



School Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Education + Community Impact *(Mi Escuela Saludable SWASH+)*

Evaluation - Summary and Recommendations

by Jacques-Edouard Tiberghien
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Mi Escuela Saludable SWASH+ (School Water Supply Sanitation Hygiene Plus Community Impact) is an initiative developed by the Millennium Water Alliance (MWA) to improve schools' access to basic water and sanitation services as well as hygiene behaviour, in collaboration with surrounding communities. The programme targeted 150 rural public schools (approximately 15,000 students) in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua and was executed by CARE, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Water for People (WfP) on behalf of IDB Water and Sanitation Division (INE/WSA) between March 2010 and July 2011. This evaluation by BPD Water and Sanitation focuses on two lines of inquiry: Partnership processes and programme results.

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Note to the Reader

This document contains only the executive summary and recommendations from a full evaluation report, which can be made available by emailing info@bpdws.org.

ACRONYMS

- ACE:** Community Educational Association
- ADESCO:** Community Development Association
- ANA:** National Water authority
- ANDA:** National Water Supply and Sanitation Administration
- CDE:** School Management Council
- COCODE:** Community Development Committee
- COSUDE:** Swiss Development Cooperation
- CONAES:** National Committee for Healthy Schools
- CE:** Community Educational
- ENACAL:** National Water Supply and Sanitation Company
- FECSA:** Healthy Family, School and Community
- FISE:** Social Investment Fund
- GPC:** Citizen Power Cabinet
- GWC:** Global Water Challenge
- IM:** Implementation Manual
- MARN:** *Ministerio de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales*
- MINED:** Ministry of Education
- MoE:** Ministry of Education
- MoH:** Ministry of Health
- MOU:** Memorandum of Understanding
- MWA:** Millennium Water Alliance
- PHAST:** Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation
- PAHO:** Pan American Health Organization
- PASHE:** School Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
- PROMESA:** Healthy School Promotion
- PTA:** Parents Teachers Association
- SARAR:** Self Esteem Associative strength Resourcefulness Action Planning and Responsibility
- SWASH +:** School Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Education + Community Impact
- TCCF:** The Coca-Cola Foundation
- WASH:** Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
- WHO:** World Health Organization

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. Introduction

Mi Escuela Saludable SWASH+

Mi Escuela Saludable SWASH+ (School Water Supply Sanitation Hygiene Plus Community Impact) is an initiative developed in 2008 by the Millennium Water Alliance (MWA), an association of eleven international NGOs with expertise in water supply, sanitation and hygiene education in rural and peri-urban areas formed in 2002. MWA's lead members in Central America are CARE, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Water for People (WfP). The *Mi Escuela Saludable* SWASH+ programme co-funded by IDB and The Coca-Cola Foundation (TCCF), with a budget of US\$2.15 million is the second phase of this regional SWASH initiative. It aims to improve access to basic water supply and sanitation services as well as hygiene behaviour in 150 rural public schools in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, targeting approximately 15,000 students. The programme, executed by IDB Water and Sanitation Division (INE/WSA) between March 2010 and July 2011, was launched in the context of the realignment process of IDB in 2007, which called for increasing IDB presence in the region, strategic alliances with private and civil society partners, and a renewed emphasis on the water and education sectors.

Rationale for intervention

Parasitic worm infections and diarrhoea remain major threats for hundreds of millions of children, aggravating malnutrition, delaying physical development and affecting attendance and performance at school. Schools, at the very heart of communities, play a key role in shaping the attitudes, habits and expectations of future generations with respect to hygiene and water and sanitation services. Yet, in most of the world, their sanitary condition is appalling. Central American countries (Costa Rica excluded) are among those with the highest rates of child mortality in the Latin American region. Malnutrition and the lack of safe water and sanitation contribute to half of these deaths. According to the MWA, approximately 75% of rural public schools in the region lack access to safe water and/ or adequate sanitation. As a result, students are unable to adopt appropriate hygiene practices. WASH in schools projects enhance hygiene conditions by granting access to adequate watsan facilities and promoting hygiene behaviour. Such interventions also motivate children, and especially girls to attend school. Targeting public schools provides an effective entry point to community interventions. Because public schools are government-supported these programs are relatively easy to target and cost effective.

Programme strategy and partnership structure

The programme was thus built around four components or key objectives, which tackle essential dimensions of WASH in schools work:

- I. Water and Sanitation Infrastructure
- II. Hygiene Promotion
- III. Community Strengthening;
- IV. Advocacy, Knowledge Management and Dissemination.

The MWA was contracted by IDB to implement the programme in accordance to the ToR drafted by the IDB. They prepared the Implementation Manual, which they shared with the various NGO partners in each country. Through the signature of MOUs, government agencies, such as the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Ministry of Health (MoH) and national water authorities committed to support the implementing partners during project implementation and to ensure follow-up of the beneficiary schools. In Nicaragua, CARE and CRS targeted 17 and 26 schools respectively in the departments of Matagalpa and Esteli. In Guatemala, Wfp's intervention in the department of Quiché comprised 65 schools while CARE served 27 schools in the department of San Marcos. Fifteen schools of the department of Chalatenango, El Salvador, benefited from the programme through CARE.



Figure 1: Map of intervention for SWASH+ 2nd phase (adapted from Water Corps Monitoring Report 2011)

Evaluation

The evaluation carried out in Feb-Mar 2011, focused on two lines of inquiry: Partnership Processes and Programme Results. Largely qualitative, the approach relied on document review, interviews and unannounced school visits carried out in March 2011. Thirty five schools were visited across Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador. The sample, representative of the total population of beneficiary schools, included four schools of the previous phases of *Mi Escuela Saludable* SWASH+. In each country, the evaluator was accompanied by the external consultant previously contracted by IDB to oversee the programme during implementation. A rating system was developed to evaluate performance on the main components of the programme, which complements the largely qualitative body of information gathered through school visits and helps gain quick insights into the achievements of the program.

1.2. Programme Evaluation

Main outcomes

The global targets set by the main outcome indicators were either met or exceeded: 150 schools and 23,730 pupils (instead of the 15,000 targeted) benefited from the program. Importantly, a six-month no-cost extension for the donors was agreed, expanding the initial 12-month project timeframe to 18 months. In that period the NGOs continued to make significant financial contribution, approximately \$200,000 or more. This six-month no-cost extension essentially resulted after the project was approved by the Bank, from unexpectedly long administrative delays associated with the preparation and approval of a number of school specific documents (including technical files, mitigation plans...) critical for the implementation of project activities. This significant delay was experienced in all three countries. Most activities were postponed, causing a number of difficulties.

Water and sanitation infrastructure

Appreciation of key players at project completion: **8.2/10**

Average rating of ex post evaluation: **8.5/10**

Implementing partners fully met their objectives: WASH systems were designed and delivered in 150 schools. All of them met national norms or the minimum *Mi Escuela Saludable* SWASH+ technical standards and were delivered with a routine maintenance plan. At the moment of the project completion, on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 10¹, the level of achievement of the programme on this component was rated by a pool of key players² at 8.2, which reflects a very high level of satisfaction with the quality of the facilities built. Whilst the types of facilities vary geographically, often reflecting budget constraints, the facilities built are generally robust and based on appropriate technologies meeting people's needs and expectations. The facilities built by the programme in all three countries are, according to conversation with IDB supervisors and NGO staff amongst the best that can be found nationally and sometimes the only ones that comply with the norms.

The school visits undertaken as part of this evaluation confirmed this appreciation. On a scale ranging from 1 to 10, on average the schools visited scored a very good 8.5³ as far as the quality and functionality of their WASH facilities was concerned. After one year, the facilities remained in generally very good condition and operated properly. Guatemala reaching the highest score (9.1) thanks to higher functionality, closely followed by El Salvador (8.4) and Nicaragua (7.8). While the evaluation did not allow a systematic check of the number of pupils per functional tap and per latrines or toilet, observations suggest that the sometimes rather strict norms are not met in a significant number of schools, at least as far as the

¹ Where 1= significant scope for improvement, 5= Satisfactory; 10= Excellent

² The rating is an average of scores given by a pool of key informants representing both NGOs and IDB supervision. (The pool includes 4 staff from NGOs and 1 from IDB in Nicaragua, 2 from NGOs and 1 from IDB in Guatemala, and 1 from an NGO and 2 from IDB in El Salvador.). The scale reflects an average of the subjective appreciation of each informant.)

³ This scale describes the quality and functionality of facilities without addressing their degree of compliance with the norms. Scores, defined by the evaluator, result from an analysis carried out with the accompanying IDB supervisor and MoE official (when available) following school visits. Scores were systematically the product of a consensus (or near consensus) between the two or three parties involved.

number of toilets are concerned. Likewise, a systematic and accurate check on the existence, effectiveness and frequency of water treatment was not possible.

All the sanitation technologies used by the implementing partners were found to work perfectly in a number of schools visited. Appropriate technologies thus exist for all the biophysical and socio-economic environments targeted in the program. Their appropriate use and maintenance is rather the limiting factor.

Whilst the development of the 150 technical files constituted a laborious exercise, the thorough and very collaborative work it involved greatly limited risk-taking and increased the likelihood of selecting the best design. The quality of the technical support and critical oversight of IDB through the field supervisors was also cited as a decisive factor in all three countries. In Guatemala, the hiring of an effective contractor by CARE and the quality of material they used almost led the NGO to meet their objectives within the original timeframe. In contrast WfP faced considerable difficulties through the involvement of the local private sector and the contribution of municipalities and communities.

> Recommendations: Simplify official approval process of school-level project; further enhance the use of water disinfection and filtration; hang mirrors and check location and appropriateness of soap dispensers

Hygiene promotion

Appreciation of key players at project completion: **6.5/10**

Average rating of ex post evaluation: **7.2/10**

The targets of the second component of the programme, Hygiene Promotion, were all exceeded. However, the absence of baseline data and monitoring of hand washing with soap and the proper use of latrines prevented tracking progress on these critical indicators. Rating by a pool of IDB and NGO informants of this component of the programme *at the time of project completion* produced an average score of 6.5. This is just above 'satisfactory' but far from 'excellent'. This rating reflects the challenge of this component: the delivery of well-designed training activities during a period of only a year or so is unlikely to instil new hygiene behaviours

The relatively low budget allocated to hygiene promotion generally led to limited resources made available for the corresponding activities. The frequency of visits to schools and meetings with teachers, parents and pupils was reduced, which profoundly influenced the outcome of the program: a relatively continuous presence and activity of social promoters in communities is a key success factor. The administrative bottleneck also caused delays in the educational activities, and decoupled them from the construction of facilities, which lowered the convening power of NGOs. Despite the six-month extension, the hygiene promotion process was often hurried.

After one year, project gains have been well sustained in terms of hygiene practices. 7.2/10 is the average score obtained across the 31 schools visited. Important contrasts exist amongst schools. Guatemalan schools reached the higher score 7.8, closely followed by schools in Nicaragua (7.2) and El Salvador (6.25). The participatory approach and tools (e.g. SARAR cards, hygiene corner, hygiene box) were very instrumental. School leadership is a major determinant of the success or failure of WASH in schools projects. The existence of an institutional framework addressing hygiene promotion was also influential. The lack of soap and toilet paper remains a critical obstacle that only a few schools have managed to properly overcome.

> **Recommendations:** Adjust the timeframe and combine hard- and software components; use levels of hygiene effectiveness ladder; enhance the follow-up phase; enhance the institutional framework; secure soap and toilet paper provision

Community strengthening

Appreciation of key players at project completion: **6.5/10**

Average rating of ex post evaluation: **7.5/10**

The objectives associated with the Community Strengthening component were fully met or exceeded: 135 community educational organizations were created and trained in hygiene, systems O&M, financial management and leadership. 1,100 women were trained in hygiene. All organizations took or assigned responsibility for the sustainability of the school water and sanitation system (infrastructure repairs, provision of soap and toilet paper, solid waste handling, etc.). All of them were deemed to have the resources necessary to meet O&M needs.

The appreciation of the achievement on this component of the programme by the pool of IDB and NGO informants at the time of project completion produced an average score of 6.5/10, reflecting the shared impression that much more could have been achieved under more favourable circumstances. Effective community strengthening implies arriving at a clear definition of roles and responsibilities (R&R) by means of a consensus approach (the only relevant approach in a context of Free Education). This lengthy process ideally needs to be fuelled by the momentum created by the simultaneous construction of the facilities. In most cases, this definition of R&R occurred at the very end of the project in a hurried manner. There was no time left for follow-up and customised institutional strengthening for each school. NGOs sought community participation at all stages of the project cycle. Despite the general goodwill of community members to engage in the project, their capacity to participate was sometimes significantly hindered by competitive activities. Except for WFP, NGOs were hardly able to provide follow-up to the organizations formed once the facilities were in operation.

Rating of Community Strengthening in the schools visited led to a very reasonable average score of 7.5/10 with Guatemala leading the way (8.0), followed by El Salvador (7.1) and Nicaragua (6.7).⁴ Getting parents to contribute a minor fee to buy soap, toilet paper and to cover the basic O&M costs of the facilities was usually difficult in all three countries. This partly stems from the Free Education principle according to which parents should not pay a penny for the schooling of their children. Nonetheless, *Mi Escuela Saludable* SWASH+ could build on the goodwill of local stakeholders: parents, school staff, and community development groups. The input of community development committees varied across countries. Guatemalan COCODE (community development committees) were particularly functional. High turn-over in school and community institutions (teachers, PTA and committees) is an issue. Another challenge was to achieve a level of formalisation of arrangements between stakeholders that was meaningful (leading to compliance), socially

⁴ Due to the unannounced nature of school visits and the time allocated for the evaluation, the functionality of the organizations involved in sustaining SWASH+ gains was not systematically assessed. The score for Community Strengthening takes into account the level of participation of the community and parents during the project (5 points) and the level of their contribution to sustainability (5 points). The latter considers the existence of active formal structures, as well as informal mechanisms which guarantee the sustainability of project gains (e.g. facilities are operational and well maintained, soap and toilet paper are available).

acceptable (not conflicting with informal mechanisms or introducing excessive rigidity), simple and practical. The short timeframe and significant administrative delays, as well as limited budget earmarked for this component, limited the capacity of NGOs to provide the substantial follow-up and hands-on tailored training needed.

> **Recommendations:** Organise high impact preliminary awareness raising events; organise partnership meetings; customize interventions on community strengthening; establish engaging (playful) accountability and follow-up mechanisms; explore broader technical support mechanisms

Advocacy, knowledge management & dissemination

All the objectives associated with this last component of the programme were completed: Six national and two regional workshops were organised, two bulletins with case studies and lessons-learned were published. In addition, an intervention database was prepared as well as two manuals (minimum technical standards and implementation strategy). Also, a framework for national WASH advocacy plans was developed with the participation⁵ of the governments. As a result, *Mi Escuela Saludable* SWASH+ positive impacts are known amongst key institutions of the government and civil society, and key government institutions have increased their participation in such initiatives. *Mi Escuela Saludable* SWASH+ produced vast and useful information, well shared amongst partners and disseminated to the public by various means. This strong capital of knowledge and information will be of great use for all organizations concerned by WASH in schools. It will inform the next advocacy steps of the MWA and partners.

In Nicaragua, the influence of the programme at central level was manifest in the flexibility that Nuevo FISE (Nicaragua's Social Investment Fund) introduced in their norms regarding infrastructure design. Likewise, possible plans of the MoE to emphasise hygiene in its school monitoring plan is another sign of positive influence at central level. A major hindrance to advocacy work in the country stems from the extreme turn-over rate in all levels of the administration. In Guatemala, the existence of the Healthy Home and School programme with a national board for healthy schools (CONAES), established in 2000 by MoE and MoH with the support of UNICEF has considerably facilitated the advocacy efforts at department and municipal level. In El Salvador, the SWASH commission formed under the programme (still active) had some influence at intermediary level of MoE and at central level to a lesser extent.

> **Recommendations:** Target more strategic levels; Improve information systems; Monitor WASH in schools at MoE level

Schools from previous phases of *Mi Escuela Saludable* SWASH+

The evaluation provided the rare opportunity to take a glance at the sustainability of programs in schools that had benefited from previous phases of *Mi Escuela Saludable* SWASH+. On the basis of the four schools visited, the sustainability of the interventions implemented several years ago was excellent. The very high scores attributed to three of them reflect the high quality and functionality of their facilities, the anchoring of hygiene behaviour, and the capacity of the educational community and other local stakeholders to cope with the regular, preventive and corrective maintenance of the systems. These three schools have in common a strong leadership, a relatively high cohesion and a shared

⁵ The intensity of participation varied across countries.

commitment towards WASH in the staff team. These qualities were missing in the fourth school, which totally failed to sustain project gains. The sum of excellent ratings obtained by three of the four schools visited can be regarded as an exception: it does not reflect the average rating that would be typically derived from a more representative sample of schools from the previous phase. As such, it provides an overly optimistic picture of *Mi Escuela Saludable* SWASH+ sustainability. Two of the four schools visited have benefited from regular follow-up of the implementing partner post-project. This characteristic, a key factor of success, is not present in all schools of the prior phase. Also, another of these four schools is very small (i.e. one classroom and one teacher only), which is not representative of the average school size. It can be reasonably assumed that the evaluation of a larger sample of school of the previous phase would have shown less sustainability of the programme, unfortunately.

Nonetheless, this picture is very encouraging: it demonstrates that high levels of sustainability are achievable, that the technologies used in the latest phase have demonstrated their appropriateness and sustainability. Critically too, it confirms that, despite poverty conditions, making toilet paper and soap available for pupils each day of the year is within reach, and that the school leadership and staff cohesion are fundamental.

Analysis of the different interventions

The three NGOs followed slightly different approaches, which was perceived as an extra learning opportunity by IDB, by comparing processes and identifying those that are more adapted.

Table : Implementation approaches by NGO

MWA member and country	Water and sanitation infrastructure	Hygiene promotion program
CARE El Salvador and Nicaragua	Led by CARE, contracting construction services locally	Led by CARE
CRS Nicaragua	Led by local NGO partner (FIDER and CARITAS)	Teachers lead after being trained by local NGO partner
WfP Guatemala with a geographical concentration of all its operation in Guatemala in the department of Quiche	Led by local NGO partner trained by WfP and with strong support of the Municipal Govt. The Municipal Govt. contributes with the skilled labour and the community with the unskilled labour. A contract between WfP and the Community is signed before activities are initiated.	Teachers lead after being trained by health promoters trained by WfP

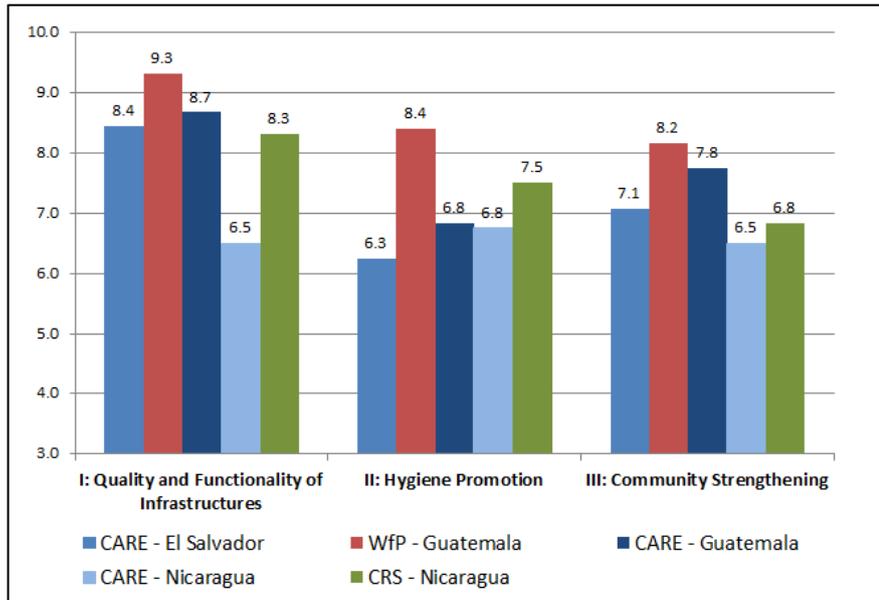


Figure 2: Per partner comparison of the level of achievement one year after project completion

A limitation to such a comparison however is that the different NGOs operated in different socio-economic contexts and in three countries baseline data was missing. Also, given the pilot-scale of the programme, institutional situation as well as the skills and approach of the staff members dedicated to the project mattered significantly too.

The graph reflects the greater challenge posed by the software aspects of the intervention for all partners. Whilst all NGOs obtain high scores on the first component, WfP achieves the highest. Functionality of their facilities was higher, notably because more taps and toilets were in use (and not broken or stolen). The more frequent follow-up visits of WfP during and after the project can partly explain this difference. WfP's higher score on Hygiene Promotion coincides with the observed emphasis put by the NGO on this component, the higher quality of their expertise and know-how in the promotion of educational tools and participatory approaches and the greater resources invested on this component. The two NGOs active in Guatemala show the highest scores on Community Strengthening, which is probably due in part to the relative reliability and functionality of the official COCODE community development committees. Levels of participation during and after the project was higher in Quiché than in San Marcos overall. In Nicaragua, the scores of CRS, superior to CARE's on both Hygiene Promotion and Community Strengthening, can be explained in part by greater local presence of CRS through their partners FIDER and CARITAS and the greater investment on these components, notably thanks to a higher complementarity with Mi Cuenca program.

The three NGOs have different traditions, guiding principles and levels of commitment as to software aspects. WfP increasingly focuses on level of service rather than on number of beneficiaries. There is a trade-off between implementation efficiency and level of operation. CARE, through their pragmatism managed to efficiently achieve their goal almost within the initial 12-month timeframe, whilst WfP required 18 months.

1.3. Lessons Learned about the Partnership

Programme relevance

The programme addressed a critical demand, shedding light on needs neglected by the governments in the region, and where potential gains for society are vast. Concerning the level of ambition and realism of the programme, IDB took a rather conservative and pragmatic position, regarding behaviour change as an impact exceeding the timeframe of the programme and the bank's accountability. The aim was more realistically framed as establishing the conditions for success, notably through a greater emphasis on Hygiene Promotion and Community Strengthening, as stressed by the MWA. The means of this ambition were insufficiently reflected in the budget breakdown and result matrix however. The ambitious timeframe, which donors put no special pressure on, was not reasonable considering the level of collaboration planned with the public authorities and corresponding risks of delays and likely impact of educational component, and the complexity of the approach⁶. Although IDB and MWA have an extensive knowledge of the regional context, it was reportedly hard for them to anticipate the risk of such a bottleneck at government level as the one associated with the signature of MoUs and approval of the technical files.

Due to these limitations, *Mi Escuela Saludable* SWASH+, albeit programmatically very relevant for the MWA and NGO partners, presented a risk for NGOs. The risk that they drift away from their core vision and essence, by adopting more of a supply-driven approach than following the demand-driven participatory empowering model they tend to identify with. NGOs took a calculated risk to engage in this second phase of the programme with IDB, acknowledging the opportunity to provide IDB, an important actor, with direct and meaningful experience in school WASH programming, an area that had been historically insignificant in country loan programs. As for The Coca-Cola Foundation (TCCF), *Mi Escuela Saludable* SWASH+ matched very well with their strategy for social and environmental sustainability and the prospect of collaboration with IDB was very attractive: leveraging funds with an honest broker close to the public sector and with presence in the field. On their side, IDB were seeking opportunities of partnership with a non-traditional donor. TCCF was a great candidate for the new Water and Sanitation Division and partnering with the MWA allowed working with three major trusted US-based water NGOs expert in water, guaranteeing much visibility. Furthermore, the MWA and TCCF had previously worked together. *Mi Escuela Saludable* SWASH+ was also strategically meaningful for IDB, supporting both the rural component of its Water and Sanitation Initiative and the Early Childhood Development (ECD) area of the Bank's Education Initiative. The programme, also consistent with several ongoing and upcoming interventions in the three countries, served as a golden opportunity to derive lessons feeding into an integrated rural Watsan approach. Finally, an alliance would also be beneficial to IDB not only in regional programs, but also in large scale national programs, such as Honduras, where MWA members work in 84 municipalities in the country.

⁶ Since it was a contractual agreement the NGOs had to assume personnel costs due to delays, exchange rate risks and others.

Effectiveness of programme structure

MWA played a unique and fundamental role in the design phase of *Mi Escuela Saludable* SWASH+ and as an expert regional coordinator of Watsan activities working through the most reputable NGOs of the sector. The strategic relevance of an additional centralisation layer during programme implementation makes particular sense when a project of regional nature is desired. Since adjustments of the implementation mechanisms and decision-making are generally made at local level, a regional platform can be a source of administrative complication despite its value of offering cross-fertilisation opportunities for the program. While such a regional platform is beneficial to donors like TCCF, it is less of need for IDB, who rather focus on a particular country/location to achieve economies of scale and reach more beneficiaries

The results-orientation of the programme and tight timeframe inhibited the ability of NGOs to experiment, which was arguably a key aspect of this pilot program: the contractual nature of the agreement with the MWA encouraged NGO partners to achieve wide access and high value-for-money interventions, but more flexibility would have been required to foster innovation and to let NGO partners express the full diversity of their respective approaches. The monitoring system put excessive emphasis on infrastructure at the expense of Hygiene Promotion and Community Strengthening. Arguably, the lack of baseline data on hand washing with soap and proper use of latrines did not justify the absence of basic monitoring of these critical indicators of hygiene behaviour. The monitoring system was also skewed towards a quantitative analysis of the programme, which possibly stemmed from 'statistical' requirements of IDB and/or TCCF expectations.

Signing MoUs with the authorities caused delays and failed to generate the government accountability IDB were seeking through the signature of these agreements. Overall, IDB's concern for accountability combined with MWA's diligence with regard to the terms of their contract with IDB led to an excess of formalism, exemplified by the exaggeratedly long and complex technical files. Local supervision, undertaken by external consultants recruited by IDB was consistently regarded by NGO staff as a success factor for the program. They represented a real quality control for NGOs although their civil engineering background often led them to put insufficient emphasis on software components of the program. The involvement of IDB experts varied across countries. Staff turn-over, in Guatemala and in Washington, led to a temporary slow-down in communications.

Recommendations for partnership structure with NGOs

The type of relationships and level of collaboration that IDB has fostered with the public sector and NGOs in this programme is relatively new. Establishing these bridges, strengthening such alliances and making them more effective is required. The value NGOs add in WASH in schools and community watsan projects is particularly noticeable on sustainability issues. NGOs traditionally operate with a certain level of autonomy and flexibility, which they require as a space for innovation. Yet, they need to link more with the institutional framework and be accountable, if strong collaborations are to be developed with the public sector. The current trend is to instil more private, business-like practices in the NGO sector, which the programme achieved to some extent. The Water Division of IDB, in the definition of their future programs, can propose incentive measures, in agreement with the beneficiary country, to collaborate with NGOs in meaningful ways. As there is no one-size-fits-all solution in partnership building, appropriate partnership structures and mechanisms need to be found and negotiated between partners. Particularly when considering large scale programs, building on the lessons-learned of pilot initiatives and

brainstorming / negotiating through these partnership issues with the relevant actors is worth dedicating appropriate time to.

A general recommendation thus, in the context of scaled-up WASH in schools interventions (possibly led by the government and addressed as a sub-component of an integrated community watsan approach), is to convene a series of workshops to jointly reflect on these issues, understand the perspective, resources, constraints of each actor, envision scenarios with different breakdown of R&R, identify possible accountability mechanisms and governance structures, and initiate some negotiations.

Institutionalisation

Mi Escuela Saludable SWASH+ has been a significant learning experience for the Water and Sanitation Division of the IDB: an occasion to learn about various facets of multi-sector partnership and to quickly acquire state-of-the-art knowledge on the theory and practice of WASH in schools interventions. The programme also had a positive influence on the image of IDB. NGO partners and the MWA also benefited a lot from the programme and organizations were transformed, notably as a result of the sometimes unprecedented level of collaboration achieved with public authorities at central and intermediate levels. More collaboration between NGOs and Government can now be expected. In Guatemala, *Mi Escuela Saludable* SWASH+ has supported the updating of the National Healthy School Strategy established in 2000. In Nicaragua, the learning in the departmental delegations of the MoE was significant as much in terms of the approaches and tools used by NGOs as in terms of the types of infrastructures they build.

The programme reaffirmed the relevance, cost-effectiveness and tangible impacts of WASH in schools work. It has triggered TCCF to envisage funding a similar initiative in the region in the near future. *Mi Escuela Saludable* SWASH+ has been very useful for IDB to formulate larger-scale WASH in schools interventions in Mexico and South America. In El Salvador a new phase of the project, implemented by CARE, is also about to start with funds from the central government. In Guatemala, Helvetas is building upon the efforts of *Mi Escuela Saludable* SWASH+ and supporting the MoE by strengthening hygiene promotion in the department of San Marcos. Also, the initiative has been inspirational for COSUDE in the development of their own school programme in Nicaragua.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Table 2: Overview of Recommendations

Theme	Recommendations
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplify official approval process of school-level project • Further enhance the use of water disinfection and filtration • Hang mirrors and check location and appropriateness of soap dispensers
Hygiene Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust the timeframe and combine hard- and software components • Use levels of hygiene effectiveness ladder • Enhance the follow-up phase • Enhance the institutional framework • Secure soap and toilet paper provision
Community Strengthening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise high impact preliminary awareness raising events • Organise <i>Mi Escuela Saludable</i> SWASH+ partnership meetings • Customize interventions on community strengthening • Establish engaging (playful) accountability and follow-up mechanisms • Explore broader technical support mechanisms
Advocacy & KM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target more strategic levels • Improve information systems • Monitor WASH in schools at MoE level
Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep strengthening Public Sector – NGO partnerships • Foster private-sector practices in NGOs • Create space for negotiating partnership structures and mechanisms

2.1. Design and Construction of Infrastructure

➤ **Simplify official approval process of school-level projects**

Find ways to reduce the delays associated with the official review and approval of the technical files presenting school-level project specifications: Learn about the pros and cons of the approach followed by COSUDE in Nicaragua as it unfolds. It involves developing a catalogue of standard designs for WASH in schools facilities and elaborating the documentation for official approval based on clusters of up to 50 schools. Address environmental mitigation at cluster-level or lower requirements at project-level.

➤ **Further enhance the use of water disinfection and filtration**

Achieving the proper use of ‘appropriate’ disinfecting and filtering methods and devices is a challenging task, which constitute the main objective of certain programs. If such a goal is targeted as part of a WASH in schools initiative, greater resources are needed to cover the cost of awareness raising and training sessions as well as follow-up.

➤ **Hang mirrors and check the location and appropriateness of soap dispensers**

Promote the use of mirrors over tapstands or in classrooms to support hygiene promotion activities. Lack of soap in schools is a key obstacle, lack of soap at the tapstand is yet another. Check whether tried and tested robust and affordable soap dispensers can form a viable alternative to keeping the soap bars within classrooms.

2.2. Hygiene Promotion

➤ **Adjust the timeframe and combine hard- and software components**

Harmonise the schedules of stakeholders (implementer, community member, school): plan activities so that the dynamic created around hygiene promotion is not interrupted by school vacations. Run hardware and software components simultaneously, making the most of the enthusiasm sparked by the prospect of new infrastructure to raise awareness and trigger interest in and commitment to behaviour change across the educational community.

➤ **Use levels of hygiene effectiveness ladder**

Consider using the hygiene effectiveness ladder recently developed by IRC⁷ as a means to monitor progress on hygiene promotion and in the evaluation of future WASH in school and community watsan programs.

➤ **Enhance the follow-up phase**

A 2-3 year phase of vulnerability following a WASH in schools project is common, during which the newly developed hygiene behaviours become ingrained and the facilities O&M system fine-tunes. Arguably, beyond three years of enjoying improved access to water and sanitation and achieving hygienic behaviours in all age groups, a sufficient momentum has built and regression to the previous state is less likely. Future interventions of IDB Water Division need to foster such follow-up after infrastructure construction in order to anchor project gains.

⁷ Assessing hygiene cost-effectiveness – Dec 2011

➤ **Enhance the institutional framework**

Reinforce and make greater use of the existing bi-ministerial agreement between the MoE and MoH in Guatemala. In all countries, verify with the MoE and ensure that the curriculum of primary school teachers includes an updated module on WASH in schools and is addressed as a priority. In El Salvador, lobby to obtain approval by the MoE of the educational modules jointly developed by CARE, the MoE and the MoH (or a similar tool).

➤ **Secure soap and toilet paper provision**

Reliable mechanisms involving the MoEs and/or the educational community are needed to ensure soap and toilet paper are available all year round. Lobbying is needed to put a higher priority on these supplies. Before the launch of large WASH in school initiatives, more precise commitments of the MoE in terms of the supply of such consumables (but also educational material and monitoring) may need to be negotiated.

2.3. Community Strengthening

➤ **Organise high impact preliminary awareness raising events**

Further raise the awareness of stakeholders of both the magnitude of the opportunity presented to them through WASH in schools project and the nature of the challenge. The impact that the quality of the first exposure to the project can have on stakeholder mobilisation is crucial: as a consequence invest more resources there. In such preliminary meetings with the members of the educational community, including pupils and parents, use high impact video documents to report on real-life experiences, real successes, real benefits, real challenges, real failures and missed opportunities. Use champions and representatives of the MoE and MoH to increase buy-in. Use the expertise of the marketing and media industries (e.g. input from Coca-Cola partner) to trigger demand and to instil from the beginning a sense of shared responsibility and commitment. Tailor messages adapted to each stakeholder and age group.

Set up preliminary visits, whereby the key stakeholders of candidate or future beneficiary schools (e.g. PTA members, teachers, director) can observe schools where hygiene behaviour change is a success, where watsan systems are well used and maintained and where teachers and parents can relate positive impacts.

➤ **Organise *Mi Escuela Saludable* SWASH+ partnership meetings**

Building on the awareness building events, convene meetings with key partners such as: PTA members, school staff, community development committee, water committee, municipality, MoE and MoH officers. Using local success and failure stories, make clear that the challenge requires effective partnership. Introduce lifecycle-cost basics, basic principles of work in partnership (R&R formalization, accountability, governance). Follow a participatory approach (e.g. jointly facilitated by MoE/MoH following induction by NGOs) so that participants, meeting after meeting, set up their own partnership arrangements and establish the level of formalisation needed to operate reliably.

➤ **Customise interventions on community strengthening**

Adjust Community Strengthening activities to the particular weaknesses⁸ of each system. Ensure that substantial hands-on training and follow-up occurs to diagnose weaknesses and address them. Just as the technical files illustrated the importance of a tailored approach to the hardware component, require such a customised approach on these ‘community strengthening’/local partnerships aspects of the programme and define steps with corresponding indicators.

➤ **Establish engaging (playful) accountability and follow-up mechanisms**

Striving for accountability can cause tensions in communities and prove inadequate. Introducing accountability mechanisms in a playful context sparking the interest of all can be a great solution: good games and engaging activities help dissipate tensions but require clear rules. Explore the scope for inter-school competitions at program-scale, that embed WASH in schools challenges in the context of a game incentivizing all stakeholders (i.e. educational community, municipality, MoH and MoE officers) to meet their respective commitment to sustain project gains. For example, a game, covering multiple topics of interest for all stakeholders (e.g. nutrition, health, environment protection), would provide scope for private sector participation. Rolled over a two-year duration at least (to cover the ‘vulnerability phase’), this game represents an energizing alternative to the generally lacking post-project follow-up and monitoring phase. It could provide the protracted stimuli needed to keep the momentum high and anchor behaviour change for good.⁹

➤ **Explore broader technical support mechanisms**

The influence of the community members trained in plumbing skills in El Salvador needs to be assessed. Their impact was uncertain during the evaluation since no reference to them was made during the visit of schools where their services were badly needed (e.g. broken tap, broken toilet float valve). Reflect on the broader role that water committees may play in some countries. In Nicaragua, through their recent legal status (2010), the scope of their mandate can be extended by municipal decree to cover the O&M of schools if that decision results from a consensus at community level, under the following rationale: community members are jointly responsible for school water management and sanitation and families have to contribute to school WASH services. Examine the risks of such an approach which overtly poses the question of the incapacity of the MoE to meet its commitments. Diluting the responsibility of the MoE can lead to disengaging them. Consider the circuit-rider model, which can be relevant for large-scale programs (> 500 communities). Cost of the service estimated at \$2-3/year/person can be covered partly through the water bill¹⁰ partly through subsidies.

2.4. Advocacy, Knowledge Management & Dissemination

➤ **Target more strategic levels**

Focus advocacy work at a more strategic level now that a relevant body of information is available and analysis and strategy has been developed and validated by NGOs, field level

⁸ E.g. awareness level and mobilisation issues, school leadership, PTA’s administrative and financial skills, R&R formalization, needs prioritization...

⁹ BPD and SeeSaw are currently exploring this mechanism

¹⁰ There are some arguments against this approach however: water tariff, the payment of which is already quite a difficult issue, should not support external services, such as the O&M of school facilities.

officials and teachers. Use the convening power of the most influential and experienced programme partners and market workshops to attract the high-ranking officials whose participation is essential if effect on policy is sought.

➤ **Improve information systems**

More effective information systems are urgently needed in all three countries to assess needs and progress, engage in evidence-based advocacy, and learn from successes and mistakes. In Guatemala schools were on the MoE selection list that did not have real needs whilst others facing critical sanitary conditions were absent from the list. The same occurred in Nicaragua: the MoE does not have a proper knowledge of the state of each school regarding the existence and conditions of WASH infrastructures, which affect the efficiency of all programs and limits the potential use of the generated information. NGOs can be instrumental in helping the public sector gather and manage the information and in training.

➤ **Monitor WASH in schools at MoE level**

To lower the risk that the success or failure of projects depends on the motivation of local teachers or the director, foster the development and implementation of a WASH in schools norm in MoE at central level. It will include a set of indicators used by MoE officers as part of their monitoring routine and taken into account to calculate the performance indicators of teachers and directors.¹¹ This also implies training supervisors on WASH issues, providing them incentives to monitor these additional indicators (see above recommendation on accountability). Improving their mobility and resources is likely to be needed to achieve an effective supervision and a minimum of visits per year.

In Guatemala, support the development of WASH in schools norms and standard designs (probably at the level of the inter-ministerial commission CONAES¹²). Explore with MoE and MoH ways of harmonizing their monitoring systems and linking of their statistics. Strengthen a national-level network supporting the WASH in school agenda to put pressure on MoE/MoH for such institutional development.

In Nicaragua, where the MoE has expressed interest in emphasizing hygiene in the monitoring of schools, an important opportunity exists to support the development of these indicators, their integration in the monitoring process and the training of supervisors. Explore the relevance of linking WASH in schools with the “Hygiene and Cleanliness of the Working Environment” theme put forward by the President.

2.5. Partnership Recommendations

➤ **Keep strengthening Public Sector – NGO partnerships**

IDB and their member countries in Latin America have to make the most of the existing capacities in all sectors. NGOs have historically demonstrated a very relevant role in WASH in schools projects and in the rural water and sanitation sector. Their added value is particularly noticeable on sustainability issues. Through their community outreach, mobilisation and capacity building skills, they often manage to achieve levels of community ownership and service sustainability that the private sector and the public authorities tend to fail to attain on their own. The type of relationships and level of collaboration that IDB has fostered between

¹¹ UNICEF recent WASH in Schools MONITORING PACKAGE publication will be a great guidance

¹² National Commission for Healthy Schools.

the public sector and NGOs is relatively new but establishing these bridges, strengthening such alliances and making them more effective is required.¹³

➤ **Foster private-sector practices in NGOs**

NGOs traditionally operate with a certain level of autonomy and flexibility, which they require as a space to operate effectively, producing their added value through experimentation, creatively piloting new approaches and technologies etc. Yet, they need to be accountable, correctly supervised and overseen, if strong collaborations are to be developed with the public sector. The current trend is to instil more private, business-like practices in the NGO sector. The fact that several NGO staff expressed their appreciation of some aspects of the contractual relationship and supervision of SWASH is the expression of this shift, which pushes NGOs to be increasingly accountable and concerned with the value for money of their interventions.

➤ **Create space for negotiating partnership structures and mechanisms**

The Water Division of IDB, in the definition of their future programs, can propose incentive measures, in agreement with the beneficiary country, to collaborate with NGOs. Because of the value of the work that NGOs provide, although countries are not necessarily demanding more partnerships with NGOs, appropriate partnership structures and mechanisms need to be found and negotiated. That is basically BPD's credo: *stakeholders involved in such multi-sector alliances need to dedicate more time preparing the space in which their partnership will operate*. A more rigorous analysis and then negotiation of the scope, objectives, resources, and structure governing partnerships is essential for success. That is valid for all kinds of alliances formed around WASH in schools, rural or peri-urban community water supply initiatives.

Particularly when considering large scale programs, building on the lessons-learned of this type of pilot initiatives executed by NGOs, and brainstorming / negotiating these partnership issues with the relevant actors is worth dedicating time to. A general recommendation thus, in the context of scaled-up WASH in schools work, government-led and possibly addressed as a sub-component of an integrated community watsan approach, is to convene series of workshops to jointly reflect on these issues, understand the perspective, resources, constraints of each actor, envision scenarios with different breakdown of R&R, identify possible accountability mechanisms and governance structures, and initiate some negotiations. Participants would be the relevant stakeholders of the different sectors (public, private, civil society...) of the considered country(ies).¹⁴

¹³ In El Salvador, mistrust prevails between public authorities and NGOs, the latter fearing that the former take all the credit for projects. In Nicaragua and Guatemala, the public authorities tend to mistrust NGOs on the basis that they generally operate in a completely uncontrolled way, outside the official institutional framework

¹⁴ BPD has extensive experience in the conduct of such workshop and is now incorporating WASH in school and environmental protection themes into the standard framework which traditionally focused on community watsan.