



Keeping sanitation on the agenda

Ms agnes Bitature, Uganda

SANITATION IS A RIGHT! Investing in schools in the developing world is central to meeting children's rights, confronting issues of gender and ethnic discrimination and preparing young people for their roles in civil society.

The population in Ugandan primary schools, soared from 2.5 million in 1995 to 6.8 million in 2000. Sanitation facilities, however, did not increase significantly. A study done by Uganda Examination Board in 1996, for example, revealed that 62% of schools had water facilities while only 8% had adequate number of latrines and 33% had separate latrines for girls. Another study done by UNICEF in 1999 showed that only 2% of the 90 schools covered by the study had adequate latrine facilities. When there was a cholera outbreak in 1997, 560 schools had to be closed due to lack of adequate and acceptable sanitation facilities.

Sanitation in schools has such low status because people do not value the need for a safe and clean environment. This attitude hinders favourable planning and utilization of resources for sanitation. So, when there are many competing priorities, it is the activities that have a direct bearing on academics that get all the attention while sanitation is neglected. Hence, there is a need for continual efforts to keep sanitation on the agenda. So far efforts to do so have paid off, as sanitation continues to receive attention from the highest office in the land and other levels of Government.

The Government of Uganda continues to support efforts to promote better sanitation in primary schools through the provision of supplementary funds to eligible schools. This assistance is in support of the Kampala Declaration on Sanitation signed by LC V Chairpersons of all District Local Councils at the National Sanitation Forum in 1997. Among the 10 -Point Strategy for Action, strategy no.5 "Focus on Schools" states:

"We the collective leadership of the district commit to provide excellent opportunities to encourage life-long behavioural change... We shall ensure that every primary school and all other institutions of learning have adequate sanitation facilities (latrines, safe drinking water supply and hand washing facilities; with separate facilities for girls) by the end of 1998."

Government has already committed up 2.7 billion shillings in the past three years, to increase the sanitation facilities in schools. A further 26 billion shillings will be made available to the water and sanitation sector under the Enhanced HIPC investment. UNICEF and many other donor agencies such as DANIDA and SIDA have also placed sanitation high on their agenda as an activity to be given a very high level of support.

Alongside this, other efforts have been: training of teachers and Parish Development Committees, mobilisation of political leadership, mass media activities, construction of

facilities, sanitation materials development and empowerment of communities using participatory approaches.

For the purpose of this paper I will concentrate on the media activities. In 1999, a communication campaign taskforce was set up to develop a campaign that would address the information and communication problems that the programme was experiencing in promoting sanitation in schools.

School sanitation being a cross cutting issue and concern for almost all sectors, it was agreed that a multi-sectoral committee be set up to spear head the school campaign activities. It was called the School Sanitation Campaign Team (SSCT). Members of the committee were from Ministry of health, education, different UNICEF programmes, media representatives, other *Watsan* projects, and district officers.

Children have a right to a safe environment in which to learn and play. In Uganda less than 5% of schools have adequate latrine facilities and on average there is 1 latrine to 300 pupils in most schools. This is why UNICEF and the Uganda Government have launched the school sanitation effort to improve hygiene in schools.

Better sanitation is a human right!

You can help this project by:

- Campaigning for adequate latrine facilities for children in schools.
- Supporting the provision of clean water in schools.
- Teaching children basic hygiene skills like washing their hands after using latrine.

Support sanitation in schools for a clean environment for our children.

Sida

The school sanitation campaign was an attempt to inform, persuade and motivate sanitation and hygiene behaviour changes in school children and other stakeholders by means of organised communication activities involving the mass media.

The need for the campaign was a result of the need to give extra 'software' (promotion of behaviour change/community participation) support to 'hardware' (construction) activities. Its aim was to promote good hygiene and sanitation conditions and practices at school in order to help reduce girl- child drop out rates, improve academic performance and prevent water and sanitation-related diseases.

Campaign objectives: To motivate and stimulate the target groups to do the following:

- 70% of the schools receiving UPE support have pits dug with the *participation* of the *community* by the end of the campaign;
- 50 % of the latrines constructed, *well maintained and clean*;
- 20% of the schoolchildren in the campaign area practicing *hand washing after using the latrine*;
- 70% of the children in UPE schools *exposed* to campaign messages; and
- 35 % of the children can recall basic campaign messages.

Target Group Definition: The primary and priority target group were the school children in schools receiving UPE assistance. Children were chosen because they are far more receptive to new ideas and are at an age when they can be influenced to cultivate good habits in personal hygiene. The secondary audience was the teachers and school management teams, while the parents and policy makers formed the tertiary target group.

Brand Positioning: The brand was school sanitation. We needed to create a sense of urgency and responsibility. In particular we needed to create a clear positioning statement that reflected the need to get involved. The campaign slogan therefore was; *School Sanitation: a responsibility for all*

The positioning strategy was suggested based on the findings from a research study into positive factors associated with hygiene. Status/prestige related issues were a main finding. The majority of respondents in the survey were most of the times influenced by the community. They seemed to value very much what, for example, the neighbours thought of them.

Therefore, the brand was positioned as, "sanitation is attractive" because: *People want to be clean, Children see it as positive behaviour, Politicians say it is the best thing to do, Get respect from your neighbors, Be the envy of your classmates, be the most clean school in the district etc...*

Messages/promise:

For school children: Practicing good sanitation will help you pass your exams. When you wash your hands you will keep disease free, therefore, more healthy. And as a result, you will have more time to study and therefore will have chances of passing your exams. Being clean is good for you and your classmates.

For school teachers and school management: Clean children at school hygiene parades and more latrines with hand washing facilities will make your school to rank among the best schools. This will in turn make you popular in your community, you might win an award and more children will enroll into your school.

For parents: a responsible parent ensures that their children go to a school of good standard.

For politicians: Create a sense of national pride and development by ensuring proper resource allocation, accountability and community participation.

Personality of the Brand: Fun, energetic, exciting, friendly, likeable, vibrant and attractive.

Tone and manner of advertising: The hygiene issues should be seen as appealing, a good thing to do, and the type of messages listeners will want to be associated with.-Fun-Exciting - Non-threatening - Socially beneficial.

Because we would be communicating to such a diverse audience we needed to create different moods and messages for the different target audiences.

In order for the campaign to be done systematically, the following activities were carried out:

- **Strategic planning meetings:** The SCCT met monthly and eventually weekly as the media launch date drew near. The meetings were chaired by the Ministry of Health and both creative and practical issues were discussed;
- **Research:** A baseline was done in a sample of 90 schools to give an indication of the current hygiene practices, presence of sanitation facilities and educational materials in primary schools. And because it was necessary to understand the positive factors associated with sanitation, a qualitative study was also done and its information was used in designing the materials and messages that were used in the media campaign;
- **Production of materials:** Posters, flyers and banners were produced with campaign the slogan "*Better school sanitation: A responsibility for all*" The national sanitation logo was used on all materials and advertisements;
- **Training workshops:** A national workshop was held for Commissioners, Directors of the different ministries, programme chiefs and project coordinators involved in the campaign to bring them to speed on the activities and progress of the campaign. And to get their blessing. Other similar workshops were held at district level; and
- **Launching activities:** Press releases of the launch in all newspaper mainly, the New Vision, Monitor, Bukedde, Etop, Rupiny and Orumuri. Launch activities were carried out in order to publicise the campaign, promote good relations between different actors and to gain support.

The Minister of Health was the guest of honour. At the occasion prizes were given to children who had participated in a sanitation story writing competition. It was on that occasion that a school sanitation art competition and the mass media campaign were launched.



- **Radio programmes:** Three 30 seconds adverts were developed by an advertising agency. They were then pre-tested and aired on all 8 national and local FM stations in different languages;
- **Newspaper articles:** A bi-weekly page specifically and exclusively for sanitation was published. In addition quarter page adverts were run every other day for 3 months in all the papers; and
- **Sanitation TV Documentary:** The objective of this documentary was to act as a baseline to create awareness of the school sanitation situation and to motivate politicians to act to improve the situation. The documentary targeted the politicians and decision-makers. The documentary also showed the sanitation problems in schools and the progress of the sanitation campaign in terms of the roles of different actors such as teachers, students and the community in changing the situation. It was also used to show the linkage of school sanitation to community sanitation. It was aired on 2 national TV stations for 3 months.

Impact/results of the school sanitation campaign

It was proposed that we would monitor the following:

- The presence of latrines in schools and their use;
- Targets groups' exposure to campaign messages/materials;
- Comprehension of media messages;
- Presence of hand washing facilities in schools; and
- Evidence of hand washing practice.

Two studies were commissioned. One was a rapid assessment survey done in one district and the other a social survey in 26 districts. In addition, feedback was also received informally from peers and colleagues. The surveys established the following:

Over 93% of respondents were aware of the campaign, the majority having heard messages on radio. All headmasters, policy makers and community workers interviewed had seen all the three adverts in the newspapers and some students had seen the adverts pinned on their school notice boards. 45% of the respondents had heard the messages on Capital FM, 34% on Simba, 10% on Radio One, and 10% on other stations. 26% of the respondents remembered all the three adverts and the messages contained in them. The majority i.e. 54% preferred the advert which depicted a fouled latrine and the indignation of parents about the poor sanitation of the school.

The following were some of the immediate reactions to and /responses/comments on the media campaign:

Radio adverts

- The adverts are a good way of alerting people to keep clean and observe good hygiene;

- Some of the respondents talked the messages over with friends, neighbours and relatives;
- Changed lifestyle by improving on latrine hygiene and cleanliness;
- Encouraged siblings to respect hygienic conditions
- Teachers told pupils to clean latrines;
- An LC official informed people of his area about proper garbage disposal and clean water supply;
- Children said they had learnt to clean toilets at school; and
- The advert reminded people of their obligation to maintain good sanitation in communities.

Newspaper adverts

- Headmasters realised that sanitation is a children's right and that parents have a right to inspect and monitor sanitation in schools; and
- Headmasters also saw the need for adequate latrines in school and that children should be availed with water and soap for washing hands.

School children

- They realised that they should wash hands after using the toilet and that it is their right to have good sanitation at school.

Paint a picture, win a prize

By Geoffrey Kamali

awarded to the pupils by Dr. Beatrice Wabudeya, state minister for primary healthcare at The New Vision head offices in Kampala.

You can also win a prize! UNICEF and the Ministry of Health is sponsoring an Art competition, whose overall theme is "Better school sanitation: a responsibility for all."

You can participate by drawing cartoons or paintings. Use colours, crayons, water paint or ink to come up with an attractive picture.

One of themes that you could also draw what you think is a safe method of disposing of human excreta (faeces). Or how to practice good personal, domestic and food hygiene. Show, for example, how you would keep drinking water clean and safe to drink. You could also draw a picture of how you would dispose of garbage, and how you would control flies and mosquitoes. Do not record your name, class, sex, telephone number or address on the certificate. The details of the competition are available at the Sanitation Office, 7047, 1st Floor, Plot 10, The de

THANKS: Dr. Beatrice Wabudeya gives Patience Ayebare of Boma Primary School the prize she won in the competition.

Local council

- Realised that it is their responsibility to inspect schools within their locality; that it is children's right to have good sanitation facilities at school and schools should have proper sanitation facilities e.g. water, soap, dust bins and latrines.

Policy makers

- Realised that they should have a budget for supplementing sanitation campaigns in schools because children have a right to proper sanitation.

Informative nature of the adverts

27% of the respondents rated the adverts very satisfactory, 43.5% thought they were satisfactory, 16% said they were just satisfactory and 7% said they were not satisfactory.

Facilities in schools

- There are increased latrines and remarkable improvements in the pupil/stance ratios. Previously estimated ratios were 325:1, currently the ratio estimated at 96:1;
- 97 % of schools use latrines with slabs; and
- 60% of schools have hand washing facilities.

Attention to the needs of the girl-child

- 97% had separate facilities for boys and girls; and
- 16.5% of schools have separate washing room for girls.

Safe water

- 85.2% of schools have access to protected water sources.

Community involvement/sustainability

- Better and more streamlined accountability by districts and schools;
- Interest of parents in their children's health and welfare;
- Interest by public e.g. *The New Vision* offered free space for sanitation promotion, Hima Cement factory has shown interest to make donations for the campaign; Uniliver, Mukwano and Crestanks have donated prizes for children's competitions;
- The president's manifesto – elections 2001, pays special attention to sanitation and hygiene; and
- The private sector is involved in latrine construction, thus contributing to poverty eradication in the communities.

School administration

- Sanitation features in the school plans;
- Clubs with activities related to sanitation have been formed in schools;
- Schools have teachers and prefects in charge of sanitation and hygiene; and
- Increased participation by children in national competitions.

Media campaigns, though costly, can be effective for information dissemination and for motivating behaviour change. However, the cost is worth the benefits that accrue from keeping sanitation on the agenda. What greater benefit can you expect than the highest office of the land acknowledging and recognising the importance of sanitation in poverty eradication and the country's development? *Let's make keeping sanitation on the agenda an agenda for all genders!*

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