



School Washrooms: Meeting more than toileting needs

Questions

In 2007, SANA International, a subcontractor for the SWASH+ project, constructed “washrooms” in two intervention schools to meet the persistent requests of primary school girls at those schools. Although these washrooms deviated from the original research design and were built without knowledge of the partners, the project partners decided to assess whether it would be worthwhile to pursue washrooms as a potential innovation.

Research

Emory University created a questionnaire, and a researcher conducted the survey in Chemilil B1 Primary School (Nyando District) and Osuri Primary School (Rachuonyo District) in November 2008.

The questionnaire assessed the type of washrooms built, the manner in which they were being used, and the schools’ overall impressions of the existing washrooms.

Results

Chemilil B1 Primary School

Chemilil B1 Primary School’s two added washrooms were set apart from the latrines in the school. Although these washroom facilities were of poor quality (i.e. Untreated sewage, shallow drainage pits, and open drainage of latrine pits), upper primary girls used them for mainly bathing purposes aside from toileting. Washrooms were also used to comb hair and apply body oil. Approximately 100 upper primary girls use the washroom each day.

These washrooms appeared to be well received and used for more than toileting. The interviewee reported liking the washrooms because they help “maintain cleanliness and neatness” and provides “room for changing clothes.” The supervisor reported to Emory that when probed further, the girl described “changing clothes” as both meaning changing to a clean uniform for some girls and changing sanitary napkins for others. The interviewee also pointed out that some of the girls were saving time in the evenings by taking baths at school since walking to available water sources outside of the school is time consuming. The

washroom was in high demand; in the 30 minutes of observation, the supervisor reported seeing ten people use the washroom as well as a long line of girls waiting for their turn. Additionally, members from the community use these lockless washrooms over the weekend.

Osuri Primary School

The Osuri Primary School has one washroom built as part of a block of latrines intended for girls. It is in essence a small cement room the size of the latrines adjoined to it without a pit or any sort of visible drainage system. The inside of the washroom was observed to be “dirty.” The supervisor observed approximately one liter of standing urine in the toilet without any way for the urine to drain. In addition to having no drainage system, the health patron noted that they did not have sufficient soap available for bathing purposes, only handwashing. The supervisor observed a 5,000 liter tank as the school’s primary source of water, which does not provide sufficient water for a washroom year round.

Key Findings

The washrooms constructed in Chemilil B1 and Osuri vary in design and use. The washrooms in Chemilil B1 Primary School, although in need of better drainage, mosquito control, and locks, show that **washrooms may be a promising hygiene innovation** due to the observed high level of daily use and maintenance by the upper primary school girls. In addition, due to the easy accessibility of water at this school, washroom use can be sustained. In the case of Osuri Primary School, the original poor design of the washroom has made it unusable from the start. It is also flawed due to its inadequate water source.

Recommendations

- Review recommendations and existing washroom designs from other agencies (i.e. IRC, WEDC, etc.).
- Discuss potential ways to build and test additional washrooms in a select number of schools.
- Build and test washrooms in a select number of schools as a “hygiene innovation.”

From *School Washrooms: Should school washrooms be pursued as one of the SWASH+ innovations?* by the Center for Global Safe Water at Emory University (2008).

SWASH+ is a five-year applied research project to identify, develop, and test innovative approaches to school-based water, sanitation and hygiene in Nyanza Province, Kenya. The current and previous partners of the SWASH+ consortium are CARE, Emory University, the Great Lakes University of Kisumu, the Government of Kenya, the Kenya Water for Health Organisation (KWAHO), and Water.org (formerly Water Partners International). Visit us online at www.swashplus.org.