

# Getting School WASH Right

*Notes from a Forum<sup>1</sup>*

In December 2011, the SWASH+ partnership (CARE and the Center for Global Safe Water at Emory University), the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the WASH in Schools Network brought together 80 representatives of governments, NGOs, academia, and donor institutions to discuss how to effectively implement and sustain school water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH)



interventions in developing

countries.<sup>2</sup> We took stock of how school WASH efforts have progressed since the 2005 Water & Sanitation for Schools Leadership Forum, what recent evidence is teaching us, and what it will take to reach sustainable school WASH access at scale.

**Reaching total and sustainable school WASH coverage: what will it take?** The key activity of the Forum was developing a set of recommendations for each constituency group. Participants voted on the statements that resonated most with them. The following are the statements with the most votes:

National governments should provide a national school WASH strategy and coordinate the relevant stakeholders.

Donors should be willing to fund systematic, flexible, long-term approaches rather than just easily quantifiable infrastructure investments.

INGOS should work in coordination with other stakeholders to ensure a sustainable service delivery system.

NGOs should commit to sharing experiences and evaluation results (including negative findings) with other NGOs, governments, research organizations about which approaches do and do not work in given contexts.

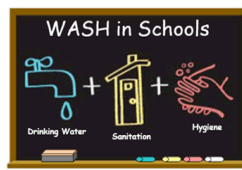
Researchers should interpret and make accessible findings for use by multiple audiences.

**Where are we now?** Global school water coverage has increased from 63% in 2008 to 70% in 2010; school sanitation coverage has increased from 59% in 2008 to 67% in 2010 (UNICEF, 2010a). However, in a group of 60 surveyed developing countries, less than half of primary schools have access to safe water and just over a third have adequate sanitation (UNICEF 2010b). There is mounting evidence of the health, psychosocial, and, by extension, the educational benefits of school WASH. We have some limited evidence that school-based WASH programs reduce absence and parasitic infection (Bowen, Ma et al. 2007; Freeman, Clasen et al. 2011; Freeman, Greene et al. 2011).

While there have been gains in the numbers of schools with WASH services, the conversation has

<sup>1</sup> Presentations and materials shared at the meeting can be found at [www.swashplus.org](http://www.swashplus.org)

<sup>2</sup> Detailed agenda and list of participants are in annexes at end of this summary



changed over time from what works at the school level to how to reach **sustainability at scale**. We now understand that sustainability is not about building infrastructure, but rather about systemic change at the national, district, and local level. An effective program must work within the existing policy framework – even as it tries to improve that policy – and engage all stakeholders to ensure clear understanding of roles and responsibilities. For example, without ensuring that the funds for operations and maintenance are institutionalized, hardware will not be sustained. To reach scale, we need to better understand what systemic changes are needed.

At the 2005 Water & Sanitation for Schools Leadership Forum, participants determined that collaboration, while not easy, is the key to scaling and sustaining WASH services. While this is happening at some levels, collaboration with peers and coordination with stakeholders has yet to be fully ingrained in approaches.

**What’s the evidence telling us?** Looking at the report card on school WASH efforts to date, we get some good grades. For example, studies on handwashing programs show that we can increase student knowledge and that they are sharing that knowledge at home (Blanton et al 2010; Bowen et al 2010). School WASH can reduce absenteeism (particularly for girls), reduce helminth infections, and change

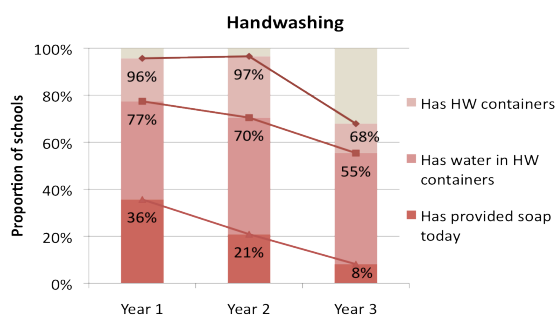


Figure 1. Sustainability drives impact in Kenya (from Rheingans presentation)

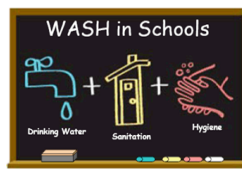
household hygiene behaviors, but impacts depend on who and where you are, how well the intervention is executed and how well it is sustained (Bowen, Ma et al. 2007; Freeman, Clasen et al. 2011; Freeman, Greene et al. 2011). However, we continue to get low grades in what is often considered the most necessary behavior change for health impacts: handwashing with soap. A review of several studies shows that “Only 5% of students are washing with soap, even when facilities are available,” said Murat Sahin of UNICEF.

A surprising finding from the impact evaluation of the SWASH+ program in Kenya was that in schools receiving new latrines, children had increases in hand contamination by fecal matter. This could be prevented by emphasizing the importance of latrine cleanliness, the interdependence of hand-washing and sanitation, and the need for anal cleansing materials. Impact was determined less by infrastructure and more by whether schools kept the soap in place and kept water treated, which is difficult over time as shown by Figure 1.

### What changes can we make to reach sustainability at scale?

The recommendations above are not shocking; so why aren’t we following them? A series of provocative statements (Annex 4) helped focus the discussion on several specific actions to change the status quo. The major takeaway is that achieving sustainable outcomes at scale requires engaging with government to support systemic change. This is a fundamentally different approach from the typical approach used by NGOs and donors, which is to support direct provision of WASH services in schools. Furthermore, it has become increasingly obvious that school WASH efforts must be part of comprehensive efforts for child health and education.

*Peru’s teacher certification programs are examples of how creating incentives and accountability for high performing institutions are important components of sustainability.*



There are clear reasons why coordination isn't happening currently. Coordination requires a shared vision, skills, information, financial and human resources, intent on the part of those being coordinated, and influence on the part of the coordinator. Coordination for school WASH has the additional challenge of requiring engagement across education, water, health and finance sectors for each of the constituency groups. However, the Government of Kenya is showing a way forward with its National School Health Technical Committee to coordinate the national strategy. They also have a hub in the Ministry of Public Health to collect WASH monitoring and evaluation data. Furthermore, a school WASH program in Zambia supported by USAID is intentionally building on lessons learned the Kenya SWASH+ program.

*If you want a sustainable program, "Try always to embed your program . . . in programs that are already a priority of the government of the country."*  
*James Ole Kiyiapi, Permanent Secretary in Ministry of Education, Kenya*

At the practical level, we need to strengthen the link between research and implementation. For example, handwashing education efforts should be informed by a recent study that shows the most important time affecting contamination is before food preparation (Luby et al 2011). We could also save time and resources if implementers worked together and shared information, but as Elynn Walter of the WASH Advocacy Initiative noted, "A lot of organizations are nervous about communicating with other organizations because [t]hey are competing for funding."

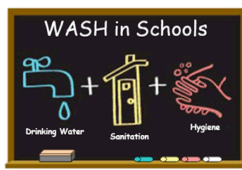
Donors and NGOs should shift a higher percentage of funds to advocacy, using evidence of what works from project implementation to credibly influence governments.

Across the WASH sector, we must change our measurements of success. Field staff participants said they continue to see an emphasis on short-term, "more beneficiary per buck" projects. NGOs must help donors understand the benefits of contributing to total, lasting WASH coverage vs. taking credit for relatively smaller gains. As Louis Boorstin from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation put it, "It's about contribution, not attribution." All stakeholders should work towards a common vision aligned with the national priorities, starting with planning and resource allocation.

*Getting school WASH right is not so much about math (counting beneficiaries), but more about the ABCs: Aligning with national priorities, documenting and using Best practices, and Coordination with governments, other players, other sectors, and with community-based efforts.*

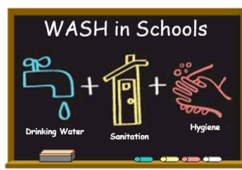
**Conclusions:** We have identified the barriers; now it's time to step up our efforts to find solutions. There is an urgent need for coordination across sectors (health and education in particular), amongst NGOs – large and small – and with government. National or local governments are the logical drivers of that communication and

coordination, but we must all be accountable for working this way. Together we can solve this challenge. We can take courage from what has been accomplished and inspiration to raise the bar higher.



**Annex 1: Participants**

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Representatives</b>
A Spring of Hope	Brittany Young, Joanne Young
Agua para la Salud	Jackie Powell
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	Louis Boorstin
CARE	Malaika Cheney-Coker, Doris Kaberia, Brooks Keene, Peter Lochery, John Migele, Alex Mwaki, Betty Ojeny, Ben Okech, Jason Oyugi, Chris Toews
Catholic Relief Services	Naoko Kamioka, Chris Seremet, Dennis Warner
Children Without Worms	Cassandra Holloway
Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian (CCAP)-Water & Sanitation Programmes	Jim McGill
Dubai Cares	Yousuf Caires
Emory University	Kelly Alexander, Bethany Caruso, Robert Dreibelbis, Matt Freeman, Leslie Greene, Christine Moe, Clair Null, Sarah Porter, Shadi Saboori, Victoria Trinies, Anil Vora, Sarah Yerian, Karen Levy
Global Water Challenge	Monica Ellis, Kyle Sucher
Government of Kenya Ministry of Education	Prof. James L. Kiyiapi, Leah Rotich
Government of Kenya Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation	John Kariuki, Dr. Kepha Ombacho
Great Lakes University of Kisumu	Emily Awino, Dr. Richard Muga
Improve International	Susan Davis
Innovations for Poverty Action – Kenya	Holly Dentz, Sarah Gilman
International Rural Water Association	Bill Kramer
International Trachoma Initiative & Lymphatic Filariasis Support Center	PJ Hooper
Johns Hopkins University	Tanvi Nagpal
Kimberly-Clark Corporation, Global Sustainability	Mike Lloyd
Kosovo-Addis	Angelita Fasnacht
Margaret A. Cargill Foundation	Mark Lindberg, Terry Meersman
Millennium Water Alliance	Rafael Callejas
OMEP-USA	Judith Wagner
Palms for Life Fund	Hannah Laufer
PATH	Liz Blanton, Jenna Forsyth, Robyn Willmouth
Project WET Foundation	Julia Nelson, Morgan Perlson
Pure Water for the World, Inc.	Carolyn Meub
Pure Water For The World-Haiti	Dieudonne M. Khula
Rotary Fort Lauderdale	Martin Brody
RTI International	Seyi Ibidapo
Save the Children	Dan Abbott, Seung Lee
The Coca-Cola Company	Joe Rozza
U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	Anna Bowen, Laird Ruth
UNICEF	Murat Sahin
University of Florida	Rick Rheingans
USAID	Christian Holmes, Merri Weinger
WASH Advocacy Initiative	Elynn Walter
WASHPlus	Sarah Fry
Water For People Central America	Diana Betancourt
WATERisLIFE	Kristine Bender
Waterlines	Mark Reimers, Diane Reimers
World Vision	Ron Clemmer
World Water Relief	Clay Sparrow



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## **Annex 2 – Agenda**

### **Day 1**

#### Welcome & Introduction

Peter Lochery, CARE (SWASH+ Partnership)  
Prof. James Kiyiapi, Permanent Secretary, Kenya Ministry of Education  
Murat Sahin, UNICEF (WASH in Schools Network)  
Louis Boorstin, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

#### The Evidence Base for School WASH: A Panel Discussion

Dr. Anna Bowen, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
Dr. Richard Rheingans – University of Florida (SWASH+ Partnership)  
Dr. Keph Ombacho, Kenya Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation  
Merri Weinger, U.S. Agency for International Development

#### Q&A Session: Getting Beyond the Status Quo

#### Reaching Sustainability at Scale: A Panel Discussion

Leah Rotich, Government of Kenya  
Rafael Callejas, Millennium Water Alliance  
Katie Carroll, Global Public-Private Partnership for Handwashing  
Brooks Keene – CARE (SWASH+ Partnership)

#### Getting Provocative: Factors of Sustainability at Scale

#### Presentation & Plenary Synthesis

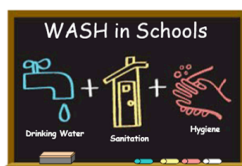
### **Day 2**

#### Setting the stage

#### Sustainability at Scale in Different Contexts

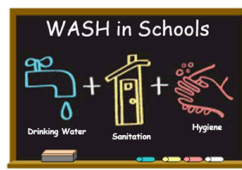
#### Recommendations for Constituency Groups

#### A Time for Reflection

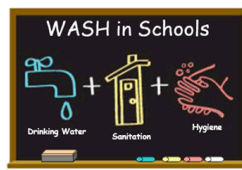


**Annex 3 - Constituency Group Recommendations and Votes**

Votes	Recommendations Grouped by Similar Statements
<b><i>National Government will / should . . .</i></b>	
18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate sector partners of SWASH and ensure participatory accountability</li> <li>• Be more pro-active in coordinating and regulating external assistance</li> <li>• Make available a list of NGO partnerships in WASH programs and their areas of operations.</li> </ul>
15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a national enabling framework and strategy that organizations can with within</li> <li>• Should create a vision and enabling environment for all stakeholders to work together towards sustainable school WASH</li> <li>• Ensure mechanisms for joint planning, financing and implementation of SWASH programs are in place</li> </ul>
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and commit to a national plan that is operational, realistic, and includes a system for transparent monitoring</li> <li>• Develop realistic targets based on available research/data and define roles, responsibilities, and accountability with appropriate monitoring systems</li> </ul>
6	Ensure local government has adequate technical and financial support to match devolved responsibilities
0	Endeavour to ensure that the right policies are in place in support of SWASH
0	Coordinate and provide leadership in WinS implementation using evidence generated by research
<b><i>Local Government will / should . . .</i></b>	
5	Monitor local NGO projects
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate and strengthen partnerships</li> <li>• Coordinate collaborative efforts with schools</li> </ul>
2	Ensure an environment for active participation of civil society, community, etc
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build technical and financial capacity for WinS and be responsive and accountable to both national government policies and community needs</li> <li>• Be accountable through M&amp;E</li> </ul>
<b><i>Researchers will / should...</i></b>	
20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translate and make accessible findings for use by multiple audiences</li> <li>• Better synthesize existing findings and create more practitioner-friendly (grey literature) research and better engage with systems to support the application of research.</li> <li>• Make products of their research available to practitioners</li> <li>• Consolidate the evidence base for school wash, make it readily available &amp; digestible for appropriate stakeholders and identify areas for additional research</li> <li>• We will make findings easily accessible to non-academic audiences</li> </ul>
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will do multidisciplinary, collaborative research that is relevant to both policy and practice.</li> <li>• Direct their research towards areas where there are gaps in order to inform government policy and planning</li> </ul>

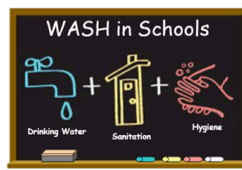


Votes	Recommendations Grouped by Similar Statements
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carefully consider research goals: focus on knowledge gaps that impact successful implementation</li> </ul>
1	We will improve our understanding of the context-specific financial, behavioral and institutional factors that support WinS at scale.
1	Capacity building around applied research
1	Generate knowledge and information to make M & E systems work
0	Fit needs of national efforts, not be driven by current career incentives
<b><i>Donors will / should . . .</i></b>	
29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be willing to fund systematic, flexible, long-term approaches rather than just easily quantifiable infrastructure investments</li> <li>Fund programs that contribute to systemic approaches that deliver scalable, sustainable, and demonstratively effective school WASH</li> <li>Support program vision</li> <li>The timeframe of grants should be appropriate for national strategies (right now the funding cycles are too short)</li> <li>Have long term strategies that support national policies and strategies</li> </ul>
8	Ensure and promote enough funding for sufficient learning, monitoring, evaluation and accountability in school WASH programs
3	Be more adaptive to make adjustments based on evidence learning
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure funding address national priorities in particular where there are SWASH gaps</li> <li>Target resources to where it has the most impact (geographic targeting, systems strengthening, sustaining)</li> </ul>
0	Advocate for school WASH internally and externally influencing other donors and implementers
0	Fund programs with budget operations and maintenance at school level
<b><i>INGOs will / should . . .</i></b>	
22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should work in coordination/partnership with others to ensure a sustainable service delivery system</li> <li>Should coordinate/collaborate with NGO actors</li> <li>We should assess the local context and utilize existing research before beginning WASH projects in order to ensure relevance and effectively build local capacity</li> <li>We should engage all actors, including reps from education, health, government, community, schools, research, and donors when developing and scaling up WASH in schools projects</li> </ul>
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We should support the development of, and work within, the national framework of the country.</li> <li>Strengthen capacity of governments at appropriate levels</li> <li>MUST work with governments</li> <li>Ensure their strategies are in harmony with national policies and strategies</li> <li>Support and develop evidence based national priorities</li> <li>Engage with the government system, find your comparative advantage and prioritize that</li> <li>We should pursue opportunities that support national policy frameworks by</li> </ul>



Votes	Recommendations Grouped by Similar Statements
	making special efforts to inform donors & utilize extensive policy analysis.
8	Should advocate for a national framework for a sustainable provision of WASH in school within a comprehensive national school health policy with appropriate partners in various sectors.
1	Programmatic approaches should include long-term commitment to particular population issues.
0	Should advocate for the adoption of best practices
<b><i>Small / Local NGOs will / should. . .</i></b>	
10	Should commit to share experiences and evaluation results with other NGOs, governments, research organizations (including negative findings) about which approaches do and do not work in given contexts
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programming should fit into WASH strategy.</li> <li>• Engage in the government system and find your comparative advantage and prioritize that</li> </ul>
1	Should provide better mutual support within NGOs
1	Should focus more on sustainability of program over infrastructure.
1	Should engage schools and communities to increase demand for WASH
0	Shall ensure vertical and horizontal implementation in line with national policies and strategies.
0	Work with community mobilization, galvanize day to day engagement
<b><i>Communities will / should. . .</i></b>	
5	Shall be actively involved in SWASH at all levels, taking ownership of the program.





#### Annex 4: Getting provocative

Small groups debated their responses to the statements below.

- Sufficient data and knowledge exist to make informed decisions about service delivery.
- There is no need for additional research on the effectiveness (health and educational outcomes) of school WASH.
- It's more important for teachers who provide WASH services to be accountable to students and parents than for them to be accountable upward to line ministries.
- In school WASH interventions delivery of services should always be done by or through those who will be delivering them in the long run.
- School WASH interventions done in only a small number of schools can never hope to create sustainable impact.
- Local governments will never be able to generate enough resources to meet their policy obligations.
- With limited resources, it is better to budget for two latrines with soap and water and cleaning products than six, which enables you to meet the government--required ratio.
- Funds are better spent buying soap and cleaning materials than building new latrines.
- Funding for direct delivery of school WASH services from NGOs and donors undermines the commitment of national governments and communities.
- A national level curriculum is the best way to sustainably change hygiene behaviors at school.

#### References

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- Bowen A, et al. American Academy of Pediatrics Annual Conference and Exposition, Oct 1 - 5 (2010). Abstract 11322. [Note: Summaries of results were presented at the Forum because the data are not yet published]
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- UNICEF (2010b). "Raising Clean Hands: Advancing Learning, Health, and Participation through WASH in Schools."