

Improving Sanitation and Hygiene Using a Behavioral Change Approach in Public and Private Schools in Kampala, Uganda

Authors : G. Senoga, D. Nakimuli, B. Ndagire, B. Lukwago, D. Kyamagwa

Abstract : Background: The COVID-19 epidemic affected the education sector, with some private schools closing while other children missed schooling for fear contracting COVID-19. Post COVID-19, PSIU in collaborated with Kampala City Council Authority Directorate of Education and Social Science, Water and Sanitation department, and Directorate of Public Health and Environment to improve sanitation and hygiene among pupils and staff in 50 public and private school system in Kampala city. The “Be Clean, Stay Healthy Campaign” used a behavioral change approach in educating, reinforcing and engaging learners on proper hand washing behaviors, proper toilet usage and garbage disposal. In April 2022, 40 Washa lots were constructed, to reduce the pupil - hand wash station ratio; distributed KCCA approved printed materials; oriented 50 teachers, WASH committees to execute and implement hygiene promotion. To ensure sustainability, WASH messages were memorized and practiced through hand washing songs, Pledge, prayer, Poems, Skits, Music, dance and drama, coupled with participatory, practical demonstrations using peer to peer approach, guest speakers at assemblies and in classes. This improved hygiene and sanitation practices. Premised on this, PSI conducted an end line assessment to explore the impact of a hand washing campaign in regards to improvements in hand washing practices and hand hygiene among pupils, accessibility, functionality and usage of the constructed hygiene and sanitation facilities. Method: A cross-sectional post intervention assessment using a mixed methods approach, targeting headteachers, wash committee members and pupils less <17 years was used. Quantitative approaches with a mix of open-ended questions were used in purposively selected respondents in 50 schools. Primary three to primary seven pupils were randomly selected, data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) Outcomes and Findings: 46,989 pupils (51% female), 1,127 and 524 teaching and non-teaching staff were reached by the intervention, respectively. 96% of schools trained on sanitation, sustainable water usage and hygiene constituted 17-man school WASH committees with teacher, parents and pupils representatives. (31%) of the WASH committees developed workplans, (78%) held WASH meetings monthly. This resulted into improved sanitation, water usage, waste management, proper use of toilets, and improved pupils’ health with reduced occurrences of stomach upsets, diarrhoea initially attributed to improper use of latrines and general waste management. Teachers reported reduced number of school absenteeism due to improved hygiene and general waste management at school, especially proper management of sanitary pads. School administrations response rate in purchase of hygiene equipment’s and detergents like soap improved. Regular WASH meetings in classes, teachers and community supervision ensured WASH facilities are used appropriately. Conclusion and Recommendations: Practical behaviour change innovations improves pupil’s knowledge and understanding of hygiene messages and usage. Over 70% of pupils had clear recall of key WASH Messages. There is need for continuous water flow in the Washa lots, harvesting rain water would reduce water bills while complementing National water supply coupled with increasing on Washa lots in densely populated schools.

Keywords : handwashing, hygiene, sanitation, behaviour change

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