

■ Learning from our experiences

Case Study: **Punjab Province-Pakistan**

#01 | April 2022

IMPROVING WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE IN SCHOOLS (WinS) – A CASE FROM PUNJAB PROVINCE IN PAKISTAN



■ Background

The government of Punjab invested in providing Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities in almost all (99 %) of the schools in the province by 2016. However, operation and maintenance remain a challenge. Available facilities which include hand washing stations and toilets in many cases do not meet basic standards, such as allowing easy access to children living with disabilities, nor are they gender segregated, etc. According to a study conducted by the Punjab School Education Department in 2016, at least 37% of the schools surveyed had contaminated drinking water sources. Most schools had inadequate latrines quantities, where the student to latrine ratio was too high. WASH facilities in schools were not accessible by children living with disabilities. Toilets in schools were kept locked leading to rampant open defecation. Handwashing with soap was not common in most schools due to non-availability of handwashing facilities and soap. Menstrual health and hygiene (MHH) was not a common subject in most schools hence no facilities were made available to support it. Dust bins in latrines were generally non-existent; and teachers were generally reluctant to discuss menstruation with adolescent girls. Hygiene promotion related themes

were not found in the textbooks; and the majority of teachers believed that educating children on WASH was the parents' responsibility rather than teachers.

Inadequate WASH facilities in schools increased the risk of school children contracting related diarrheal diseases. The lack of improved WASH facilities might result in an increased number of absentees in schools, resulting in a decreased academic performance and even dropping out of school. This case study describes how the government of Punjab, School Education Department improved the WASH situation in schools with support from UNICEF and other developmental partners.

■ Strategy and implementation

UNICEF advocated, engaged, and supported the government of Punjab to develop a WASH in Schools (WinS) strategy, which was backed by the UNICEF's [Three Star Approach](#). The Punjab's WinS Strategy not only provides guidance for strategic interventions to stakeholders, but also articulated the Strategy Rollout Action Plan, WinS Standards and training modules. The strategy articulated four major program components: 1) Minimum Hygiene Package 2) Training Package for Stakeholders 3) Minimum Hardware Package and 4) Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and Action Plan.

With support from FCDO (formerly DFID) under the ASWA project, UNICEF leveraged government resources and supported the minimum hygiene package in schools. The package included training of School Health and Nutrition Supervisors, Head Teachers, School Teachers, School Councils, and Lady Health Workers (LHWs) in hygiene promotion leading to the formation and operationalisation of school WASH clubs. The WASH clubs in schools had three subgroups i.e. Little Doctors who led on the physical hygiene management of students, School WASH Ambassadors who led the dissemination of WASH messages in schools and communities and lastly School WASH Engineers responsible for the maintenance and monitoring the cleanliness of infrastructure. UNICEF provided financial and technical support in the development of a technical manual for WASH facilities in schools highlighting architectural designs, bill of quantities, and specification for each infrastructure. This supported construction of standard toilets, drinking water, hand washing, and MHM facilities.

UNICEF supported the [“No Chutti”](#) an Urdu word for ‘No Break’, campaign that seeks to inspire young Pakistani women to feel empowered and strong even while they have their periods. It refutes the claim that girls and women need to take a break from their normal daily activities just because they are menstruating. It also dispels the myths around physical and dietary restrictions supposedly imposed on menstruating women by religion and culture.

To ensure sustainability, UNICEF advocated for and supported Education Department to include WASH in textbooks and curriculum for students and teachers. UNICEF also supported and advocated for the inclusion of key Indicators for drinking water, toilet, hand washing, and menstrual hygiene management into the Punjab Education Information Management System (EMIS).

■ Progress and results

Despite the challenges associated with implementing a new program, significant progress and results were achieved between 2017 and 2019. Below are some of the key milestones made by the end of 2019 in Punjab province:

- A significant increase in the number of standard and hygienic toilets in schools. According to the 2019 datasets, an additional 42,720 were provided taking the tally of user-friendly toilets to 229,469 in 2018-19 from 186,749 in 2016-17 in government schools.
- On 30th January 2018, Punjab School Education Department, through a notification titled “Implementation of Punjab WinS Strategy, Standards and Action plan” directed all Chief Executive Officers (CEO) at districts level to take measures towards formation of WASH clubs in school and ensuring the availability of soap to students for hand washing at critical times. This notification further made the head teacher responsible for any neglect to implementation of notifications’ directions.
- In November 2018, the WinS strategy was aligned with Clean & Green Pakistan Movement and Minister School Education Department, Government of Punjab launched Clean & Green School Program in Jhang district. This was later included in ‘New Deal’ document of Government of Punjab and scaled up in all 36 districts of Punjab
- On 4th January 2019, Programme Monitoring and Implementation Unit of Punjab Education Department revised its monitoring indicators through a notification. The new set of districts ranking indicators consists of 14 indicators, and three of these are derived from WinS i.e. sufficiency of toilet, drinking water, and hygiene of schools. Another notification issued on January 2019, Programme Monitoring and Implementation Unit (PMIU) revised the hygiene indicator with the addition of availability of soap. On 9th April 2019, PMIU included another set of indicators related to existence and functionality of WASH clubs in its Schools’ monitoring application.
- In addition to institutionalization and adaptation of WinS strategy in day to day business of education department, 440 teachers from districts of Faisalabad, DG Khan, Rahim Yar Khan, Rajanpur and Bahawalpur were trained on WinS by Literacy and Non-Formal Basic Education Department of Government of Punjab.

■ Lessons learned and way forward

- Ensuring safe WASH facilities and education in schools improves school attendance, especially among menstruating girls thereby reducing gender disparities in access to education. To enhance the implementation of WinS in both public and private schools, there is need to create awareness among relevant stakeholders, such as politicians and policy makers.
- The creation and strengthening of an enabling environment for WASH in schools requires incremental approach. The process started from School Led Total Sanitation (SLTS) under the PATS, adding school WASH interventions in Punjab WASH Sector Development Plan 2014-2024, and specific allocation of funding in Punjab Education Sector Reforms Programme culminated with a dedicated Punjab WASH in Schools (WinS) Strategy 2016. This was aligned with the inclusive education initiative of the Government of Punjab to ensure the provision of accessible services to persons with special needs. A special package was developed for Early Childhood Education (ECE) and rolled out by Government of Punjab in all schools providing ECE services. Further, the WinS package was customized for Literacy & Non Formal Basic Education Centres to the context of non-formal education set ups with a special focus on reaching out to adolescents girls with knowledge, skills and means to manage their menstruation. These steps and processes brought government ownership and stakeholders consensus leading towards a unified vision for WASH in Schools.

- Capacity building and institutionalization of WinS training into the routine teachers training program equipped the teachers with knowledge and skills to implement WinS strategy and facilitate a school led movement for Clean & Green Schools in Punjab.
- The integration and coordination among institutions and stakeholders is the key to the success of a scalable and sustainable program. The WASH in schools have demonstrated an active collaboration and partnerships between health and education departments at the operational levels, and while with other key departments like Public Health Engineering Department, Local Government & Community Development Department, etc. at the strategic level. All this contributed to the development of effective synergies and strategic actions for sustainable changes in practices and behaviours, and potential for scalability.
- Capacity building of school health teachers, involvement of LHWS in MHH awareness creation and provision of sanitary bins, soap and sanitary pads to girls in the schools were a key step towards breaking the silence and taboos surrounding menstrual hygiene management.
- Formation of WASH clubs in schools ensured participation of students in WASH. This was a critical step to realise their basic rights i.e. participation, protection, and survival. Addition of WASH club related indicators in the government monitoring and management information system is a step in the right direction towards institutionalisation of WASH clubs in the education system.
- Effective and institutionalised monitoring and evaluation in existing government systems is critical for evidence-based programming and sustainability. Three WinS strategy indicators were added into the periodic reporting of the Chief Ministers Roadmap for Education and Punjab Education Management Information System distinctively. Similarly, the same indicators were made integral part of periodic household survey under Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey or School Census from 2020.
- After COVID 19, the School Education Department has integrated IPC interventions in the existing WASH in Schools program. The technical designs of handwashing stations have been revised to ensure social distancing and hand hygiene. This also included modifications in the design of existing hand washing stations which were designed to promote group hand washing.

Related links:

<https://schools.punjab.gov.pk/cleanpakistan>

<https://www.unicef.org/pakistan/stories/water-every-child>

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