

# WASH and EDUCATION



The provision of safe water and sanitation and hand washing facilities is a first step towards a healthy physical learning environment. However, the mere provision of facilities does not make them sustainable or produce the desired impact. It is the use of the facilities – the related hygiene behaviour of people – that provides health benefits. In schools, hygiene education aims to promote practices to prevent water and sanitation-related diseases as well as healthy behaviour (Burgers, 2000). The combination of facilities, correct behavioural practices and education are meant to have a positive impact on the health and hygiene conditions of the community as a whole, both now and in the future (Snel, 2004).

UNICEF has estimated that more than half of the world's schools lack clean toilets, drinking water and hygiene lessons for all schoolchildren. More than half of all primary schools in developing countries have inadequate water facilities and nearly two-thirds lack single-gender bathrooms. Safe water and sanitation are essential to protect children's health and their ability to learn at school.

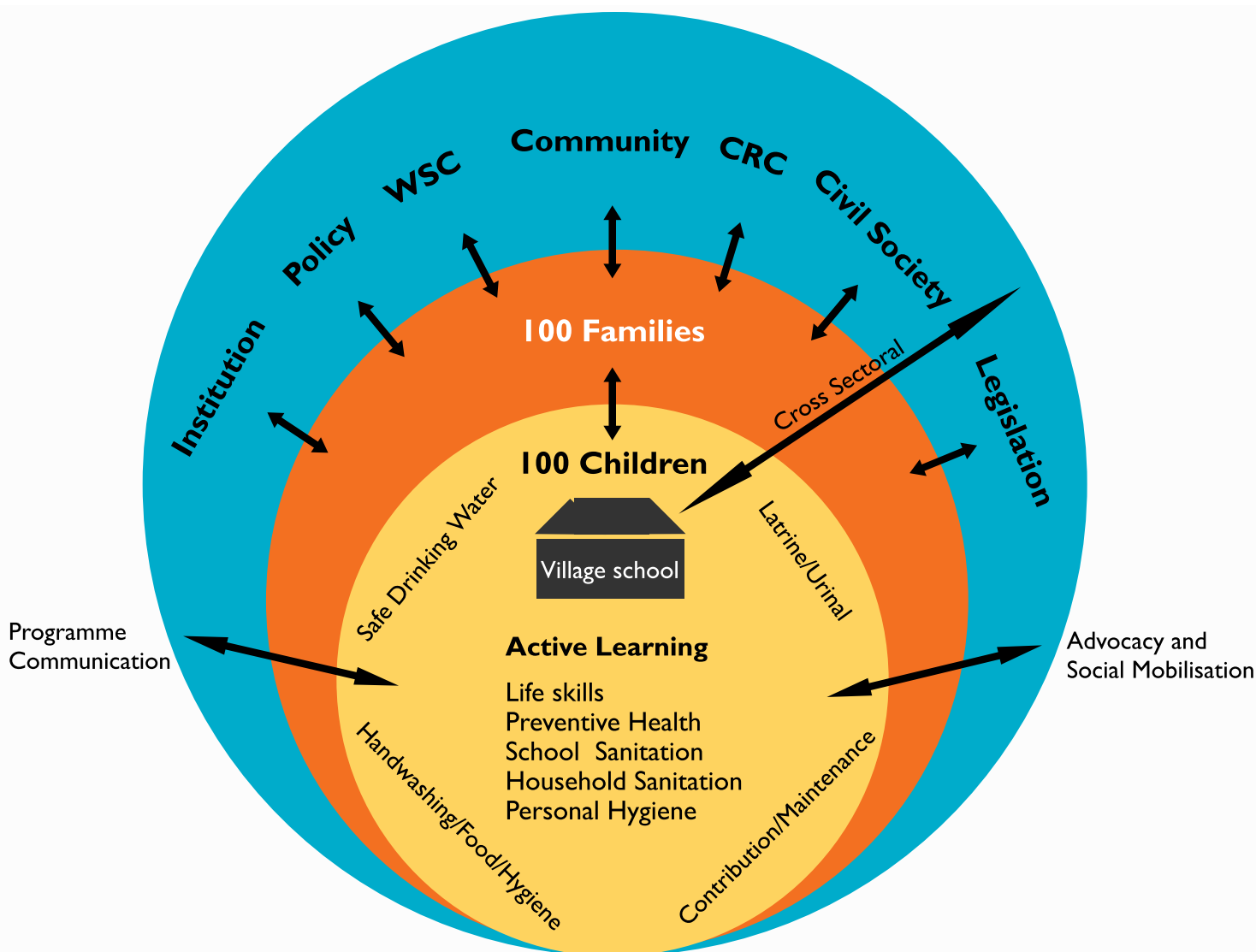
**In this sense, safe water and adequate sanitation are as vital to a child's education as textbooks.** The availability of clean water, adequate sanitation and hygiene education has a profound impact on the health of children, on learning, the teaching environment, and on girls' education. It is directly related not only to physical, mental and social health, but ultimately to economic and political development.

Indeed, the campaign for safe water and sanitation in schools will bring the world much closer to achieving the MDGs. The record on providing safe water and sanitation and hygiene education has improved over the past decade, but more needs to be done from governments to development agencies to communities.

## WASH AND SCHOOLS



# WASH IN SCHOOLS BALLOON



By integrating cost-effective and sustainable WASH solutions with education programmes, we can dramatically decrease child morbidity while improving access to and effectiveness of education.

Cost-effective, scalable and context-relevant interventions, which may include hand-dug wells, harvesting rainwater for drinking purposes, protecting springs, purifying water, building safe latrines, handwashing with soap and integrating hygiene education into curricula are key elements to improve WASH in schools.

Each stakeholder (implementing organisation, donor, community, and government) plays an essential role in WASH in schools. Specifically, national, regional, and local governments can help

ensure that WASH in schools is a component of their basic education strategies.

Safe water, sanitation and hygiene-care practices are essential to ensuring that children get the best start in life; that they are able to enter school healthy, alert and ready to learn. In fact, interventions that focus on improving hygiene practices seem to have the greatest impact, followed by improvements in water quality, sanitation and water quantity.

Prioritising the funding and implementation of integrated packages to include WASH interventions in schools and communities is an important part of creating long-term change in infrastructure, health and education systems.