

SCHOOL LED TOTAL SANITATION: PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

The school led total sanitation program emphasizes the complete elimination of open defecation from the catchments of the schools as a pre requisite for improving hygiene and sanitation. It aims to ensure communities' self-realization of hygiene and sanitation through sensitization. Ignition participatory rural appraisal tools are its backbone. These tools empower communities to see improved hygiene and sanitation as a matter of dignity, health and development; and open defecation as the matter of disgust and shame. The program envisages for developing school and students role model in sanitation and promoting the use of toilet and proper hygiene behavior. The ultimate goal of the program is to build positive attitudes and feelings of self-esteem of users to sustain hygiene and sanitation behavior. Participation, synergistic efforts, inclusion, innovations and recognition of sanitation as a public good are its guiding principles. The program has proved to be effective because parents pay interests in school based sanitation program due to the health improvements and maintenance of the privacy of their children, and sustainability of hygiene and sanitation in community continuously backed by school and community partnership.

1. BACKGROUND

Nepal has adopted the concept of Total Sanitation (TS) after her participation in the first South Asian Conference on Sanitation held in Bangladesh in 2003. The Rural Water Supply and Sanitation National Policy, Strategy and Sectoral Strategic Action Plan 2004 have recognized TS as the key approach in sanitation promotion. For the first time, the concept of School Led Total Sanitation (SLTS) was developed in Nepal in 2004 by adopting the TS approach. The SLTS program has encompassed capacity development activities specified in the Basic Sanitation Package, basic philosophy of the School Sanitation and Hygiene Education program, awareness related activities of the National Sanitation Week and Ignition Participatory Rural Appraisal (IPRA) tools used in Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS). SLTS is a comprehensive program package to achieve the universal sanitation (toilet) coverage in schools and communities followed by sustainable hygiene behaviors.

2. CONCEPT OF SLTS

SLTS is a new program approach, which aims at empowering schools and communities for eliminating Open Defecation (OD) from schools' catchments and promoting Hygiene and Sanitation (HS). SLTS recognizes the school as an entry point and student as the change agents. This program encourages communities to move towards TS. Unlike the conventional approaches of HS that had focused mainly on increasing the number of toilets, SLTS aims to achieve universal toilet coverage within the given program areas (school catchments) followed by good hand washing and hygiene behavior. The main assumption of SLTS is that the exploration of self-esteem of student, teacher and the community people is a basis of sustainability of HS behavior. Schools are generally fixed institutions and this can positively impact on the sustainability of any committee established and linked with them (Pretus et. al: 2008). The rewards and recognition which are the affirmative actions of SLTS stimulate sanitation promoter to work with full of devotion and vigor. Reduction in HS related diseases, enhancement of quality education and student's leadership skills and innovations in HS promotions are the key result areas. The following facts demand the SLTS program approach:

- People remain unsafe from faecal contamination till OD continues in communities.
- The school is an effective entry point due to enduring school and community relationship.
- The school galvanizes the local level efforts through mutual trust and reciprocity.

- The school and community partnership is a basis of sustainability and institutionalization.
- SLTS help fulfill resource gap through optimal mobilization of local resources including the support of the local bodies of the Government.
- Inclusiveness and participation is ensured because of universal toilet coverage and participatory planning and self-monitoring mechanism.
- SLTS is a demand generating approach since students work as a pressure group to catalyze their parents for building toilets and adopting good hygiene behavior.

3. STRATEGIES

Stakeholders' collaborative effort is taken as a broader strategy of SLTS to facilitate policy development, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. SLTS recognizes teachers and School Management Committee (SMC) and Parents Teachers Association (PTA) as the mover and shaker and the students as the change agents. The behavioral transformation, maintenance of environmental sanitation, promotion of sanitation facilities and total elimination of OD are its building blocks. SLTS has assumed that the revolutionary change in the thinking of students, teachers and communities takes place with the use of IPRA tools coupled with mass sensitization activities innovated locally. The participation of a wide range of stakeholders such as local Government bodies, Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs), local clubs, forest users groups, local clubs, etc., partnership with other development activities (income generation activities, informal education, etc.), use of participatory tool (social mapping, street drama, door to door visit program, etc.), capacity building of stakeholders (training, workshops, exposure visits, etc.), implementation of advocacy and awareness raising activities (radio program, wall painting, distribution of education materials, etc) and optimal mobilization of local resource (indigenous skills, local materials, money, etc.) are the key strategies of SLTS program. The school and community level plan of action synergizes local efforts, capitalize local knowledge/resources, enhance togetherness and build ownership. A hidden aspect of SLTS is that self-realization of student and community people about the importance of total sanitation approach results in the improved HS once they are sensitized to look sanitation as a matter of health, dignity and development as well as a 'public good'.

4. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

SLTS is a comprehensive program package of school and community sanitation. It comprises coordination, capacity development, community sensitization and promotion of sanitation facilities. These activities are accomplished in partnership with the local Government bodies, SMC, PTA, schools, communities, local clubs, etc. The SLTS program comprises software (orientation, exposure visit, advocacy, awareness, etc.) and hardware (construction of latrine, urinal, water supply facilities, etc.) aspects of HS. The program period of SLTS is designed for 3 years. However, the promotion of sanitation facilities and behavioral changes take place continuously for further promotional actions including post-Open Defecation Free (ODF) actions. It is important to note that promotional actions may happen serially or simultaneously in school and community irrespective of sequential steps of SLTS program; and there are several instances that even the orientation and introduction of the IPRA/mass sensitization tool alone could empower communities to promote toilet and achieve OD free situation on their own provided effective facilitation are ensured. For this, community people could be organized in the Community Action Groups in different *Toles* for promotional actions. The process of SLTS is elaborated as follows:

4.1 First phase-development phase: In this phase, the capacity of the school level stakeholders such as teachers, members of SMC and PTA, child clubs, women groups and VDC secretary is developed for planning, programming, identification of resources, mobilization of stakeholders and development of the school/community level plan of action. Child clubs are formed in schools to organize and strengthen them as the powerful change agents. The following key activities are accomplished to create an enabling environment for action:

- Orientation of stakeholders.
- Formation/re-formation of child clubs in schools.
- Formation of school catchments level sanitation committee (if needed).
- Development of the school/community level plan of action.

4.2 Second phase-promotional phase: This phase emphasizes social mobilization and promotion of toilets in schools and communities. Students, teachers, child club members, staff of NGOs/CBOs/local clubs and Water Supply and Sanitation Division/Sub-Division Offices (WSSD/SDOs), etc facilitate to apply IPRA/community sensitization tools and organize communities for promotional actions. Walk of praise and shame and development of social map help school/communities to assess the local situation, select technological options, set time line for toilet promotion, initiate construction work and declare ODF situation. Both the school and community work closely to improve hygiene and sanitation situation. In most cases, schools work as the linkage institutions to maintain relationship and communication between support agencies and users and recognize the sanitation promoters. The following key activities are undertaken in this phase:

- Promotion of toilet, urinal and water supply facilities in school.
- Entry and rapport building with communities.
- Use of IPRA and participatory community sensitization tools and analysis of sanitation situation.
- Formation and mobilization of Community Action Groups (if needed).
- Development and implementation of community level Plan of Action.
- Promotion of toilets in communities.
- Declaration of ODF situation.
- Reward and recognition.

4.3 Third phase-upgrading and follow up phase: Maintenance of the sustainability of behavior and sanitation facilities are the prime goals of SLTS. So, continuous upgrading of facilities, innovation in approaches/technology and knowledge management is therefore emphasized largely even after the attainment of the ODF situation. For replicating the efforts and retaining the community sentiments, following interventions take place in this phase:

- Advocacy and awareness.
- Upgrading of toilets and sanitation facilities.
- Exposure visit for learning exchange.
- Self-monitoring and facilitation of local level activities.
- Documentation, dissemination and knowledge management.

5. RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

In the SLTS program, local resources are optimally mobilized through local credit and self-help initiatives. The integration of HS activities with other development programs helps fulfill the resource gaps. Reward-recognition/revolving fund are provisioned to promote households toilets. Schools are provided with financial support to construct child-friendly, gender-friendly and differently abled person-friendly latrine, urinal and water supply facilities. The central role of the local Government bodies such as District Development Committee (DDC), Municipality and Village Development Committee (VDC) is recognized particularly for toilet promotion among socially disadvantaged and densely settled landless communities.

6. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

It has long been experienced that most of the HS related capacity development activities emphasize on building knowledge rather than attitude. The SLTS nevertheless aims to develop attitude, build alliance and

enhance innovation and change. It emphasizes on sensitizing students and community people to recognize HS as a matter of their health, dignity and development. SLTS program includes orientation, exposure visits to capacitate policy makers, planners, implementers and communities. IPRA tools (e.g. walk of praise and shame, social and defecation mapping, faeces calculation, flagging in OD areas) as well as other community sensitization activities such as public recognition of sanitation promoters, study visit of model school and communities in sanitation, cartoon show, whistle blowing, installation of idols (where OD existed in the past), etc. are used to sensitize the communities. Street drama, inter-school competition in sanitation, demonstration of video, rallies and processions, etc also deserve the significance for mass sensitization. It is important to note that the effectiveness of IPRA/community sensitization tools is however subject to community's socio-cultural setting and geographical situation. It may or may not need to apply all the tools at a particular area because it depends on how communities respond to them. The IPRA tools are not the 'panacea' or 'magical stick' for bringing the sweeping changes in people's mind set because the impact of these tools depends on how effectively these tools are applied. So, the role of facilitators is central.

7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The program activity of SLTS has been designed in a way to establish self-monitoring. Both school and communities are made responsible for monitoring/facilitating promotional actions. Following indicators are used for monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment:

- Construction, use and maintenance of water supply and sanitation facilities in schools.
- Institutionalization of child clubs to facilitate sanitation activities.
- Promotion of hand-washing behaviors.
- Promotion of student's hygiene and cleanliness in school and communities.
- Development and implementation of Plan of Action and local level norms.
- Rebuilding/upgrading of latrines and scaling up of SLTS.
- Generation of community demand of toilet/sanitation facilities.
- Declaration of ODF situation and its continuity.
- Development of educational quality and leadership skills of students.
- Enhancement of school and community partnership for financing and facilitation.
- Reduction in HS related mortality and morbidity.

9. ACHIEVEMENTS

During inception period, the SLTS program was implemented in some schools in UNICEF supported Decentralized Action for Children and Women (DACAW) districts. For this, supports were provided to construct latrine, urinal and water supply facilities at schools. The Department of Water Supply and Sewerage (DWSS) begun to promote SLTS nationwide through WSSD/SDOs by adopting the Sanitation Promotion Norms-2007 and Total Sanitation Centered Program Implementation *Margdarshan*-2009. The Department of Local Infrastructure Development and Agricultural Road is also using these norms to promote sanitation in local levels. The Department of Education has accelerated toilet promotion in schools which has helped strengthen the SLTS initiatives. UNICEF has expanded the SLTS program approach in DACAW districts. Similarly, WHO, UN-HABITAT and Nepal Red Cross Society have been promoting SLTS in various forms and scales. Besides, the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Fund Development Board, Nepal Water for Health, Water Aid Nepal, Environment and Public Health Organization, LUMANTI and other stakeholders have adopted the SLTS approach and worked together with the Steering Committee for National Sanitation Action (SCNSA), District Water Supply and Sanitation Coordination Committees (DWSSCC) *Chitwan* and other district level stakeholders to develop *Chitwan* as the Sanitation Model District. In Nepal, more than 50 VDCs and the catchments of hundreds of school and communities have been declared ODF through total sanitation approach. Contribution of SLTS in this regard is significant. Inspired by total sanitation initiative, DWSSCCs in several districts have begun to formulate district level strategic Action Plans on total sanitation. A whim for achieving ODF situation is

propagating as a social movement throughout the country. The SLTS program could therefore be accredited as both an evolution and revolution in sanitation. The momentum gathered in sanitation promotion stimulated by SLTS is promising.

10. CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The SLTS program has created an enabling environment to develop school and student as the role model in sanitation, generate community demand of improved HS, encourage communities to take the feelings of positive competition to promote toilets and stop OD. Nevertheless, SLTS is not free from challenges. The major challenge is to sustain the growing community sentiment towards TS. Despite the remarkable achievements, the scaling up and the spirit of the SLTS is hindered due to some challenges: a) lack of competent facilitators at grass root levels to sensitize communities, b) landlessness stands as a big bottleneck to expand toilet coverage among slum/squatters, c) maintaining the OD free situation across highways, and d) movement of massive seasonal labors in brick kilns and during harvesting of the crops in the intensive farming areas often kills the spirit of ODF situation. In some cases, the affinity for hurried declaration of ODF status in communities has lowered the pace for promoting hygiene and sanitation in schools. In such cases, it seems that the very attempts for SLTS in place are prone for attaining ODF in communities rather than on 'sustainable' changes on hygiene behavior though the efforts made so far have generated a strong sentiment and inspiration to expand ODF campaigns in an accelerated manner through the strong institutional back up of school, child clubs, NGOs, CBOs, local clubs, WSSD/SDOs and the local Government bodies. For this, clear cut post-ODF strategy for improved sanitation and hygiene is equally important for attaining the anticipated results of the SLTS. Some of the recommendations for strengthening the SLTS program are as follows:

- Development of competent human resources is essential to effectively facilitate school and community level actions.
- Integration of the SLTS initiative with community forestry, local credit program, self-help development program, etc is indispensable for fulfilling the resource gaps.
- A strong mechanism should be developed and implemented to integrate SLTS in the annual program of local Government bodies such as DDC, Municipality and VDC.
- Study visit of model schools/communities in sanitation should be further strengthened to enhance learning, sharing and innovation.
- Success stories should be developed and disseminated by targeting different groups.
- Schools and communities should be encouraged to document the locally generated mass sensitization tools.
- Massive social marketing of lucrative technologies like eco-san is essential to motivate communities to build and use toilet and utilize waste as a resource.
- Promotion of community toilets is must among squatters and slums dwellers with a provision to manage locally.
- Documentation, self-monitoring and facilitation should be ensured for institution building and group dynamism in grass-root level.
- Post-OD free strategies should be sincerely implemented to continuously engage school/communities in action. For this, they could be motivated with additional promotional actions to upgrade toilet and introduce the concept of *healthy village*.

11. REFERENCES

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Note:

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