

Site visit to Bugiri WASH in Schools project (GG1634459)

On November 11, two members of our committee (Dennis Gray and Joe Clarke) travelled to Uganda to review progress on the Bugiri WASH in Schools project funded by Global Grant 1634459. An initial proposal to work with 10 schools in this very poor district of southeastern Uganda was separated into two global grant applications. The funding for the first, to cover 4 schools, was further divided into two parts, with 2 schools per part. This site visit was scheduled to review the work described in a comprehensive progress report when work on the first two schools was complete.

Prior to any training or construction of facilities, each school and community underwent a full year of health promotion, in the course of which the community was involved in the planning and actual construction of the sanitation facilities. Members of the communities were also involved in assisting with the construction. We feel that this fostered a sense of ownership by the community, something we considered to be important in sustaining the health education and facilities.

The site visit took 5 days and included all 4 schools to be funded with the first global grant. Meetings were held with the head teacher of each school, teachers in charge of child health and sanitation training (CHAST) and menstrual hygiene management (MHM) education, members of the Student Health Clubs, and members of the community. A tour was made of the construction and functioning of the rain water harvest (RWH) tanks, gutters, hand-washing facilities, and the latrines for both girls and boys and washrooms for girls.

All 4 schools underwent comprehensive and intensive CHAST, first with the teachers and then with the students. We were impressed that the training resulted in the formal establishment of Student Health Clubs who showed that they understood and taught personal hygiene management to all the students in the schools. We were particularly impressed that the training spread, by the students' influence at home, to the rest of the community, resulting in a general appreciation and practice of improved personal hygiene. Special sessions were organized with the girls on menstrual hygiene management, which included the making of reusable sanitary pads.

In 2 of the schools, 30,000 litre ferro-cement RWH tanks were constructed and gutters installed to capture rain water during the two wet seasons. The water was piped to hand-washing stations of 5-6 spigots each for use by the students after using the latrines. These schools also had newly constructed or renovated ventilated improved pit (VIP) latrines and also separate, private washrooms for girls to use during menstruation.

What was particularly impressive was the enthusiasm with which the student in ALL the schools embraced the CHAST, even in the 2 schools where construction of the improved water and sanitation facilities had not yet been initiated.

During the course of our visit, we learned several things:

1. The organization of Student Health Clubs and the dedication of the teachers involved are extremely important in promoting personal hygiene, not only in the schools, but in the communities at large.
2. Much of the success of the project could be attributed to the skill, wisdom, and respect enjoyed by the Project Manager, Rita Nantongo.

3. Promotion of water conservation is extremely important for periods of several weeks during the dry seasons.
4. We recognized the importance of more complete collection of rain water by the use of extensive guttering with high-capacity gutters to ensure the RWH tanks were filled during the rainy season.
5. Some contingency plans should be considered for maintaining the safety of the RWH during dry periods. The interim installation of water filters, especially for drinking water, was considered.
6. In one school, the lack of a gradient in the school terrain made the flow of stored rain water to the hand-washing facilities uncertain.
7. In general, we suggest increasing the number of spigots delivering water to the hand-washing stations.
8. It is important not to carve up contracts for the construction of different elements of the project by different contractors, which had the effect of contractors denying responsibility for problems issuing from failures of one component of a multi-component project.
9. We were completely surprised by the observation that many adults thought that so much attention was focused on girls, in the education as well as the construction of the latrines and washrooms, that the boys were being ignored. Some even suggested that the boys should also be included in the MHM education of the girls!

Summary

The site visit was a success. Concerns we may have had resulting from problems with communication were laid to rest. The interim Progress Report prepared by the Rotary Club of Ntinda is an accurate reflection of the status of the Bugiri WASH in Schools project as of the autumn of 2018. The project is on schedule. The Child Health and Sanitation Training (CHAST) and Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) education was well advanced and effective. The construction of rain water harvesting, hand-washing facilities, and latrines was competently undertaken and, for the most part, functioning. We learned several lessons during the course of the site visit, which will improve the project going forward.

Addendum from Dennis:

Here is a link to a self-advancing “movie”

<http://sharethegiftofwater.com/bugiri-uganda-wash-project/>

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