

HYGIENE/HEALTH EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN LESOTHO
THE ROLE OF URBAN SANITATION IMPROVEMENT TEAM, (USIT)

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8 7 H Y Provision of Improved Sanitation in schools is not in itself an end but a means of obtaining good health for students as well as communities. It needs to be implemented, with among other things good hygiene practices.

In general hygiene in Lesotho is incorporated into the school syllabus.

Urban Sanitation Improvement Team (USIT) through its community section commits a lot of its time to teaching hygiene to students and teachers from schools provided with adequate improved sanitation facilities, i.e. Multiple Ventilated Improved pit latrine (Multiple VIDP).

The community section gets involved at the completion of latrines just before they are used. They give user and health education to teachers who in turn make arrangements among themselves on how students should be grouped for lessons.

The discussion about the role of teachers in emphasising hygiene on sanitation is also discussed. Possible ways in which health education can be integrated in their day to day subjects like nutrition, language, biology, science etc. are also looked into.

Cleaning of latrines as a form of punishment is discouraged as this tends to give low status for VIPs. Rewards and other motivation options are looked into instead. Teachers are encouraged to produce their own teaching aids which they feel can easily be understood by their pupils; and USIT do the printing of these. So far only posters have been produced by teachers.

The time spent by USIT in each school depends on numbers of pupils, distance and the number of USIT members giving the health and user education lecture, but this varies from 3 days to a week. Students are taught on why build a VIP, how it works, how it is used and how it should be maintained.

Since one cannot teach Health Education on sanitation in isolation all aspects of health education related to water borne, waterwashed waterbased diseases are touched. Personal hygiene is also taught in full.

Methods Used:

USIT has prepared different tape slide programmes for audio visual aids. There is one for school managers and teachers titled "HYGIENE AND HEALTH IN OUR SCHOOL". There is another one for students titled "NEW START FOR HEALTH".

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These programmes show in detail how feacal-related diseases are spread. They also show how these can be prevented by building and using VIP latrines. They also show how these VIPs can be kept clean and maintained. The tape slide programme for pupils include a 'TEN POINT PROGRAMME' which is a reminder of the health education lesson, see attached note.

This Ten Point programme is also made into a wall chart which is displayed in each classroom as a reminder to students.

A generator is used used to run the tape slide equipment in rural areas.

Booklets are also provided for pupils to read all what had been taught about the VIP.

Self adhesive posters are also pasted in each latrine. This also emphasises simple things that are easily forgettable e.g. washing of hands, closing of seat covers. See attached.

USIT has prepared two poems on VIPs which are meant to remind students of their responsibilities towards their own health. These poems also emphasise care and maintenance of latrines. There is also a song that has been composed by USIT. It is suitable for both teachers and students for continuity of the message. This song is sometimes used by the Ministry of Health in their health education programmes on the national radio especially when they are talking about feacal-related diseases.

Use of Media:

Communication of Health Education is also done through radio. Interviews in different slots are carried out continuously. Talks are also carried out on the radio health education both to pupils and public at large.

Newspapers are also used for health Education messages.

Since teachers are the key persons in communities they are encouraged to help spread the need for improved sanitation in the communities they live in. This is emphasised during their training lectures that are provided by USIT at National Teachers Training College. They have closed contact with parents than USIT, therefore USIT uses them as a mouthpiece. Teachers in the field are often called together in workshops to discuss Health hazards they are faced with in their schools in relation to sanitation. They advise each other on how to overcome these problems. USIT gets involved in technical problems as soon as health standard has been achieved but every 3 months schools are visited for inspection of latrines.

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Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and USIT (Ministry of Interior)

Ministry of Health:

The Health Education Unit and Rural Sanitation Programme of the Ministry of Health work hand in hand with USIT in promotion of Health Education in schools. Health Education Unit provides some of display and teaching materials for teachers and pupils. Health problems arising from schools are discussed by these two departments in the Ministry of Health and USIT whenever they arise. USIT provide lectures on sanitation to Health Assistants Nurse Clinicians and Village Health Workers whenever necessary. There is therefore an ongoing co-ordination between USIT and the Ministry of Health.

Ministry of Education:

The Ministry of Education through its National Curriculum Development Committee also works hand in hand with USIT. The designing and modifying of Health Education syllabus for Primary schools involves USIT, Health Education Personnel, Nutrition department and other organisation concerned with health promotion.

Training of teachers on how to go about the syllabus is also done jointly by the above departments.

Construction of latrines in schools is also made on co-ordination with the Ministry of Education, for example, Training for Self-Reliance Project from Ministry of Education is constructing VIPs in schools in Lesotho. This cannot be done without consultation with USIT. Plans have got to be designed by USIT, construction as well needs involvement of USIT technicians. Health and User Education is done by USIT Community Section. Therefore there is continuous co-ordination between Ministry of Education and USIT. No latrine is supposed to be constructed by any builder in any school without USIT approval to avoid setbacks.

Health Education by USIT alone does not solve the problems that are experienced in Lesotho, hence a joint integrated effort is encouraged.

USIT helps all the individual schools that need help both in project areas and outside.

Working together by the departments involved in promotion of Health helps avoid duplication of jobs which is very common in many developing countries.

Lastly Health Education is a key component of all water supply and sanitation programmes. It involves various elements like:

- Motivation,
- Counselling - door to door or person to person,
- Advertising,
- User and Basic Hygiene Education.

CONCLUSION:

Schools sanitation are of good benefit to children. Through it they can influence their older relatives to do the same at home. But if the latrines are not properly used and maintained and are a health hazard, this could have a negative impact on the community and on the cause of sanitation as a whole. USIT experience is that it is important for the recipients of sanitation improvements to be committed to the proper use, care and maintenance of hygienic sanitation facilities so that other schools might desire similar improvements.

Caution should be taken when attempting a school sanitation project as the result may be the opposite of what is intended.

Co-ordination approach is very crucial in promotion of water and sanitation in schools.

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