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# Present Scenario of West Bengal regarding School sanitation and Drinking water

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***Abstract***

*Inadequate sanitation and drinking water has been found to be a major problem in primary and secondary Schools in India. This study therefore sets out to investigate the adequacy and utilization of sanitation facilities in primary, secondary and various Sishu siksha Kendras in various districts of West Bengal. District wise information was gathered from different studies and analyzed. The study shows that the success rate of achievement of water and sanitation target varies widely among different districts. Some of the districts are very well performing like Kolkata, Nadia, Howrah, South 24 parganas, Bankura and Purba Medinipur and Some of the districts have medium performance like, Birbhum, Purulia, North 24 Parganas, Paschim Medinipur, Malda, Murshidabad, Bardhaman, Jalpaiguri, Uttar Dijnajpur, Dakshin Dinajpur, Coochbihar. On the basis of observations and analysis of gathered informations it was recommended that there is need to develop water and sanitation facilities in different schools to manage the health hygiene related problems of students. School authorities need to prioritize the aspect of sanitation and hygiene.*

***Key Words: School, Sanitation, Water, Latrine, Hand Washing.***

**Introduction:** According to World Health Organization sanitation is the condition relating to public health, especially the provision of clean drinking water and adequate sewage disposal. Sanitation can be defined as hygienic measures taken to maintain public health, which includes safe disposal of human waste, waste water and solid wastes, control of vector diseases, domestic and personal hygiene. The National Sanitation Guidelines (2000), define sanitation as a process where people demand , develop , and sustain a hygienic and health environment for themselves erecting barriers to prevent the transmission of diseases. The process thus involves building, use and maintenance of latrines and other sanitation facilities, such as construction of urinals, hand washing facilities, safe water supply. It also involves learning behavior change, organization and collective action with other community

members (Nansereko , 2010). Inadequate sanitation is a major cause of disease worldwide and improving sanitation is known to have a significant beneficial impact on health. For any social and economic development, adequate sanitation in conjunction with good hygiene and safe water are essential to good health (Mara, *et. al.*, 2010). Poor health of children affects their ability to learn and therefore influences their prospect in life.

By "good sanitation" at School is meant that every students should have ready access to a convenient and well maintained facility for the safe disposal of human waste , suitable anal cleansing materials , most important the means to effectively wash hands with soap after defecation must be provided and used (Nansereko, 2010). Good schools need good students and good students need good sanitation. Sanitation is at the core human dignity and human progress. Access to sanitary toilets not only ensures dignity of the individual but also positively impacts health, well being and productivity, reduces dropout rates and encourages regular attendance in schools (National School sanitation Initiative, 2009).

Lack of sanitation facilities can cause distress. Women and girls in particular face problems of distance, lack of privacy and personal safety. Poor sanitation is also a serious threat to the cleanliness of the environment and the water resources used for the supply of drinking water. But beyond being just an issue of convenience, children have a right to basic facilities such as school toilets, safe drinking water, clean surroundings and basic information on hygiene. In addition if sanitary conditions are created children will be more enthusiastic to come to school, they will enjoy their school experiences and will learn better, and can bring concepts and practices on sanitation and hygiene back to their families (Protos, 2005).Schools can play an important role in bringing about behavioural changes and promoting better health as children are potential agents of change in their homes through their knowledge and use of sanitation and hygiene practices learned at school (Anonymous, 2010).

Many School lacking basic amenities like toilets, access to water and basic infrastructure creates an unwelcoming environment in schools, which leads to higher rate of absenteeism, finally resulting in to drop outs (http:// borgen project.org). For rural India, this becomes an extremely large issue because an estimated 50% of Schools here are without functioning toilets (Coca-cola India and NDTV, 2011).

In reality, Schools are often more than just places for learning and behavior change. If School sanitation and hygiene facilities are absent, or are badly maintained and used, schools become risky places where diseases are transmitted. Schools can also pollute the natural environment in such a way that it causes health hazards for the community at large. It is therefore, important that Schools have proper facilities ( Manual on School Sanitation and Hygiene, 1998).

From this point of view, an investigation in to the present condition of school sanitation system in west Bengal has been undertaken.

**District wise Status:** According to the District Census Handbook (2011), the district Purba Medinipur has been established WASH facilities in the school i.e ground water well and submersible pump, water and sanitation fixtures and a septic tank, latrines and urinals, Hand washing station , Drinking water stations , sanitary napkin disposal system. Seventeen to eighteen schools having water committee and organize hygiene education programme in their daily lesson. After WASH intervention programme , all school reported that 100% students use WASH facilities and drinking water facilities.

In Paschim Medinipur district out of 4,360 primary schools 499 schools have been provided toilet with one unit and some of the secondary schools have received the second unit. Emphasis is now given on setting up of separate units for boys and girls in primary schools , progress of which is quite satisfactory. At the same time coverage of all the Sishu Siksha Kendras (SSK), Madhyamik Siksha Kendras (MSK) and Anganwadi Centres ( AWC) is another target. However ,land related problem has become a hindrance in some of the cases and most of the Anganwadi centers still do not have their own building. Also presently the district is taking up the work of construction of sanitary latrines and at the same time of construction of new building is going on.

A major part of the district is lateritic and drought prone area in summer, water level goes down to a large extent. As a result good numbers of the shallow wells become dry from mid – summer. Even there are places, specially in Jhargram , Medinipur Sadar and parts of Kharagpur sub – division where situation starts to worsen from the onset of summer season and people are compelled to drink water from dug wells and other sources (District Human Development Report, 2011).

In Howrah district this year 44 schools undertook initiative for water testing at their sources It helped to increase the general awareness of students on water quality related issues and importance of regular water quality monitoring exercises.

Presently 78% school students in this district were habituated in Hand washing with soap before taking mid – day meal. In addition, several other impacts were noted on the functioning of wash maintenance management and operation in schools –

Thirty two percent (32%) schools were involved in awareness development programme of WASH related issues. 24% schools were included health hygiene related question in examination paper. This attempt may be seen as a step in regularizing WASH in school curriculum, thereby increasing the importance of the issues. 20% schools provided dustbins through requisition forwarded by child cabinets. Presently 45 schools were checked personal hygiene in daily basis.

District level data from Census 2001, reveals that south 24 parganas has medium rank regarding the sanitation facilities. A block wise analysis of achievement of sanitation targets shows that the success rate varies widely among different blocks. Some of the blocks are very well performing in the district achieving more than 100% of this target where as some

other blocks are very low performing. Namkhana ranks highest in the District , followed by Thakurpukur , Mahestala , Sonarpur , Gosaba , Kakdwip as 2nd , 3rd , 4th and 5th achievers.

Out of 2,468 primary schools in South 24 parganas, where toilets have been constructed so far, 335 schools do not have sanitary latrines, while in 509 there are no latrines for girls. The latter creates problems, particularly for adolescent girls, and may lead to drop outs ( District Human Development Report, 2009).

In Birbhum District as per DISE report, 2012, it is found that out of 3,740 schools 3,681 have boy's toilet and 2,269 schools have girls' toilet. It is also found that few schools do not have drinking water facilities. Such list of drinking waterless schools has been sent to Public Health Department, West Bengal for setting up tube well.
It is found that there are 7,829 Children with Special Needs (CWSNs) students were enrolled in schools all over the district. So in all such schools Barrier Free Toilets (BFT) are required for the purpose of access to CWSNs **(**http: // birbhum. gov. in / dpscindex.htm).

At present in Bankura 4, 84,262 students are now studying in 4,934 institutions under the district. To facilitate the students with adequate number of toilets, the district has initiated programme to construct toilets in each and every educational institution so that the situation of child friendly environment may be created. There are 4, 862 number of school students are covered by boys toilet for 2, 46,485 number of boys students. Similarly, 4,926 number of schools are covered by girls toilet for 2, 37,777 number of girls students. So far the CWSN (Children with Special Needs) friendly toilet facility is concerned 2, 606 numbers of schools are covered by such toilet for 7, 836 numbers of CWSN students. At present there is no school devoid of any toilet facility under the district. Safe drinking water facilities have been provided to each and every schools of this district.

Parent – teacher association has been formed along with the community people for their strong participation and involvement in this 'Swachh Vidyalaya' Programme (Sarva Shiksha Mission, 2014). Community awareness campaign has been conducted in school through 'Nirmal Vidyalaya Saptah'. A school level sit and draw competition was conducted to promote water, sanitation & hygiene in the School context is one of the most impressive highlights of "Nirmal Vidyalaya" Abhiyan. For better implementation of "Swachh Vidyalaya" each and every school will have to be covered under running water system and proper drainage system in school. Awareness to be made all over the local community for proper use of sanitation. Green plantation in and around school campus (Sarva Shiksha Mission, 2014).

In Purulia district most of the schools have separate toilet facilities but most latrine blocks have no water connections. Staff toilet range from an improved latrine up to flush toilets in rare cases. Three phases of water resources exploitation –

i) Dug well
ii) Hand tube wells
iii) Deep tube wells.

Many schools are using all three types, although dug wells are used for drinking water in only a few schools. In very few cases, mainly at girl's schools, piped water is supplied to the student toilets for body washing. In even fewer cases, there was a wash basin near the latrine for hand washing (Rotary International Water and Sanitation for Purulia, 2016).

A study conducted by the NGO CRY in 2013, in Murshidabad District shows that 11% of Schools do not have toilets and 18% have separate toilets for girls. In 34% of Schools, toilets are in bad condition or simple unusable.

Atindra Nath Das, Regional Director of CRY (http: // www.cry.org , 2013) told that 'Children do not have save safe drinking water, Schools still do not have their own building and toilets are missing'. There is a sharp increase in the dropout rate, mainly among adolescent girls, as they move from primary to upper primary. Separate toilets for girls are not satisfactory in most of the schools in this district.

Nadia district, among all the district of west Bengal, is a forerunner and has been able to nearly achieve the targets set for installation of sanitary toilets at the house hold and institutional level. The physical performance of sanitation indicates 70% coverage in Nadia as a whole, however among the blocks Nabadwip has the highest penetration followed by Karimpur II. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)-National Busket ball Association (NBA) Convergence Programme coined as "Sabar Souchagar" Programme in Nadia district was initiated on a pilot scale in July 2013 and at a district scale in a mission mode from October, 2013 for sanitation and hygiene promotion in the district. But in Anganwadi Centers (AWC), there is a lack of toilets within the premises. AWCs in rented accommodation face problem of a different nature. While many of the AWCs have toilets within the premises, owners or land lords often do not allow children to use toilet, forcing them to resort to open defecation. In Nadia district Anganwadi workers are playing an important role in generating awareness on the ill effects of open defecation and jointly campaigning with ANM, ASHA and school teachers to reach out to women, children and villagers. They are also educating children on Toilet usage and proper hand – washing process / hygiene practices (Anonymous, 2014).

In North 24 Parganas School Sanitation Programme is launched in the district to provide toilet complex in the primary schools of the District where such facility was lacking. Infrastructural facilities had been created by installing rural sanitary marts and additional production centers in 22 blocks of the district. So that people's awareness and demand can be substantially increased and sanitary appliances can be provided at a reasonable cost. In north 24 Pargans Anganwadi has 86% coverage and the sanitation facility in all the Anganwadis was limited to a single latrine. One toilet served as many as 170 babies in North 24 Parganas.

A study conducted by Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Malda District (2012) shows that water supply and sanitary conditions of Schools and Anganwadi centres were also not satisfactory. The drinking water facilities are not available during summer season. Many schools did not have separate toilet facilities for boys and girls.

In Hooghly district 3% schools did not have drinking water facility within the school campus.10% schools did not have drinking water facilities, particularly during summer season. 30% schools did not have separate toilet for boys and girls and were forced to share common toilets. About 17% of the schools had inadequate facility with sharing of one toilet by more than 100 students (Sarkar, 2014-2015).

In Bardhaman district 10% schools did not have toilet facilities within the school campus. 19% not having it round the year. 10% schools did not have separate toilets for boys and girls and were forced to share common toilets (Sarkar, 2014-2015).

Kolkata district have 100% drinking water facilities within the School campus round the year. Most of the schools have separate toilets for Boys and Girls (Sarkar, 2014-2015).

The district Jalpaiguri (17%), Uttar Dinajpur (13%), Dakhin Dinajpur (13%), Coochbihar (10%) Schools did not have drinking water facility. Schools without having toilet facility was reported by the district Jalpaiguri (22%), North Dinajpur (22%), South Dinajpur (17%), Coochbihar (5%) (Sarkar, 2014-2015).

**Conclusion and Recommendations:** On the basis of observations and analysis of gathered information from the relevant studies the following recommendations may be proposed for further improvement of sanitary condition of West Bengal:

- Plan for financial sustainability should develop including WASH repair savings account.
- Campaign for teachers to gain basic knowledge to fix small problems.
- School should provide more available and accessible sanitary napkins and incineration system for disposal.
- School should provide daily education regarding Water, Sanitation and Hygiene.
- Extensive educational Programme and publicity through mass media, meeting, postering, motivational lectures to the students should be undertaken to increase the awareness of the people about the health and hygiene practices and the environmental pollution.
- Steps should be taken to improve water supply system in parallel with providing sanitation facilities to maintain healthy sanitary environment.
- Water related control measures including the increase of the use of water in quality, improvement of water quality, restrict contact with polluted water supply should be initiated.
- Necessary disposal facilities of waste water should be upgraded.
- School administrations need to prioritize the aspect of sanitation and hygiene.

Despite the different backgrounds of the students in schools, school administration should design sanitation and hygiene policies and programmes to groom students and general school population into practically responsible citizens with good knowledge and practices as far as sanitation and hygiene are concerned. School administration should conduct regular monitoring and evaluation of the students' wing of toilets and urinals

instead of leaving the task to the sanitation perfects and support staff members. Regular cleaning and of the latrines and urinal sanitation facilities should be ensured especially in the morning and evening hours of the day. Regular maintenance should also be ensured by the school administrations to avoid possible break – down of the facilities which would comparatively make repairs more costly than maintenance. School should be encouraged and facilitated to put wall painting word curving and clay portrait that depict hygiene and sanitation messages. This can be installed in such manner that there are not easily removed.

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