

Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools

A practical guide for creating safe and healthy learning
environments



hands4health project

hands4health is a research project to develop, test and evaluate a systemic approach to improve WASH services for schools and health care facilities not connected to a functional water supply system. The project is implemented in four specific contexts by 10 consortium members led by the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW).

Systemic approach

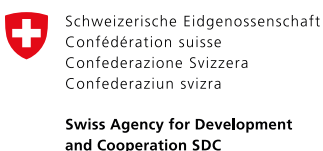
The systemic approach is a methodology for tackling water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) challenges, focusing on strengthening actors and existing systems in the local context. It combines technology, management, monitoring and behaviour change concepts into well-designed interventions oriented towards rethinking the entire WASH system and aimed at achieving systemic change. The systemic approach takes into consideration the needs of users and implementers in a specific context, with the goal to make WASH interventions more effective and sustainable.

This document is part of a series of tools that make up the systemic approach. More information about the systemic approach is available here:
 › <https://hands4health.dev/systemic-approach>

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Introduction

A clean and well-maintained school environment is pivotal in improving a safe, healthy, and productive learning atmosphere for students and staff. Sanitation is not just about cleanliness; it is a fundamental aspect of promoting health, preventing the spread of disease, and creating a space where everyone can focus on learning and growth. This sanitation guide is designed to provide schools with clear, practical, and actionable steps to establish and maintain high standards of hygiene and cleanliness. By implementing these guidelines, schools can protect the well-being of their community, enhance the overall educational experience, and set a strong foundation for a healthier future. Let this guide serve as a valuable resource in your journey toward building a cleaner, safer, and more vibrant school environment.

IMPORTANCE OF SANITATION IN SCHOOLS

✔ School Sanitation is important for creating a safe and healthy learning environment. Proper sanitation practices help reduce the risk of diseases, improve student attendance, and promote overall well-being. A clean and hygienic school environment not only supports better academic performance but also encourages the development of lifelong hygiene habits among students. Schools contribute to the physical health, mental well-being, and academic success of their students.

OBJECTIVES OF THE GUIDE

✔ The primary goal of this guide is to offer practical strategies for improving sanitation in schools. By addressing key challenges and providing actionable steps, it seeks to enhance the cleanliness and functionality of school sanitation facilities, creating a healthier and more conducive environment for learning. This guide also emphasizes the importance of adopting simple, effective measures that can be easily implemented, ensuring that schools, regardless of their resources, can make meaningful progress in improving sanitation standards.

✔ In addition, the guide aims to promote effective hygiene practices among students and staff, fostering habits that contribute to long-term health and well-being. By encouraging proper handwashing, waste disposal, and the responsible use of facilities, it seeks to instill a culture of hygiene within the school community. Furthermore, the guide highlights the need for sustainable operation and maintenance of sanitation facilities, ensuring they remain functional and accessible for the long term. Through these objectives, the guide aspires to empower schools to take proactive steps toward better sanitation and hygiene.



01

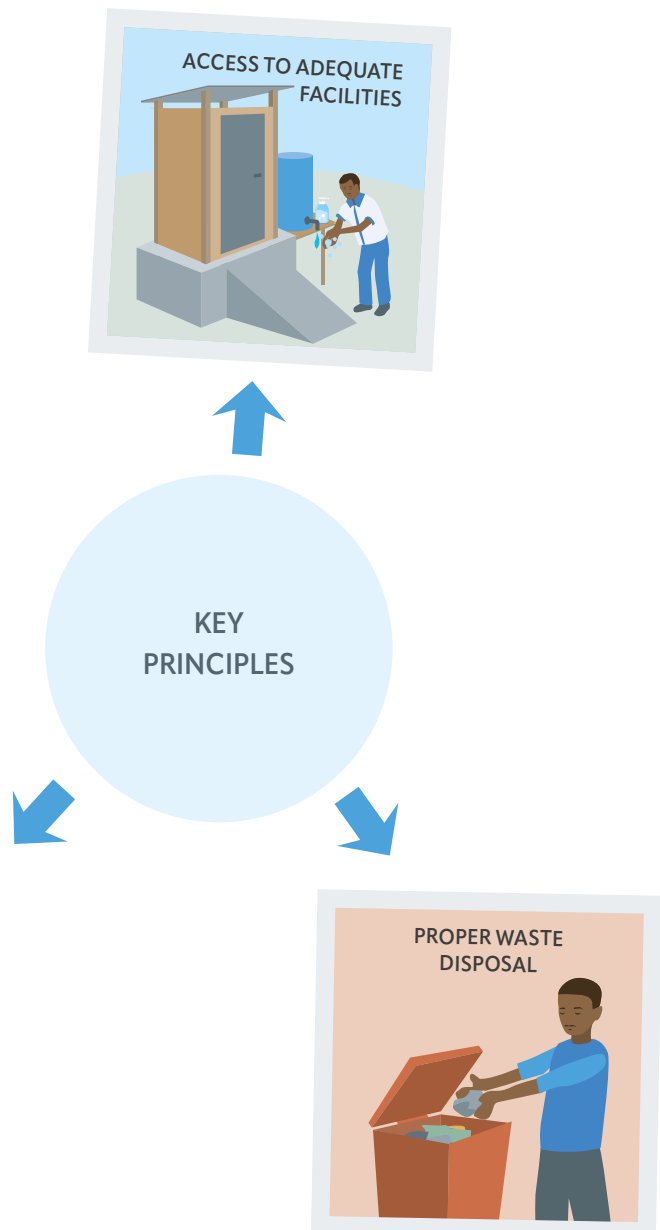
Understanding Sanitation

DEFINITION AND KEY PRINCIPLES

✔ Sanitation involves the proper management of human waste, access to clean and safe water, and maintaining hygienic conditions. It is a key component of public health, essential for preventing the spread of diseases and ensuring a safe and clean environment. Effective sanitation practices safeguard individuals' health and contribute to the overall well-being of communities by creating healthier spaces for living and learning.

Key principles include:

- > Access to adequate facilities
- > Proper waste disposal
- > Regular cleaning and maintenance



Types of Sanitation Facilities

TOILETS AND LATRINES

- ✓ **Flush Toilets:** These toilets use water to flush waste into a sewer or septic system. They are common in areas with reliable water supply and plumbing infrastructure.
- ✓ **Pour-Flush Toilets:** These toilets require water to be manually poured into the bowl to flush waste, making them suitable for areas without a constant water flow or advanced plumbing systems.
- ✓ **Pit Latrines:** Simple, cost-effective latrines where waste is collected in a hole or pit in the ground. These are often used in rural areas or places without access to water or plumbing systems.



Pit Latrines

HANDWASHING STATIONS

- ✓ Equipped with soap and water, handwashing stations are essential for promoting good hygiene, especially after using the toilet or before eating. These stations should be easily accessible and maintained to ensure cleanliness and reduce the spread of diseases.



Handwashing stations

WASTE DISPOSAL UNITS

- ✓ **Bins:** Waste bins are provided in various locations, such as classrooms, hallways, and outdoor areas, to encourage proper waste disposal. Bins should be regularly emptied to maintain cleanliness and avoid odors.
- ✓ **Incinerators:** Incinerators are used for the safe disposal of certain types of waste, particularly non-biodegradable or hazardous materials that cannot be safely disposed of in regular bins.



Pour-Flush Toilets



Flush Toilets



Bins

02

Planning for School Sanitation

Proper planning for school sanitation is essential to maintain a clean, safe, and hygienic learning environment. An effective sanitation plan should outline clear goals, assign specific responsibilities, and detail practical steps for ensuring cleanliness throughout the school. Important factors to consider include providing clean water, implementing efficient waste disposal systems, establishing regular cleaning routines, and ensuring accessible sanitation facilities for both students and staff. Moreover, raising awareness about hygiene and promoting a sense of shared responsibility within the school community can significantly enhance the plan's effectiveness. A well-organized sanitation strategy serves as the cornerstone of a healthier and more productive educational setting.



ASSESSING CURRENT FACILITIES

✔ Conduct a thorough evaluation of existing sanitation facilities to identify gaps and prioritize areas for improvement. Key factors to assess include the number and condition of toilets, ensuring they are sufficient, functional, and well-maintained to meet the needs of students and staff. The availability and proper functioning of handwashing stations are equally important, as they play a critical role in promoting hygiene and preventing the spread of diseases. Additionally, the effectiveness of waste disposal systems should be reviewed to ensure that waste is managed efficiently and safely, minimizing health risks and maintaining a clean environment. By addressing these factors, schools can create a more sanitary and supportive learning atmosphere.

✔ Assess the current sanitation facilities to identify gaps and areas that require improvement. Key aspects to evaluate include:

- > The number and condition of toilets.
- > The availability and functionality of handwashing stations.
- > The effectiveness of waste disposal systems.

SETTING GOALS FOR IMPROVEMENT

✔ Establishing clear and actionable goals is vital for enhancing school sanitation facilities and practices. These goals should address identified gaps and focus on creating a cleaner, healthier, and more hygienic environment for students and staff. Examples include increasing the number of toilets to meet demand, ensuring all handwashing stations are functional and equipped with soap and clean water, and upgrading waste disposal systems for more efficient and safe management. Goals should also include regular maintenance schedules and hygiene education programs to foster long-term positive habits. By setting specific, measurable, and achievable objectives, schools can systematically improve their sanitation standards and create a more supportive environment for learning and growth.

ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS

✔ The active involvement of key stakeholders is crucial for the success and sustainability of school sanitation initiatives. School management plays a central role in planning, implementing, and monitoring sanitation efforts, while parents can support by reinforcing hygiene practices at home and contributing to maintenance projects. Collaboration with local authorities ensures access to resources, technical expertise, and regulatory compliance. Additionally, partnerships with the Government, local authorities, community, and NGOs can provide valuable support, such as funding, training, and community awareness programs. Cooperation among all stakeholders and schools can create a strong foundation for maintaining effective and long-lasting sanitation solutions.



03

Hygiene Promotion in Schools

Hygiene education should be integrated into the curriculum, teaching students the importance of handwashing, personal cleanliness, and proper use of sanitation facilities. Interactive activities, such as workshops, demonstrations, and campaigns, can help reinforce these lessons and make hygiene practices more engaging. Schools should also ensure that hygiene supplies, such as soap, clean water, and waste bins, are readily available. This creates an environment that prioritizes hygiene and fosters a culture of responsibility, schools can significantly improve the health and well-being of their community.

IMPORTANCE OF HYGIENE EDUCATION

✓ Teaching students about proper hygiene practices helps prevent the spread of illnesses and promotes a culture of cleanliness within the school community. Proper hygiene practices, such as regular handwashing, covering their mouths when coughing or sneezing, and maintaining personal cleanliness, equip schoolchildren with the knowledge and habits needed to protect their health and that of others. Beyond reducing the risk of infection, hygiene education instills lifelong skills and promotes a sense of responsibility for maintaining a clean and healthy environment, both in school and beyond.

ACTIVITIES AND CAMPAIGNS FOR STUDENTS

✓ Engaging students in hygiene-related activities and campaigns is an effective way to reinforce good hygiene practices and promote awareness. These activities can be both educational and fun, encouraging active participation and helping students internalize the importance of maintaining cleanliness. Activities such as handwashing demonstrations, poster-making competitions, and hygiene-themed quizzes can creatively teach essential concepts. Campaigns like “Clean Classroom Week” or “Hygiene Heroes” can motivate students to take responsibility for their surroundings and practice good habits consistently.

- Organize Handwashing competitions.
- Conduct health talks and workshops.

- Celebrate WASH important days such as Global Handwashing Day, World Toilet Day, Menstrual Hygiene Day, and World Water Day, etc.

ROLE OF TEACHERS IN HYGIENE PROMOTION

✓ Teachers are key in promoting hygiene in schools by actively involving students and creating a culture of cleanliness and health. By weaving hygiene education into their lessons and daily activities, teachers help students develop good hygiene habits that will benefit them throughout their lives. Beyond teaching, teachers act as role models, setting an example by practicing the hygiene behaviors they want students to adopt. Their ongoing guidance and supervision of hygiene practices are vital to ensuring that students understand the significance of personal cleanliness and contribute to a healthy school environment. Some key responsibilities include: Teachers should:

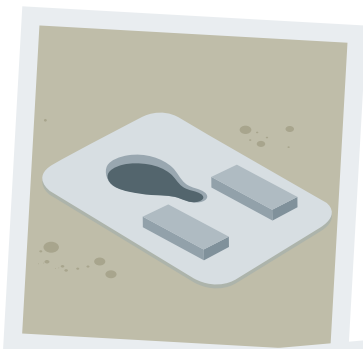
- Serve as role models by practicing and demonstrating good hygiene habits.
- Incorporate hygiene education into the curriculum, emphasizing its importance in daily life.
- Supervise daily hygiene practices, such as handwashing and the use of sanitation facilities, ensuring students follow proper procedures.

04

Sanitation Infrastructure

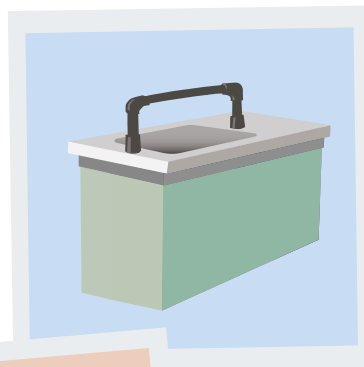
TOILETS AND LATRINES

- › Design facilities to meet student needs, ensuring privacy and safety.
- › Provide separate facilities for boys and girls.



HANDWASHING STATIONS

- › Install user-friendly stations near toilets and eating areas..
- › Ensure constant availability of soap and water.



WASTE DISPOSAL SYSTEMS

- ✔ Schools should implement a system for sorting waste into categories like biodegradable, recyclable, and non-recyclable to promote eco-friendly habits. Waste bins should be conveniently placed in classrooms, hallways, and outdoor areas, and they must be emptied regularly to prevent overflow and unpleasant smells. Educating students about the value of proper waste disposal through lessons and interactive activities can further strengthen their understanding and dedication to maintaining cleanliness. An efficient waste disposal system not only keeps the school environment clean but also promotes a sense of environmental responsibility within the school community.



05

Operation and Maintenance of Sanitation Facilities

Proper operation and maintenance of sanitation facilities are essential for creating a safe, hygienic, and supportive learning environment. Regular inspections and prompt repairs are key to ensuring that toilets, handwashing stations, and waste disposal systems remain fully functional. Schools should implement a maintenance schedule that includes routine cleaning, disinfection, and restocking of supplies such as soap, paper towels, and sanitary bins. Assigning responsibility to staff or maintenance teams ensures that any issues are resolved quickly. Additionally, teaching students how to use these facilities correctly helps reduce damage and encourages shared responsibility. By prioritizing sanitation upkeep, schools can promote a healthier atmosphere that enhances student well-being and academic performance.



Toilet cleaning and disinfection items



Toolkit for minor repairs and maintenance of sanitation facilities

DAILY CLEANING AND UP-KEEP

- Sanitation facilities, including toilets and handwashing stations, should be cleaned daily using suitable disinfectants to ensure hygiene.
- Essential supplies like soap, paper towels, and toilet paper must be replenished regularly.
- Floors in sanitation areas should be swept and mopped daily to prevent dirt accumulation
- Waste bins need to be emptied frequently to avoid overflows and unpleasant odors.
- Any visible spills or unsanitary conditions should be addressed immediately to maintain cleanliness.

PERIODIC INSPECTIONS AND REPAIRS

- Monthly inspections should be carried out to identify leaks, blockages, damage, or signs of wear in sanitation facilities.
- Plumbing systems must be checked to confirm proper water flow and efficient drainage.
- Waste bins should be assessed regularly and replaced if damaged or worn out.
- Malfunctioning fixtures, such as faucets or toilet flush systems, should be promptly repaired or replaced.
- Seasonal deep cleaning and maintenance should be scheduled for areas that are difficult to clean routinely.

RECORD-KEEPING AND REPORTING

- Detailed records of cleaning and maintenance activities, including dates and tasks performed, should be maintained.
- Usage and replenishment of cleaning supplies and hygiene products should be tracked effectively.
- Any significant issues, such as persistent plumbing problems or structural damage, should be reported immediately to school management.
- Feedback from students and staff on the condition of sanitation facilities should be documented to inform improvements.



06

Roles and Responsibilities

SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

✓ School management holds the primary responsibility for ensuring the proper maintenance of sanitation facilities. They should allocate sufficient funds specifically for sanitation needs, including maintenance, repairs, and improvements. Management must oversee the implementation of maintenance schedules and sanitation projects to ensure they are completed efficiently. Clear policies and guidelines should be established to uphold hygiene and sanitation standards across the school. Additionally, management should provide staff with the necessary training and resources to effectively perform cleaning and maintenance duties, ensuring a clean and safe environment for all.



Hygiene Club members



HYGIENE CLUB

✓ The hygiene club plays an important role in upholding cleanliness and hygiene standards within the school. Members of the club are responsible for regularly monitoring the condition of sanitation facilities to ensure they are clean and functional. They should develop and manage cleaning schedules to maintain consistent upkeep of these areas. Another key responsibility is organizing awareness campaigns to educate the school community about the importance of hygiene and how to practice it effectively. The hygiene club also serves as a vital link between students, staff, and school management, addressing hygiene-related concerns and ensuring prompt solutions. Through their dedicated efforts, the hygiene club helps maintain well-kept facilities and fosters a culture of health and cleanliness in the school.

STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

✓ Students and teachers have a shared responsibility to support hygiene and sanitation efforts within the school. They should consistently practice proper hygiene, including handwashing and appropriate waste disposal. Teachers can encourage students to follow hygiene protocols and promote a culture of cleanliness. Both students and teachers should report any facility-related issues, such as broken fixtures or depleted supplies, to the appropriate authority without delay. Additionally, participating in school-wide sanitation initiatives, such as cleanup drives and hygiene education programs, helps foster a collective commitment to maintaining a clean and healthy school environment.

07

Health and Environmental Benefits of Proper Sanitations

PREVENTION OF DISEASES

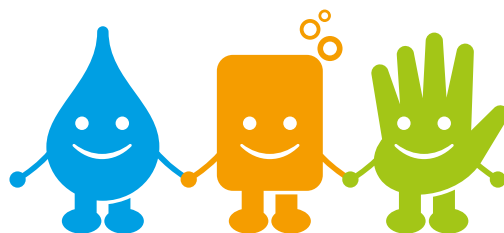
✔ Maintaining proper sanitation practices is essential for preventing the spread of waterborne and hygiene-related diseases, such as diarrhea, cholera, and other illnesses. By ensuring access to clean water, proper waste disposal, and hygienic conditions, schools can significantly reduce the risk of infection among students and staff. This creates a healthier environment where individuals are less likely to fall ill, contributing to improved overall well-being within the school community. Consistent sanitation efforts protect not only those within the school but also the surrounding community by minimizing the spread of disease-causing pathogens.

IMPROVED ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

✔ Proper sanitation directly contributes to better academic outcomes by supporting student health and attendance. Healthy students are more likely to attend school regularly and engage actively in their studies, leading to improved academic performance. When sanitation facilities are clean, functional, and readily available, students can focus on their education without the distraction or discomfort of unhygienic conditions. Moreover, a clean learning environment fosters a sense of safety and comfort, which enhances students' ability to concentrate and thrive academically.

POSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

✔ Adopting proper waste management practices in schools not only ensures cleanliness but also positively impacts the environment. Sorting waste into categories like biodegradable, recyclable, and non-recyclable reduces pollution and promotes recycling efforts, conserving natural resources in the process. Additionally, minimizing waste and promoting eco-friendly habits among students and staff instills a sense of environmental responsibility. Over time, these practices contribute to the preservation of the environment, creating a more sustainable and healthier planet for future generations.



08

Monitoring and Evaluation

TRACKING SANITATION GOALS

✔ Effectively tracking sanitation goals is essential to ensure progress and identify areas for improvement. Tools such as detailed checklists and surveys can be used to assess the condition of facilities, adherence to cleaning schedules, and the availability of necessary supplies. Regular evaluations help to identify gaps in current practices and guide corrective actions. These tools also provide valuable insights into the overall effectiveness of sanitation programs, enabling schools to make data-driven decisions for continuous improvement.

TOOLS FOR MONITORING

✔ Using the right tools is crucial for accurately monitoring sanitation efforts. Inspection forms can be utilized to evaluate the condition and cleanliness of facilities, while maintenance logs help track completed repairs and identify recurring issues. Additional tools such as inventory records ensure that essential supplies like soap, disinfectants, and paper products are well-stocked. Digital solutions, like apps or software for record-keeping and tracking, can further enhance efficiency and streamline the monitoring process. Incorporating these tools ensures that all aspects of sanitation are consistently reviewed and managed effectively.

REPORTING PROGRESS

✔ Regularly reporting progress to stakeholders is key to maintaining transparency and accountability. Reports should include updates on sanitation goals, the outcomes of inspections, and any challenges faced. Sharing this information with school management, staff, students, and parents fosters a sense of collective responsibility and encourages active participation in hygiene initiatives. Visual aids, such as graphs or charts, can help present data in an easily understandable format. Consistent reporting also allows stakeholders to celebrate achievements and address any remaining gaps collaboratively, ensuring continued support for sanitation efforts.



09

Success Story

HANDS4HEALTH PROJECT IN NIGERIA

Hand hygiene, water quality, and sanitation in primary health care and schools not connected to functional water supply systems.

✓ The Hands4Health Project serves as an inspiring example of how dedicated efforts can significantly improve WASH in Nigerian schools. Implemented in 26 public schools, this project focused on providing access to clean water, adequate sanitation facilities, and hygiene education through a behavior change concept (RANAS). Through collaborative partnerships with Government and international institutions, local communities, NGOs, and school management, the project successfully addressed the pressing challenges of poor WASH conditions

that affected student health and learning outcomes.

✓ One of the key achievements of Hands4Health was the construction and renovation of toilets, water sources, and water recycling handwashing stations in under-resourced schools in Borno state in MCC and Jere Local government Areas. The project also introduced a structured hygiene education through the RANAS behavior change concept, empowering students to take ownership of their health by practicing proper hand-

washing, waste disposal, and facility maintenance. Hygiene clubs were established in participating schools, with students leading awareness campaigns and inspiring their peers to adopt healthy habits.

✓ Moreover, the project emphasized sustainability by training school staff and community Based School Management Committee (SBMC) members in the maintenance of facilities, ensuring that the improvements would last beyond the project's timeline. As a result, schools reported a noticeable decrease in hygiene-related illnesses, improved attendance rates, and a greater sense of responsibility among students. The Hands4Health Project highlights the transformative impact of focused WASH interventions, serving as a model for similar efforts across Nigeria.



10

Recommendations and Best Practices

ENSURE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS

- › Involve students in regular sanitation activities, such as classroom cleaning and waste segregation.
- › Create hygiene or sanitation clubs to encourage student-led initiatives.
- › Organize workshops, competitions, and interactive sessions to educate students on the importance of hygiene.
- › Assign student leaders or monitors to oversee cleanliness in specific areas of the school.
- › Incorporate hygiene and sanitation topics into the school curriculum to instill lifelong habits.

ESTABLISH CLEAR MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE

- › Develop daily, weekly, and monthly cleaning schedules for all sanitation facilities.
- › Assign specific tasks to staff and

sanitation committees to ensure accountability.

- › Conduct seasonal deep cleaning of areas like storage rooms, drains, and hard-to-reach places.
- › Schedule regular inspections of plumbing, waste disposal units, and handwashing stations to address potential issues early.
- › Ensure consistent restocking of essential hygiene supplies, such as soap, disinfectants, and sanitary products.

LEVERAGE LOCAL RESOURCES AND PARTNERSHIPS

- › Collaborate with local authorities, NGOs, and community organizations for expertise and resources.
- › Use locally available and eco-friendly materials for building or upgrading sanitation facilities.
- › Partner with businesses to secure funding, sponsorships, or donations for sanitation projects.

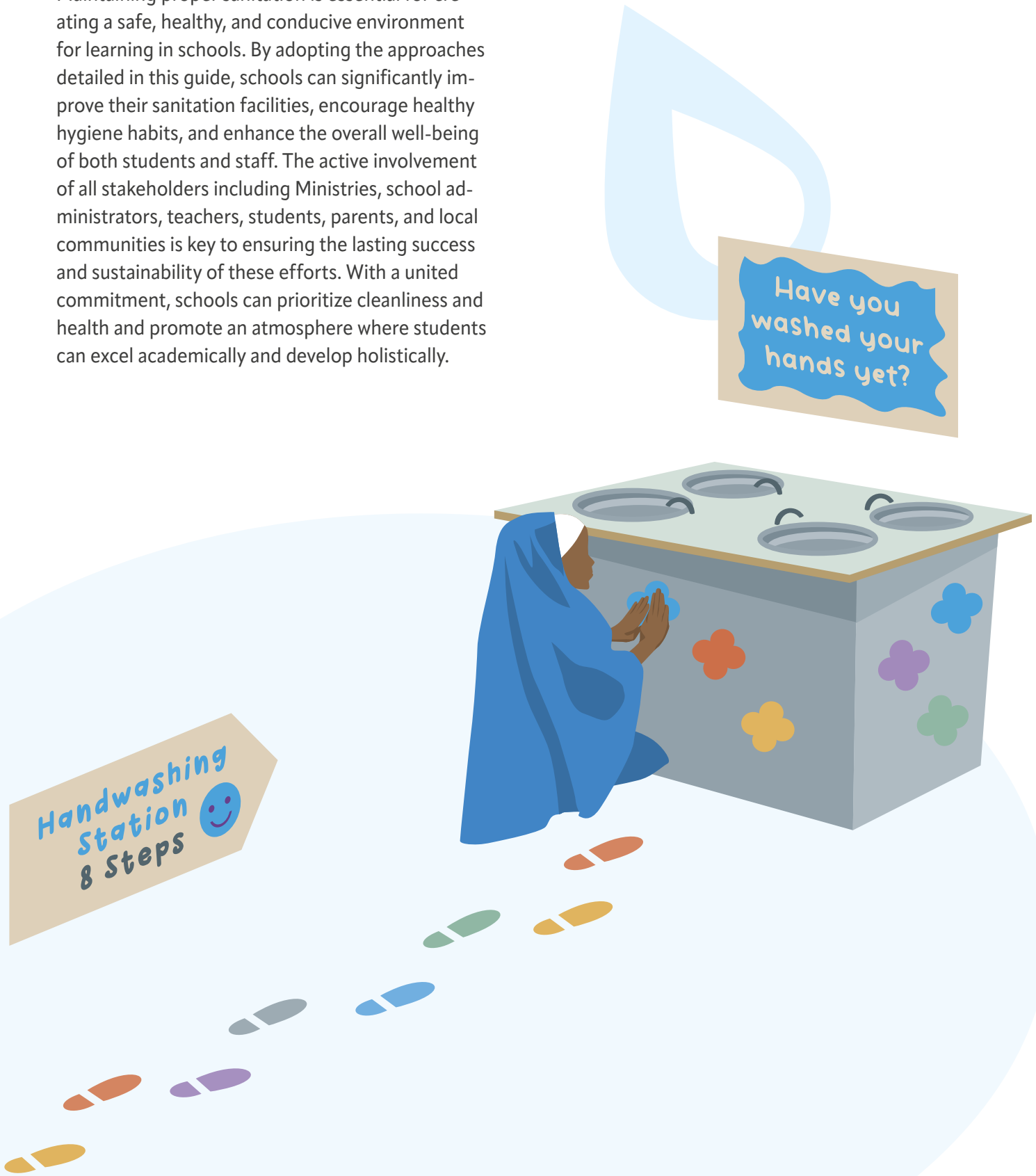
- › Engage with health professionals or environmental experts to provide hygiene education and training sessions.
- › Involve parents and the local community in school-wide sanitation initiatives to foster a collective sense of responsibility.

PROMOTE AWARENESS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- › Organize regular awareness campaigns to highlight the importance of hygiene and sanitation.
- › Use posters, charts, and visual aids around the school to reinforce good hygiene practices.
- › Conduct parent-teacher meetings to discuss the role of sanitation in student health and academic performance.
- › Celebrate special days like World Toilet Day or Global Handwashing Day to promote hygiene awareness.

Conclusion

Maintaining proper sanitation is essential for creating a safe, healthy, and conducive environment for learning in schools. By adopting the approaches detailed in this guide, schools can significantly improve their sanitation facilities, encourage healthy hygiene habits, and enhance the overall well-being of both students and staff. The active involvement of all stakeholders including Ministries, school administrators, teachers, students, parents, and local communities is key to ensuring the lasting success and sustainability of these efforts. With a united commitment, schools can prioritize cleanliness and health and promote an atmosphere where students can excel academically and develop holistically.



**YOUR
NOTES**



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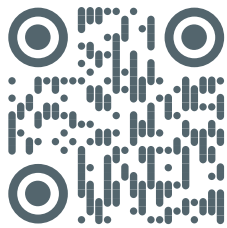
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