

Learn at school, apply at home: Working with schools

Schools often provide models for desired behaviors that we hope children will bring back home. Maai Mahu division of Nakuru County, USAID's WASHplus Program is working with early childhood development centres to teach children about good sanitation and hygiene.



A teacher makes a presentation during a progress review meeting in Naivasha.

While implementing a community-led total sanitation effort in the, the WASHplus project found that young children in early childhood development (ECD) centres were openly defecating at school. This was discovered during an open defecation-free (ODF) verification process conducted by the sub-county public health officer's team following an ODF claim by villages.

Nine villages claimed ODF status at the time, and two did not qualify because verifiers found feces in the grass near the ECD center. When they explored this further, community health workers found that children used a latrine at home, but not at school. Why was this happening?

After conversations with community leaders and ECD teachers it became clear

that teachers were not aware of the importance of hygiene to prevent illness. Children were only allowed to visit the latrine during scheduled breaks. And with large classes, not all children had time to visit the latrine, so they were defecating in the open.

WASHplus noted these practices and intervened by working with the teachers to address the problem.

Quote

"She always washed her hands when she came from playing outside, before eating her food, and after visiting the toilet. This, to me, was the best thing to see my daughter learn."

— Beth, a mother talking about her daughter, aged four years.

Strategies

- Teachers from 23 schools trained, reaching over 800 pre-school pupils
- One-day WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) training for ECD teachers from 23 centres in Maai Mahiu Division – August 2013. The participants incorporated what they learned into the curriculum and their daily practice.

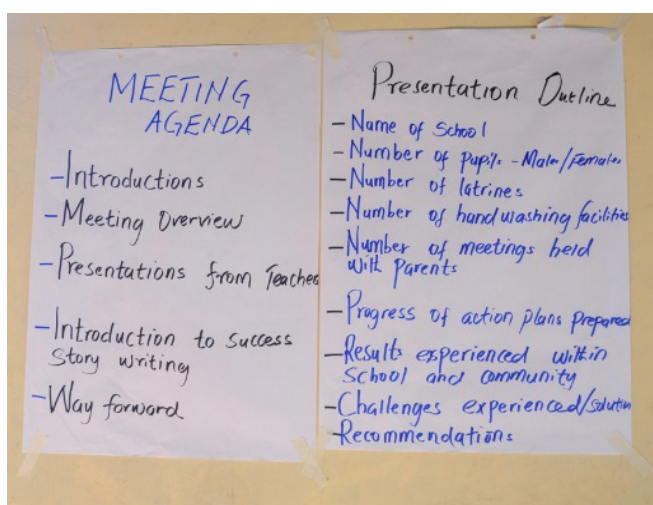
- Progress review meetings for ECD teachers - November 2013
- Involvement of primary schools in community-led total sanitation (CLTS) triggering sessions - August 2013
- Involvement of Ministry of Education (MOE) in the divisional CLTS committee meetings.



A child washes hands at one of the early childhood development centres in Maai Mahiu.

Results

- Pupils taking applying practices they learn in school at home
- Hand washing facilities installed and used in schools and households
- ECD pupils are no longer afraid to use the latrines, which have been modified and easier to access.
- Trained ECD centres treat drinking water to be used by pupils
- Parents and teachers have worked together to build more toilets in schools.



During quarterly review meetings, early childhood development (ECD) teachers present progress reports that include data to inform decision-making by the Ministry of Health.



Downloads: For more information visit: <http://www.washplus.org/kenya-ecdc2014>