

## Sanitation in Rural Area Schools: A study of Kathua District

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### Abstract

The sanitation problem in India is very serious. Lack of sanitation and poor sanitary habits among the rural people in general and children in particular have exposed them to several kinds of diseases. This study aims to find out the status of toilets in schools and their cleanliness. Study reveals that majority of the surveyed schools have toilet facility, all these toilets have been constructed under the Sarve Shikhya Abiyan(SSA) and Village Education Committee (VEC). It was found that the panchayats only took interest in the construction of the toilets and do not bother about their operation and maintenance.

**KEYWORDS:-** Sanitation, toilets , schools, cleanliness, and Jammu and Kashmir .

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### Introduction:-

The Mar del Plata Conference in 1977 focused exclusively on the drinking water and sanitation needs of the poor and vulnerable. This resulted in the designation of the period from 1981 to 1990 as the International Drinking Water supply and Sanitation Decade (IDWSSD). The Global Water supply and Sanitation 2000 Assessment? (WHO/UNICEF, 2000) show that 1.1 billion people lack access to improved water supply and 2.4 billion to improved sanitation were extended to the present day 'unserved', the burden of infectious diarrheas would be reduced by some 17 percent and if universal piped and well-regulated water supply is ensured and full sanitation is achieved, this would reduce the burden by some 70 percent. The UNFPA's state of World Population 2004 envisaged that as recently as 2000, 1.1 billion people worldwide lived without basic sanitation. Lack of access to clean water and sanitation in the developing world led to 1.7 million deaths in 2000. (UNISCO, 2003).

Lack of sanitation and poor sanitary habits among the rural people in general and children in particular have exposed them to several kinds of diseases. The burden of sanitation related diseases in India as envisaged by the Central Bureau of Health Intelligence (1998-99), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare are:

- About 30 million persons in rural areas suffer from sanitation related diseases.
- 5 of the 10 top killer diseases of children aged 1-4 in rural areas are related to water and sanitation.
- Economic loss of rupees 1200 crores annually due to loss of man-days on account of diseases.

As far as school sanitation is concerned UNICEF in its assessment on School Sanitation and Health Education (SSHE) has noted that there are about 600,000 primary schools in rural India. Only one in every 10 schools has adequate toilets and urinals. According to the WHO report, 2000 children die every day due to lack of sanitation in India.(Sinha & Menon).

**Table 1**

Percentage of Schools having Toilet Facility in Schools, 2004

Categories	Combined Toilets	Exclusive Girl's Toilets
Primary	56.93	41.86
Primary with Upper Primary	69.61	72.48
Primary with Upper Primary and Secondary and Higher Secondary	44.25	32.91
Upper Primary	63.61	69.31
Upper Primary with Secondary/Higher Secondary	41.81	28.24

Source: Arun C Mehta, Elementary Education in India ,Analytical Report 2004,NIEPA.New Delhi.

Describing a clean environment as an indicator of a nation's development President A P J Abdul Kalam called for a mission to provide sanitation to all rural homes by 2010. He also called upon all concerned to "educate children right from the age of three to make use of sanitary facilities". Some other points, which he highlighted are:

- Families and teacher should take up the task as a part of the sanitation campaign.
- Sanitation facilities were the greatest health hazard for rural India with waterborne diseases such as hepatitis, leprosy and tuberculosis commonly afflicting people.
- Provision of sanitation facilities to all homes, schools, hospitals and community halls in rural areas.
- The sanitation mission must be executed through village panchayats(Pattnaik & Mohan,2006).

Human excreta are an important cause of pollution and every society has a responsibility for its safe removal. The problems of improper excreta disposal can lead to: (i) soil pollution; (ii) water pollution; (iii) contamination of foods; (iv) propagation of flies. The diseases, which can occur due to environmental pollution and inadequate sanitation are typhoid and Para-typhoid fever, dysenteries, diahorreas, cholera, hookworm, ascariasis, viral hepatitis and a host of other intestinal infections and parasitic infestations(Kumar,1988).

Of course several all India level surveys have been conducted on the status of school sanitation, yet few studies have been conducted on their cleanliness in schools. On theses grounds, the present study has special

significance for sanitation facilities available and their quality in various educational institutions particularly in schools in rural areas.

### Objectives:

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- To analyze the status of toilets in schools.
- To study the status of cleanliness of school toilets.

### Methodology

This study is based of the primary data collected from teachers & students. The study was conducted in 8 blocks of Kathua districts of Jammu and Kashmir. The elementary and higher secondary schools were covered in the study. All these schools were randomly selected. A total of 50 elementary schools& 24 higher secondary schools were covered under the study. The sample number of schools covered in each Block is given in Table 2.

**Table 2.**

#### The sample number of schools covered in each Block

District	Elementary School Covered	No. of Higher Secondary School Covered
Kathua	6	3
Barnoti	5	2
Hiranagar	6	4
Ghagwal	7	3
Bilawar	6	2
Lohair Malhar	8	3
Basoli	6	4
Bani	6	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>24</b>

### Results and Discussion

Table 3 depicts that 86 and 91.7 percent of elementary and senior secondary school have toilets. All the school toilets have been constructed under the Sarve Shikhya Abiyan (SSA) scheme under this supervision of the village education committee (VEC).

**Table 3**

#### Schools with Toilets

District	Elementary School Covered	No. of Higher Secondary School Covered
Kathua	6	2
Barnoti	5	3

Hiranajar	6	4
Ghagwal	5	2
Billawar	5	3
Lohar malhor	5	2
Basoli	6	3
Bani	5	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>43 (86%)</b>	<b>22 (91.67%)</b>

The field study reveals that the VEC mainly consists of the following members: (i) head master of the school; (ii) one teacher of the school; (iii) sarpanch of the village; (iv) one women panchayat member; and (v) one scheduled caste member of the panchayat. However, as opined by the school teachers the role of VEC is largely confined to the construction of toilets and it hardly takes care of the operation and maintenance of these toilets. The village panchayats largely consider the construction of toilets as their duty when undertaken with the help of a grant from government. As there is no specific grant for operation and maintenance, As there is no specific grant for operation and maintenance, they do not take any interest in the operation and maintenance of school toilets .

Out of the total elementary schools with toilets 72 percent (Table 4) have functional toilets with functional water supply. Nearly 28 percents of elementary school toilets and 23 per-cent of secondary school toilets have remained non-functional because of the following reasons: (i) breakage in the toilets on account of faulty construction; (ii) lack of water supply to the toilets; and (iii) poor monitoring of cleanliness and lack of proper operation and maintenance.

**Table 4**

School toilets with functional water supply

District	Elementary School Covered	No. of Higher Secondary School Covered
Kathua	3	3
Barnoti	4	2
Hiranager	5	3
Ghgwai	5	2
Bilawer	3	2
Lohai Malhar	3	3
Basoli	6	3
Bani	5	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>31 (72.09%)</b>	<b>17 (77.29%)</b>

The non-functioning of toilets is a problem for girl children. Sometimes they have to go to their friend's house in the village for defecation. This affects their studies and also compels them to take undue' obligation form their friends. Besides many of them also use open fields particularly the deep cornfields and behind trees and bushes, which is totally uncivil. Moreover, if any one suffers from diahorrea, the non-availability of toilets is a great problem. Functional toilets are a necessity for schools and are more so for co-educational schools and girls schools.

Table 5 shows that 78.37 percent of the school toilets are used by both the teachers and pupils and 14.8 percent of school toilets are used only by teachers, mostly in the elementary schools. The teacher in the elementary schools locked the toilets and use whenever they need. They are of the view that because of lack of sweepers and a functional water supply, children make it dirty for further use.

**Table 5**

## School Toilets with Functional water supply

<b>Blocks</b>	<b>By All</b>	<b>By Teachers only</b>	<b>Not Used</b>	<b>Total</b>
Kathua	7	2	-	9
Barnoti	6	1	-	7
Hiranager	9	1	-	10
Ghagwal	8	1	1	10
Billawar	6	1	1	8
Lohair Malhar	8	2	1	11
Basoli	8	1	1	10
Bani	6	2	1	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>58 (78.37%)</b>	<b>11 (14.8%)</b>	<b>5 (6.75%)</b>	<b>74</b>

The lack of assured water Supply to the toilet and absence of sweeper are the two main reasons for which teachers do not allow children to defecate in the combined toilets unless there is an emergency.

The cleanliness of toilets is vital for both the health and hygiene of the students. As far as cleanliness of school toilets are concerned, 21.73 percent and 72.5 percent of school toilets are being cleaned by the students and sweepers respectively. Ironically, 5.79 percent of toilets are not cleaned at all; these toilets ultimately become non-functional in the long-run. Thus cleanliness is vital for keeping toilets functional.

**Table 6**

## Cleanliness of Toilets in Elementary/Senior Secondary School

<b>District</b>	<b>By children</b>	<b>By sweeper</b>	<b>Not cleaned</b>	<b>Total</b>
Kathua	1	6	2	9
Barnoti	2	5	-	7
Hiranager	2	8	-	10
Ghgwai	2	7	-	9
Bilawar	2	4	1	7
Lohai Malhar	2	8	-	10
Basoli	2	7	-	9

Bani	2	5	1	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>15 (21.73%)</b>	<b>50 (72.5%)</b>	<b>4 (5.79% )</b>	<b>69*</b>

\* :- total 69 is which are in use (74 total – 5 not in use =69)

The primary schools in most of the rural areas do not have provision of sweepers and therefore, the teachers should approach the village panchayats for the arrangement of sweepers. committees hold the key in this regard. The 11<sup>th</sup> schedule of the 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional amendment has entrusted the monitoring of the functioning of primary schools to the panchayat and the school teachers need to coordinate with the village panchayat for construction of school toilets

### Conclusion

The conclusions based on the field data analysis and observations are as follows:

- More than ninety five percent of surveyed schools have toilets many senior secondary schools have separate toilets for girls. All these toilets have been constructed under the SSA and under the supervision of the VEC.
- The 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional Amendment envisages that panchayats should look after the schools. However, while interacting with teachers it was found that the panchayats only took interest in the construction of the toilets and do not bother about their operation and maintenance. Many schools, particularly the elementary schools, do not have sweeper facilities.
- More than 18 percent of school toilets do not have water supply facilities or wash basin for a hand wash after defecation. The pupils carry water from the tubewell located at a long distance from the toilet. Many times the small children are unable to do so. As a result, the toilet remains unclean. In some of these cases it was found that after a certain period, these toilets have become non-functional.
- There is poor IEC (information, Education and communication) campaign from the health as well as public health departments in the schools as opined by schoolteacher.

### Suggestions:

- Poor sanitation would have an adverse effect on the health of the children. Therefore, the government should make provisions for toilets in every school.
- Every school must have provision of a sweeper for the cleanliness of the toilets. The village education committee must take appropriate action for the appointment of sweepers in primary schools having toilets.
- Panchayats must use MP-LAD and MLA-LAD funds for the construction of good quality school toilets.
- The health and public health department must organize IEC programmes in schools sanitations. Moreover, the teacher training programmes for school teachers must cover wider aspects of sanitation and its impact on the health of children.

Considering the level of development of the state of Jammu and Kashmir the sanitation condition of school is dismal. The state should take appropriate actions for the improvement of sanitation conditions in schools centers. Children are the first human resources of a nation and their protection against disease is one of the fundamental duties of the state.

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