



## Celebrating 13 years of working with national government for lasting water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in schools in Kenya

- **Project:** School Water Sanitation and Hygiene Plus Community Impact (SWASH+). Operating in Kenya since 2006
- **Location:** Kenya
- **Target Population:** School stakeholders
- **Implementing Partners:** CARE, Sanergy, Kenya Ministry of Health and Education
- **Funder:** Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

### Summary Points

- School Water, Sanitation and Hygiene plus Community Impact (SWASH+) is focused on finding sustainable and scalable solutions for school WASH in Kenya.
- Together, we have created change at a national level, by influencing increased budgetary allocations for schools through demonstrating the importance of WASH for students.
- SWASH+ is a model project demonstrating how integration, learning and advocacy enables change on a larger scale.

**SWASH+ Objectives:** Operating since September 2006, SWASH+ is an action-research and advocacy project focusing on increasing the scale, impact, and sustainability of school WASH interventions in Kenya. Funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the project is a partnership of CARE, Emory University and the Government of Kenya, with other partners involved at various stages. The objectives of SWASH+ included:

- **Identify, develop, and test innovative approaches** to school- and community-based WASH interventions that promote sustainability and scalability.
- **Provide and test an integrated WASH program** in schools and communities that maximizes impact, equity, sustainability, and cost-effectiveness.
- **Positively influence Kenyan government investments** in school WASH by leveraging learning on sustainable, scalable, and effective approaches.

#### CARE

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## What we did

The SWASH+ project arose from a need to find answers to persistent questions related to WASH in schools. Over the past 13 years, we have conducted a series of rigorous quantitative and qualitative studies in 650 schools across seven Kenyan counties.

### Research topics on schools included:

- Anal cleansing practices
- Diffusion of behaviours to homes
- Impact on students (absenteeism and health)
- Innovations (soapy water, girls' urinals, washrooms)
- Menstrual management needs
- Monitoring by parents, pupils, school leadership
- Private sector partnerships
- Rainwater harvesting
- Sustainability of school WASH (hardware, software)
- WASH financing and life cycle costing
- WASH knowledge, attitudes and practices in schools and communities

## What we found

**SWASH+ research revealed that school WASH is very important and more complex than generally understood.** SWASH+ partners identified a variety of gaps in typical interventions including menstrual management, latrine maintenance, budgeting, monitoring and in the overall enabling environment for school WASH. Over 20 publications from SWASH+ have helped demonstrate the tremendous importance of school WASH.

## What we achieved

This lasting partnership has helped improve the quality of life and learning environment for school children across Kenya. We've learned that **evidence-based advocacy works!** Together we have increased school WASH funding, enabled the adoption of WASH curriculum and materials, developed a school WASH sustainability charter, increased attention for menstrual hygiene and developed tools for school stakeholders to use in procuring private sector sanitation services, and in budgeting for WASH.

**SWASH+ demonstrates how learning and advocacy enables change on a larger scale.**

## Key findings

- **Absenteeism:** Hygiene and water treatment can result in up to a 58% reduction in girls' absence or an average reduction of six days per girl per year.
- **Diarrheal diseases:** A comprehensive school WASH intervention can reduce the risk of diarrheal disease by 66%.
- **Helminth reinfection:** Improvements in school WASH, with a single round of deworming, can result in reduced helminth reinfection.
- **Latrine cleanliness:** Pupils in schools with cleaner latrines were half as likely to be absent than pupils in schools with dirtier latrines.
- **Soapy water:** The use of soapy water over bar soap is effective, longer lasting and, reduces soap theft.
- **Menstrual management:** Primary school girls are often unable to effectively manage their periods due to limited sanitary facilities at school.
- **Hand contamination:** Improvements in sanitation, like new latrines or toilets, must be accompanied by comprehensive hygiene promotion and supplies in order to prevent hand contamination.
- **Service delivery:** Training students and parents in monitoring tools and engaging parent volunteers in providing WASH services, and giving funds to schools, improves daily WASH services for students.
- **Private sector sanitation:** Public-private partnerships can allow outsourcing sanitation responsibilities to private service providers to meet the demand for safely managed sanitation.
- **Sustainability:** Inappropriate technology, maintenance costs, limited access to water and lack of institutional support are among the key barriers to long-term provision of WASH in schools.
- **Financing:** Information on WASH life cycle costs can help schools plan for operation and maintenance costs to keep WASH services running.
- **Community behavior change:** School WASH interventions should be combined with other programs, specifically targeted to parents and families, for optimal behaviour change in communities.



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