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GLoWSPROS presents problems and potential solutions that have been developed in the context of the capacity building programme Guided Learning on Water and Sanitation (GLOWS) in Ethiopia. This programme adopts a problem based approach in which participants together with community members identify key water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) problems and possible solutions. In this process they receive external support from staffs from Technical and Vocational Training Centres (TVETC), Water and Health Bureaus and staff from core partners in the GLOWS programme. As a result of this process WASHCOs and Kebele leaders initiate actions that help to improve their WASH conditions, sometimes adopting very creative solutions for their problems. To make this wealth of experience available to others short write-ups are developed called GLOWSPROS (GLOWS Problems and Solutions), to help others to learn from this experience.

Poor quality and use of school latrines

Introduction

Sanitation at school is an important problem in Ethiopia. Many schools have facilities that are not in good conditions and as a result school children are unnecessarily exposed to health risks. A related problem is that the children get a poor hygiene image being exposed to dirty latrines and do not learn good hygiene behaviour. This also has implications when they become adults as facilities at middle and higher education level also have a lot of problems. So by the time they have children of their own they have accepted unconsciously that it is fine for latrines to be dirty and will not break this cycle.

The main challenges

A number of important challenges can be identified:

- Important design limitations in many school latrines, which may make the latrines difficult to clean and attract flies.
- Inadequate number of latrines and particularly too few urinals for boys and girls.

- Lack of cleanliness of latrines because of inadequate maintenance and improper use. This can also be caused by 'overcrowding' as children are often only allowed to use the latrines in the break, which sometimes leads to users sharing the latrine, depositing their feces on the slab and not in the hole.
- Lack of privacy for the users because of poor superstructure.
- Absence of handwashing facilities and soap or ash.
- Waste of nutrients.
- Lack of resources to improve the situation.



Possible solution

A joint problem analysis with the headmaster, teachers, and Health Extension Worker (HEW) is the first step to gain insight in the problems and possible improvement actions. Experience in GLOWS shows that school management can take a number of simple steps to improve upon the situation even without much external support. This may include:

- Promotion of cleaning of latrines. This includes stimulating better use by the children through hygiene promotion where perhaps the HEW can give some presentations at the school to encourage children to better use the latrines. It may also be feasible for the children to take turns in actual cleaning of the latrines with the added advantage that this may also encourage better cleaning in daily practice.
- A related issue is the cleaning of the school grounds by for example digging a pit to burn litter. This can even go further and may comprise the start of a composting project and perhaps of a school (vegetable) garden.
- Promotion of handwashing and installation of handwashing facilities and soap (or ash). A simple drum with a tap can make a massive improvement.
- Avoiding crowding by staging recreation periods, or allowing children to leave class for toilet use.
- A big difference can also be made by constructing urinals for boys and for girls. These systems can be connected to a separate drain to a storage container which has the added advantage that less urine will enter into the pit which will contribute to reducing the smell of the latrines. Ideally the urine is collected separately and used for crop growing (in the school garden or it may be even sold as fertilizer to for example a local farmer). It can be used undiluted or can be diluted with water. It should be applied to the roots of the plant early morning or late

afternoon to reduce evaporation. If mixed with water it spreads better. Interesting experience with this approach is already available in Ethiopia.

- Repair latrines and particularly cracks, doors (to ensure privacy) and the fly screens on the vent pipes to cut disease transmission.
- It may also be feasible to find a better latrine design (pit, slab and superstructure) with possible involvement of private sector particularly for slab construction. This however will require more resources and therewith needs to be included in a longer term plan.



Using urine from a school latrine as fertilizer

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