

Vietnam: School Sanitation and Hygiene Education pilot will be scaled up

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A pilot project promoting sanitation and hygiene education in schools in Vietnam will expand significantly over the next two years, to help communities plan and implement their own schemes. A new strategy has been proposed to reach all schools in a gradually expanding, demand-responsive programme.

Vietnam is one of six countries involved in a global Schools Sanitation and Hygiene Education (SSHE) programme, in which local partners, UNICEF and IRC work together. The SSHE programme started in 2001/2001 in 20 primary schools in two districts, located in two separate provinces. The following year, it expanded to a further 30 schools in 15 districts in 15 provinces. All are in rural areas - urban schools generally have better infrastructure and greater educational capacities and resources.

The pilot programme of combining improved sanitation was reviewed at the recent Second National SSHE Workshop, held in Hanoi, and it was decided to extend the programme to 300 schools by 2005, and include 265 "branch" schools. Branch schools are located in smaller villages, taking children from the age of six to nine, and are attached to a main school located in the main village of a commune.

Part of national curriculum

The SSHE programme fits into existing national programmes for primary and lower secondary education and pre-schools, where health education has been part of the school curriculum for over ten years.

Since September 2002, hygiene, sanitation and water supply have formed part of the new subject "Socio and Natural Sciences". This covers SSHE under three sub-topics:

1. 'People and Health' covers the human body, personal hygiene and prevention of illness.

2. 'Society' covers hygiene (along with safety) in homes, schools and the community.
3. 'Nature' covers environmental sanitation and protection.

Health and hygiene are part of the Science exam at the end of Grade V.

Under the pilot project, a life-skills approach was introduced for hygiene education in which children learn about hygiene along with general knowledge, attitudes and skills to cope with life problems through participatory learning activities.

Sanitation

In addition to the new form of hygiene education, the SSHE programme has promoted the introduction of good sanitation facilities in schools. In the last ten years, 11,000 school latrines have been installed using two standard models developed by the WATSAN Reference Centre of Thai Binh Medical University.

However, feedback from each of the 19 provinces represented at the National Workshop indicated that the installation itself has not always followed recommended designs. It was therefore decided that it is better to offer a wider range of models, because ecological conditions, school size, type, and local resources vary. Following this discussion, the National Workshop recommended that a range of models be developed, allowing schools and parents to install the type of facilities and to use materials that they can afford, so long as minimum design criteria are met. Installation is by local craftsmen, without training or backstopping from the programme.

The way ahead

In total, Vietnam has 15,000 primary schools (60,000 when branch schools are included), and almost 10,000 pre-schools, bringing the overall number of schools to be covered to some 70,000 for lower education alone. Up to half of the schools lack good sanitary facilities. Many also lack up-to-date teaching methods, including teaching on sanitation, hygiene and health. The current expansion strategy will take a long time to achieve total coverage. Brainstorming of the IRC Mission with Ministry of Education and Training,

UNICEF Vietnam and the local partners resulted in an outline strategy for a larger, demand driven scaling up programme.

The main strategic recommendations on the development of the SSHE programme reviewed at the National Workshop were:

- School Sanitation and Hygiene Education (SSHE) in Vietnam should change from a pilot project to a hands-on, demand-responsive and participatory strategy for improving sanitation, hygiene and water supply conditions and practices in schools and communities, with a special focus on poor areas.
- The strategy should be placed in the context of the goals of sustainable development (education and water supply) and the sound management of water resources as adopted by the global community.
- Donors and the private sector should be invited to contribute to implementing the strategy as part of a rolling programme of the Education sector in cooperation with the Water and Health sectors.

Under the proposed demand-responsive strategy, District Educational Services will organise information workshops for principals, selected teachers, parent representatives, and local authorities at district level or below. Here, they will learn how to access a five-day hands-on training workshop on child-friendly education, which will also cover technologies for hygiene and sanitation in schools as well as homes and the community.

Groups will have to organise the workshop themselves and take care of all requirements and costs for the local logistics, including food and lodging for the trainers for four nights. The programme will provide two trainers and meet their salaries and transport costs, as well as the cost of training materials. During the five-day workshop, the two trainers will provide hands-on training on SSHE, and will introduce a technology choice game to show the local group how to plan locally the most suitable technology options. The team consists of one teacher with experience in training for life skills-based hygiene education and community participation, and one technician trained in low-cost, community-based water supply/water treatment and school and home sanitation

technologies. At the suggestion of the National Workshop the team will be supplemented by the local health worker for health aspects.

After the workshop, it is proposed that the schools and community members will plan, implement and finance their own scheme, obtaining assistance from the programme for the following aspects:

1. A format for designing their plan, including technology choice, maintenance, management and financing;
2. Review of, and advice on, the quality of the plan;
3. Technical drawings and specifications for the chosen technology and service levels;
4. A model contract for constructing facilities, ensuring quality control by men and women in the community;
5. Seed funds for school sanitation and a school/community water system;
6. Two follow-up visits from the team to review and advise on (a) technical, educational and managerial implementation and (b) operation/maintenance. These visits will double as monitoring visits for the district level and above.

The SSHE programme in Vietnam is one of six similar schemes, the other five being run in Nepal, Zambia, Burkina Faso, Nicaragua and Colombia. A separate SSHE programme is running in India.

The Schools Sanitation and Hygiene Education (SSHE) programme is characterised by the combined introduction of child-friendly provisions for sanitation, water supply, hand washing and drinking water in class (especially during the hot season), child-friendly educational methods, community participation, and a focus on behavioural change. Key teachers are trained to train other teachers, and educational and locally targeted promotional materials are developed. The programme places great value on listening to children, parents and teachers in designing, planning and evaluating the facilities. School water and sanitation facilities need to be adapted to the needs of children in different age groups and must be appealing to use. This will ensure that engineers and projects install

facilities that are locally appropriate, which in turn will contribute to the proper use and operation and maintenance of the facilities.