ownership of the pilot and commitment to the process were the most essential. The foundation for this was laid down during the inception phase. As explained earlier this was done through participatory development and implementation of the pilot strategy. All members agreed from the start that collaboration and joint ownership of the process was crucial for pilot success. The pilot's content theme was another important factor. This was a common unifying factor. Consequently, members saw the pilot as beneficial to their organisations' activities, as a platform to advance their agenda. Regular and open Information sharing among members was another key stone. These were the main underlying conditions.

Other more tangible prerequisites included the development of a comprehensive Log Frame of activities to meet the objectives. These activities were workable and pragmatic which made it easier to obtain resources, especially finances.

### **Overview of pilot resources**

#### ***Human Resource***

Human resource was the most important of all resources for success of the pilot. There was a lot of time input from members throughout the process. Only on rare occasions was a member absent during

meetings, workshops and other implementation activities Apart from time input members were highly skilled and brought valuable experience to the process.

Government ministries also provided additional skilled personnel to assist the pilot in specialised activities, like video production and editing, at no extra cost.

### **Finances**

Seed funding from IRC in the Netherlands made it possible to initiate the pilot. IRC support was made possible through NETWAS, a long-time partner of IRC. Additional funds were given by UNICEF – Kenya Country Office towards video production. In both cases, request for funding was supported by elaborate proposals. In the case of UNICEF, the proposal was prepared on the basis of cost-sharing among members with an overview of members' contributions. Although only UNICEF gave cash towards the pilot, members' contributions in kind were just as crucial.

### **Transport**

All members provided own transport, especially for meetings and workshops held in Nairobi. However the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education Science and Technology provided additional transport, especially for field visits, which the seed funding and members' contribution could not cover.

### **Equipment**

All filming equipment used for video production was donated by members. The Ministry of Water and Irrigation and the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MOEST) provided cameras, in addition to personnel, for the activity. Editing services were provided by the Ministry of Information and Communications courtesy of MOEST.

### **Information/data/statistics**

Information provided by members, also contributed to pilot success. UNICEF availed pertinent data and statistics such as number of existing primary schools in Kenya, number of present toilets, number of toilets for construction in order to meet MDG targets and more. Government ministries provided useful information on policy but also practical information on government protocol for administrative purposes. They also provided valuable data on government research and surveys on school sanitation and hygiene. ITDG, experts in low-cost innovative technology, prepared a briefing note on technology targeting teachers. Sound advice from members also ensured proposals for funding were addressed to the right persons within their organisations.

## **Challenges**

A major challenge to the project was achieving the balance between the global RCD initiative objective of information sharing, and members' SSHE agenda. UNICEF and Ministry of Health saw the pilot as a SSHE project with information sharing only as a sub-set of the global SSHE agenda. On the other hand the RCD project's emphasis is on improved information sharing. One of the reasons for this challenge could have been poor communication or a lack of clear understanding of the pilot's objective, especially under the auspices of the global RCD project. However much dialogue and compromise has ensured an agreement comfortable to all has been reached. For continued collaboration, the Core Group agreed to maintain SSHE as the group's main focus, with information sharing a component.

## **Lessons Learned**

The pilot period has constituted a time of learning by doing and sharing experiences. Some of these lessons are captured below.

- i. Formalisation of partnerships is not always a prerequisite for commitment:** commitment to the process by Core Group members was exemplary despite the absence of a formal

memorandum of understanding. Members diligently contributed their resources during pilot implementation.

- ii. **However, ownership of the project ensures commitment:** as demonstrated in this case, all members jointly owned the pilot. This was achieved through participatory planning and dialogue among other things. One way of doing this was by simply appending names of all member organisations to products such as the video and briefing notes, for example, portraying joint ownership.
- iii. **Identification of an appropriate project theme:** a theme that generates and maintains the interest of potential partners, as well as the sector, is fundamental. This will keep crucial stakeholders actively involved and ensure avenues for long-term collaboration, further cementing partnerships. As a result of the SSHE theme, PLAN Kenya has expressed a keen interest to join the Core Group in future activities and have already expressed willingness to contribute funds towards a planning workshop on future roles and responsibilities of the Core Group.
- iv. **Active participation of government key to success of partnerships:** approval of line ministries and active involvement is fundamental to success of both partnerships and projects. Active participation and sustainability of activities can only be guaranteed through aligning project objectives and activities to existing government policies and programmes. In the case of the Core Group, the ongoing development of an Environmental Sanitation and Hygiene (ESH) policy by Ministry of Health and the focus on SSHE due to the education ministry's FPE policy provided a good niche for the pilot. The ESH policy has a chapter on SSHE and the ministry is seeking partners with which to develop a national strategy on SSHE. The Ministry of Education sees the video produced by the Core Group as an opportunity to solicit for increased funding from development partners and donors for SSHE.
- v. **Flexibility – learning by doing - the better approach:** the pilot was implemented as a “process” rather than a project with a fixed timeframe and set of activities. The pilot developed along the way and several changes were introduced during the pilot period. For instance, the idea to produce a video on the SSH situation in Kenyan schools was introduced during the second Core Group workshop. Video production was not part of the original pilot plan. Another example is the expansion of the pilot area, after joint consultations with members, to include two additional districts. Previously, the pilot was restricted to Nairobi only.
- vi. **Seed funding plays an important role:** without an initial fund to jump start the pilot, it would have been difficult to identify and congregate partners and implement activities. Seed funding was provided by IRC through its long-term partnership with NETWAS.
- vii. **Established network of partners:** these partners are crucial as they can provide much needed support not only in terms of funding (as demonstrated by the case of IRC) but also technical expertise.
- viii. **Respected and active secretariat vital for partnerships:** in the case of the RCD Core Group this was NETWAS, which is already recognised in the Kenyan sector as a key SSHE stakeholder. In addition, NETWAS has previously undertaken joint projects with UNICEF and the line government ministries and is recognised as a reputable organisation. This facilitated the drawing together of partners for the realisation of the pilot.
- ix. **Coalition of organisations with a history improves chances of successful partnerships:** successful partnership of the Core Group was largely based on the fact that all the organisations have had an active working relation with each other over a long period. This has resulted in mutual trust and respect, which went a long way to securing commitment to the pilot despite absence of a formal agreement.
- x. **Formation of a Core Group:** a Core Group of not more than 10 members should be in place to direct the partnership's activities. The Core Group should be relatively small as indicated to allow for easier implementation of activities. It is quite difficult to bring together various organisations with diverse objectives and ideas and get them to agree on anything relatively fast. It makes sense to pre-empt this by keeping the Core Group manageable.
- xi. **Partnerships – a “Coalition of the Willing”:** a term coined by the RCD Core Group during a workshop, to describe themselves!

## Way Forward and Conclusion

During a dissemination workshop to share pilot findings with a wider interest circle, the Ministry of Health challenged the group to develop a national strategy on SSHE. Following an evaluation workshop to review the successes and failures of the partnership and pilot, the Core Group discussed the way forward for the partnership, including joint development of a national SSHE strategy. WHO, a potential addition to the Core Group, was present at this meeting. A planning workshop to map future collaboration and develop the strategy is due to take place in June. Members are in the process of sourcing funds to facilitate the crucial workshop.

A milestone in the partnership has been the recognition of the Core Group as a key stakeholder in the development of the ESH policy spearheaded by the Ministry of Health. The Ministry and UNICEF have a paramount role in the policy's development. Consequently, they have both endorsed official recognition of the Core Group as the School Sanitation and Hygiene Technical Group, one of the working groups constituted under the Environmental Sanitation and Hygiene Working Group (ESHWG), the official steering body of the ESH policy formulation process. The ESHWG is chaired by the Ministry of Health. Its membership includes key development agencies<sup>30</sup> and line government ministries<sup>31</sup>.

The ESHWG is policy guidance and coordinating body. The technical groups are charged with preparing policy implementation strategies.

**Figure 2: Structure of the ESHWG and its technical groups.**



The Ministry of Health has proposed it will prepare a letter addressed to all stakeholders in the process to ratify the group and formally introduce the Core Group to other stakeholders during a launch workshop that will be organised by the ministry for that purpose.

The proposed planning workshop is set to discuss the group's future role and responsibilities in view of the same, and develop a framework for collaboration. The framework will include development of a national strategy for SSHE and supporting information and communication strategy, a mandate of the SSHTG.

Without the initial coalition of partners, these initiatives would not have been possible. Partnerships have the potential for greater and far-reaching impact than individual organisations.

<sup>30</sup> WSP – Africa, DFID, SIDA, DANIDA, UNICEF, WHO, UN Habitat, UNDP

<sup>31</sup> Ministry of Local Government, MoWI, MOEST, Office of the President, National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA)

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