

Programming areas and Principles for Governments to Operationalize the Call to Action for WASH in Schools

The three broad areas of WASH in schools programming are around a) management, b) hygiene promotion for behavior change, and c) water, sanitation and hygiene hardware.

- Management includes but is not limited to i) defining benchmarks to achieve national standards, ii) developing a recognition system to award schools for achieving benchmarks, iii) operation and maintenance of WinS facilities, and iv) planning, budgeting, and resource allocation for WinS at all governance levels.
- Hygiene promotion includes but is not limited to i) institutionalizing hygiene and cleaning routines in schools, ii) supported by approaches that build on hygiene knowledge, attitudes, and practices and iii) nudges and other innovations for promoting hygienic behaviors.
- Water, sanitation and hygiene hardware needs to be contextually defined, while being scalable, equitable (accessible to students of all abilities and in all geographies), simple and easy to maintain and sustain at a low-cost.

In order to operationalize the six points in the Call to Action for WinS, which is being revised in light of the SDGs, the following programming principles or ways of working (abbreviated as GRADE) should be considered by Ministries of Education for all three areas of WASH in schools.

1. Guide: Provide clear implementation guidance

When a national WinS policy or standards are in place, translating policy into action requires clear roles and responsibilities for each and every level of governance and links with other ministries/ departments so that implementation can be at scale and is sustainable. Clear and tailored guidance provides practical advice on how the policy has to be executed concretely:

- Roles and responsibilities for every level of governance should be clearly defined in government policies and implementing guidelines.
- Context-appropriate instructional materials that are easy to understand and simple to use, especially for the district and school levels, provide ideas for action and prevent the repetition of common mistakes.
- Monitoring tools serve as checklists and at the same time guide implementation. These are particularly useful to remind implementers of the key features of WinS beyond the initial orientation. Schools should be advised to use simple monitoring tools, which include WinS, even for a dry run, as this will guide the implementation.
- At school level, students should actively participate under the supervision of teachers

2. Reward: Recognize and reward WinS improvements

Making organizational adjustments to reward positive action according to the interests of respective stakeholders is needed to trigger action and sustain support for the program. Reaching national standards can feel daunting for some schools, so it is important for the departments of education to monitor and recognize their gradual efforts to move towards WinS improvements. This can help create and build momentum for schools to improve their WASH status.

- WinS is a commonly neglected issue and will only be managed if it is being monitored as part of a school's performance.

- Incentives that can lead to corruption and create dependence should be discouraged. Use performance recognition as a more sustainable reward than monetary or material incentives.
- Good-performing stakeholders make excellent role models and homegrown mentors. Taking on such roles can be a reward in itself.
- Achieving the stars or certain levels/ benchmarks starts a healthy competition between schools and triggers action as no school wants to be left out.

3. **Activate: To take one step at a time**

Taking the first step of the journey is oftentimes more daunting than taking the last. Motivational barriers prevent implementers from starting or sustaining their efforts. Implementers need evidence of their progress to sustain their morale through the journey. A stepwise approach to improvement helps to set manageable priorities and clearly show schools what to do next.

Encouraging schools to begin with small improvements that can be achieved using resources already available to the school, makes addressing WinS issues seem less daunting, particularly for resource-poor settings, be it in a rural, urban or other context.

4. **Demonstrate: Learn by doing (More practicing WinS - less teaching it)**

"I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand." The concept of learning-by-doing is as old as Confucius. The development of habits related to cleanliness and hygiene and their organizational counterparts – routines – can be better ensured by taking the step of action beyond didactics. Through routines, children develop healthy habits while school managers learn management and accountability.

- Emphasis should be placed on regularly practicing hygiene habits rather than health education, which is often times in the curriculum but not even practiced in schools.
- Supporting government partners to do orientation, trainings and monitoring by themselves builds experience and confidence to independently conduct activities essential for future scale up.
- Training materials using videos and pictures are more memorable and easier to relate with than plain text.
- Learning exchange activities are powerful instruments to spark ideas, motivation, innovation, and ownership.
- Implementing WinS is an exercise in school-based management and is therefore a tangible opportunity for school managers to practice and improve their management skills.
- Daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual routines both create demand and improve the supply of WinS

5. **Easy: Make WinS easy**

Considering the number of activities that schools have to carry out, utmost importance should be given to make WinS easy for schools to implement. Activities, which are simple and enjoyable supported by lean management processes and user-friendly facilities help to ensure that the program is implemented at scale and can be sustained. If interventions are too complex, they will not be sustained long-term without external support.

- Only activities which do not overburden personnel will be implemented long-term.
- Making activities simple and fun allows them to quickly become part of the school routine.

Guiding Principles for programs of development partners aiming to support governments to implement WinS

Development partners, which may include bilateral or multilateral agencies, international or local NGOs, community groups and the private sector, support governments in reaching their WinS objectives. In doing so, they must remember that the ownership must remain with the government, and that their support leads to in scalable and sustainable WinS. These three principles should guide the work of development partners on WinS.

1. WinS at scale planned from the start

Scalability should be integral to the design of WinS. Focus should be on modeling interventions that work within the boundaries of what is doable for a context and available within the government and partners' financial and manpower resources and within the absorptive capacity of the government structure. Given the certainty that external assistance has to end at some point, it is essential to limit the program to interventions that can be implemented, financed, and sustained by the government in hundreds and thousands of schools.

- Simplicity, and affordability is essential to implementing at large scale.
- Activities that can be easily implemented without the need for huge investments and that lie within the skills and mandates of the government workforce stand a better chance of being replicated.
- Making use of locally available resources not only makes procurement and logistics easier, but also simulates the long-term scenario.
- Only promote interventions which the government could and would fund independently

2. WinS ownership with government

Ownership is based on the clear understanding that WinS support has to target the government's goals. The government's WinS targets are reflected in its policies. By aligning with government policy and supporting their efforts to align programs of different partners, activities and resources can be more effectively coordinated and efficiently distributed.

- A crucial prerequisite for sustainability and scale is that the partner's program is recognized as a government program or integrated as part of one. Indeed, the government should be involved at all stages of a development partner's programming.
- All successes with the support of partners should be credited to the government.

3. Supporting WinS that is sustainable

As government processes take time, oftentimes development partners are tempted to take over roles, infuse resources, or create additional structures and processes. Providing temporary support may be effective as stopgap measures, but in the long run, these also create dependence – making it unlikely for change to last. Each government agency has its own unique strengths and challenges. Learning to understand, support and strengthen them will help

development partners mobilize existing resources and strengthen existing processes so that institutional change is sustained within the given context.

- A deep understanding of the government system is required, be it through a situational analysis or other means, to know how it can be properly nurtured and strengthened.
- The government system, its structures, processes, and workforce, offers opportunities for integrating activities such as use of existing meeting structures and trainings without the need to create additional ones.
- Working through the government system strengthens the system, and helps support sustainable development. Taking over the work of the government not only takes ownership away, but also prevents true development. A key part of development is the government improving service delivery and providing an enabling policy environment.

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