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A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

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**SANITATION FACILITIES AND GIRL STUDENTS SCHOOL ATTENDANCE
TENDENCY AT THEIR MENSTRUATION PERIOD IN RURAL BANGLADESH:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

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ABSTRACT

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities in school are most important for every student and closely related to school environment. It creates safe, healthy and comfortable environment in school where children grow, learn and thrive. A significant number of schools are situated in rural areas, and thousands of students are learning here. Many of them are combined school in which boys and girls students are studying together. It is observed that in most of the rural schools WASH facilities are very poor. Most of the cases, there is no separate toilet for girls and boys student or girls student and teachers are using same toilet. In a sense, girl's friendly toilet is rare look at. This condition is affecting the quality education; especially adolescent girls are main fatality of this. In schools about halves percent student are girls but there have limited WASH facilities for them. Not only for girls student but also boys student have limited toilet facilities. It suffers them enormous and they feel embarrass in school. Consequently, many girl students are irregular in school. Basically, during menstruation period about 61 percent of girls student do not come to school from 1-7 days in a month or come to school but return home after attending few classes (Baseline: 2014). Thus many girl students in rural area are depriving from regular studies and quality education. Ultimately it influencing girl student to back out from mainstreaming. To assess the importance of school WASH facilities, identifying the affect in absence of WASH facilities and keeping the learning environment in schools, this study is most important. The study will provide relevant and actual information to stakeholders and assist decision maker to realize the situation and take effective measures in interest of adolescent girls.

1. Introduction

In Bangladesh near about 50 percent students are girl in higher secondary level and they face WASH problem in the school. For this reason they can't attend school regularly and it is also one of the most vital reasons for the girl students to dropout from school. Learning, hygiene and health are strongly inter-linked as children miss school or perform poorly when they are suffering from WASH related illnesses. School is a place even where children get sick. Illnesses can spread very fast in schools

because of many children are together for many hours a day in often poor hygienic conditions. Ghoraghat Upazila under Dinajpur district and Panchbibi Upazila under Joypurhat district of Bangladesh are the studied area and both are very remote and rural area. In the Ghoraghat, there are 21 secondary high schools and 12 secondary-level *Madrassa* (Religious Based Education Institution). In Panchbibi area there are 25 combined high schools including four girl's high school and 10 secondary-level *Madrassa*. Thousands of girls and boys student are studying here.¹ (Education Office: 2014) It seems that most of the school buildings are not well constructed and toilet facilities are very poor considering government standards. Most of the student use toilet for urinal purpose or not use toilet in this school for lack of sufficient toilet facilities. Especially, girls student are face enormous complications with poor toilet facilities during menstruation. As a result adolescent girls are irregular in school (not come to school or come to school but return home before ending full classes).

In Bangladesh, Coverage of basic drinking water in schools is 74%, Coverage of basic sanitation services in schools is 69%, and coverage of basic hygiene services in schools is 44%.² (Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools, Global Baseline Report, 2018). In 35% of schools a handwashing location with both water and soap was found, around one-third of students' hands appeared to be clean and 28% washed both hands with soap during handwashing demonstration. A critical issue for schools was limited toilet access for students. Overall there were 187 students per toilet; the majority of schools (84%) had a functional improved toilet for students however, in only 45% of schools were these unlocked. Approximately one-third of all schools had water and soap available inside or near (<30 feet) the improved toilet accessed by students and a quarter of toilets were clean. An improved functional drinking water source was found in 80% of schools, and 41% appeared clean. The government ratios for WASH in schools-toilet 60 students: 1, hand-washing facilities 1,000:1³ are almost never met! Only 51 percent of government primary schools and 40 percent of non-government ones had separate toilets for girls. 9 percent of government primary schools and 19 percent of non-government ones have toilets with disabled access.⁴ Four of the five most common illnesses (dysentery, diarrhea, worms and typhoid) among students are water-borne, with diarrhea accounting for 36 percent of students' ailments.⁵ In these circumstances, sanitary facilities are very important for ensure quality education and it is also very important for girl students for their regular performance in school.

Selection of the Study Area

Focusing point of the study is to assess the impact of WASH facilities on adolescent girl student's school attendance. In this quest, such type of rural area was needed in where some secondary schools have adequate WASH facilities and some schools in where exist less WASH facilities. Ghoraghat Upazila, Dinajpur district and Panchbibi Upazila, Joypurhat District are the area, in where study required environment was exist. In the study area, World Vision Bangladesh an international child focused NGO, brac a leading NGO in Bangladesh implemented school WASH program in collaboration with respective government department. World Vision Bangladesh executed "**Child Focused Water and Sanitation Project**" and brac also executed "**School WASH Program**" in some selective schools in both areas.

10 secondary schools have been selected as experimental sample education institution and three

¹ Ghoraghat Upazila and Panchbibi Upazila Secondary Education Office, 2014.

² Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools, Global Baseline Report 2018

³ Government Approved Primary Education Development Program (PEDP)-II WASH in Schools, 2003.

⁴ The Education Sector Annual Performance Report 2012.

⁵ BRAC Baseline Report all over Bangladesh, 2008.

secondary level schools have been selected as control group from both study areas for the study. Before 2014, WASH facilities was inadequate in all the schools. Acute lack of Water and Sanitation (WASH) facilities, latrine to student ratios of up to 314 students: 1 toilet, unhygienic and broken toilets, urinal in open place and many boy students were used to open defecation, and there were no separate latrines for girls in 07 schools out of 10.⁶

When water supply is scarce during the dry season, students go outside or untimely leave school. When menstruating, adolescent girls are uncomfortable using the neighbors' latrines, and often miss classes. Girls are also exposed to the risk of sexual abuse and violence from older male students in or near toilets, for while the parents sometimes remove girls from school. The study has conducted in three dimensions. It has tried to look at the impact of school wash facilities in three dimensions pre and post status, people perception to impact and sustainability of WASH program. The study conducted pre and post evaluation in same institutions and to more comparison analysis the extended its study area in control area where there is no project has taken in very past recent years.

Methodology

The study has followed both quantitative and qualitative research method. Quantitative method has followed to measure the impact of sanitation facilities for adolescent girls in schools. To check the quantitative information validity qualitative method has also apply and there is another intention to know the insight of the study and sustainability of WASH program.

Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of the research study is to extract the effect of menstrual hygiene for adolescent girls in school. The specific objectives are:

- to identify the sanitation facilities in rural school;
- to measure the effects of sanitation facilities on adolescent girls to attend in school;
- to determine the importance of school sanitation on quality education; and
- to learn the lessons of way out the keeping sanitation facilities in school.

Study Time Duration:

The required information and data has collected from selected 13 secondary level schools (10 schools as experiential area and three schools as control area) of the study area. The study period was from January 2014 to January 2015 in different aspects.

Sample Design and Sample Size:

To determine the sample size (non-probability) purposive sampling method has followed. School wise numbers of sample have been selected proportionately (on the basis of total number of students as well as classes) among study schools. A total number of 176 eligible girls student who have history of menstruation has drawn as sample. Among the determined sample, 122 from experimental group and 54 from control group have been selected including 93 sample from Panchbibi Upazila and 83 from Ghoraghat Upazila. The respondents are 13-17 years old and all are girls.

Source of Data:

The study used both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data has collected through face to face interview. In addition Key Informant Interview (KII), Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and observational study output also used as primary data. Student attendance register books, government & non-government report, research journals used as secondary source of data.

⁶ World Vision Assessment, 2013.

Rational of the Study

In the study, it has done a comparative analysis between school with WASH facilities and school with less WASH facilities. Through this comparison, the study try to find out the impact of school WASH facilities on adolescent girl students in school attendance during menstruation period, way out the increase of adolescent girls school attendance. Thus, it will meet the demand of researcher and readers of this field. It helps also the policy makers to take effective decision regarding quality education.

Limitations of the Study

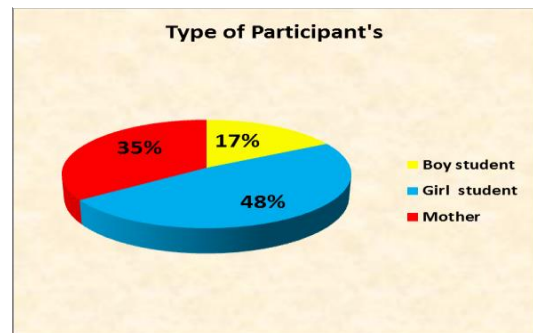
Every study has some limitations. In this study there are some limitations which are-

1. Limitation of time period for the study: Only one year's data has used which is not enough time to get a good result.
2. The study area was small: Only 13 schools have taken for the study.
3. It is a sensitive issue: So, some time the students feel hesitation for giving the data.

Participant's Category

In this study, the interview has conducted with students (both boys and girls) and mothers of adolescent girl students. Among them 48 percent of respondents are girl students, 17 percent are boys and 35 percent of mothers (Source: Figure 1).

Figure 1: Type of Participants.



School WASH Committee

Toilet facilities are imparted of human being. In social and religious principles, hygiene, well protected and secured toilet facilities is unquestionably essential for girl student especially for adolescent. The School Management Committee (SMC) has facilitated to form "School WASH Committee" in each experimental school. The committee has been consisted of 20 including teachers, SMC members, students and community people.⁷ The WASH committees are accumulating a fund where students and teachers are contributing money towards maintenance of facilities. It has been ensuring different types of logistics including sanitary napkin especially for adolescent girl students by using collected fund. The committees also made a network with brac and other service providers who supply the sanitary napkins with low cost. Members of the committee are proactive to monitor the latrines, logistics as per requirements. Necessary logistics are stored under a female teacher. The adolescent girls collect pads from female teacher during their necessity in terms of minimum cost compare to market price. The committee also provide sanitary pad to girls from poor household without cost. For this, mostly adolescent girls do not think over that they will not come to school during menstruation period. On the opposing, School WASH Committee is not formed and functional in control group schools. The SMC members and teachers are managing the WASH facilities. Therefore, existing toilet facilities are not keeping properly specially for adolescent girls.

⁷ WASH Committee Registered Book, 2014.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Facilities in Rural School at Study Period

Toilet and student ratio has close relation to health and hygiene status. There have a standard that, how many people would be used a toilet. According to the government of Bangladesh, the latrine-using ratio for students is 1:60. It was observed; in the study area, toilet infrastructural position in the schools was very poor in one year ago and WASH facilities was dissatisfactory. Huge number of students were used a single toilet. Even though, most of the school has no separate toilet for adolescent boys and girls as well as teachers. The survey data revealed that the ratio of latrine for students both boys and girls is 1:49 and the latrine for girls ration is 1:42 in experimental schools. Whereas the baseline data explored that ration of latrine for students both boys and girls was 1:146 and the latrine for girls ration is 1:324 and the similar status is exist in control schools yet. So, now the students of experimental schools have been getting access to use toilet freely as per needs (Source: Table 1). The INGO World Vision Bangladesh has contributed to make this significant change in the experimental schools. The organization contributed to construct well equipped toilet as per government standards in collaboration with SMC and respective education department.

Table 1: Toilet Facility Ration

Descriptions	Ratio
Latrine for students (both boys & girls) ratio	1:49
Latrine for girl ratio	1:42

Among the experimental group, 99 percent of studied students have expressed that they have got access to use hygienic latrine, 89 percent of the students said they have separate latrine for girls and boys in their school, 98 percent of students have assured about separate latrine for teachers and students, 99 percent stated they have sufficient water in toilets and 83 percent of students expressed that there is sufficient soap in latrine of their school (Source: Table 2) respectively it was 75 percent, 50.50 percent and 18.50 percent (Source: Baseline Survey Report December, 2013) .

Table 2: Respondent Category of the Study

	Respondent category									
	Experimental group					Control group				
	Yes	Percent	No	Percent	Total	Yes	Percent	No	Percent	Total
Have you got access to use hygienic latrine during schooling	121	99	1	1	122	29	54	25	46	54
Have separate toilet for girls and boys	109	89	13	11	122	34	63	20	37	54
Have separate toilet for teacher and students	120	98	2	2	122	40	74	14	26	54
Have sufficient water in toilets	121	99	1	1	122	31	57	23	43	54
Have sufficient water and soap in the toilets	101	83	21	17	122	24	44	30	56	54

On the other hand, among the control groups, 54 percent of students have access hygienic latrine at their school, 63 percent of students have expressed their opinion regarding of separate latrine for girls and boys at their school and 74 percent of students have uttered the separate latrine among teachers and students. 57 percent of students have spoken about availability of water in the latrine of their

school. 44 percent of students have spoken that there is available both water and soap in the latrine of their school. It also notable that WASH facilities is scaling in control schools but very steadily.

Taken Measure during Menstruation

In this study it has tried to know about taken measure during the menstrual period of eligible girl students. The study data revealed that 73.1 percent (68 out of 122) of eligible girls students have been used Napkin during their menstrual period, on the other hand 26.9

"Now time has changed. Eligible adolescent girl are coming in school more and attending school full time of schooling period during menstruation. Before the construction of toilet, student were absent in school during menstruation or return home if suddenly occur menstruation. Because of, there was no waste management and facilities to change napkin although school provided napkin to girls. So, most of the students were absent 3-4 days in every month and not only that disable student also using it easily" said Rubina Begum a school teacher of Osmanpur Girls School under Ghoraghat Upazila.

percent (25 out of 54) of eligible girl students of control groups used Napkin. They have also expressed that 90.3 percent (28 out of 122) of eligible girl students put their used Napkin in the dumper, on the other hands only 9.70 percent (3 out of 54) of eligible girl students of control group put their Napkin in dumper because of poor waste management (Source: Table 3). The government educational personnel shared, Bangladesh Government has given emphasis on quality education. A School WASH facility is one of the important components of quality education. Owing to, School Wash facilities are a contributor to increase school attendance especially for adolescent girls. In experimental schools, SMC has been providing sanitary napkin to eligible students in low price even providing napkins without cost to the students from poor households; ensure availability of dumper at toilet, educated students and parents on importance of healthy behavior and practices in support of NGOs. For these integrated initiatives above stated impact has brought. The School WASH initiatives is not only meeting present needs at schools but also making younger students and household members towards sustainability. The eligible girl students said, "If the committee provide sanitary napkin without cost, use of sanitary napkin among them might be increased. They also expressed, if the efforts continue, it will better for them." On the other hand, the result is opposite to control schools because of, in these schools there is no School WASH committee and their initiatives. School WASH facilities are poor and their awareness level is also poor among control groups. To reduce school absenteeism among adolescent girls during menstruation period, need to educate girls and their parents regarding adolescent health and ensure School WASH facilities in all schools.

Most of the student come from economically insolvent family and they are not able to purchase sanitary napkin as required. In addition, sanitary napkin is not easily available at rural locality from where they can purchase. There not learn about adolescent health behavior in school, even though there is no discussion about risk of menstruation health. They think if school provides sanitary napkin in free of cost or very low cost and orient them about menstruation health behavior in school, it would be contributed to use of sanitary napkin among adolescent girl student. Moreover, there would be less diseases among them. Also, the attendance rate among the adolescent girl student increased significantly. They suggested, there is a need to keep enough waste bins.

Table 3: Adolescent Girl taken Measures During Menstruation Period

Respondent category	Total
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			Non-control group	Control group	
Taken measures during menstruation	Used Napkin		68	25	93
		%	73.1%	26.9%	
	Used clean cloths		62	35	97
		%	63.9%	36.1%	
	Used cloths dry in sun		18	7	25
		%	72.0%	28.0%	
	Thorough napkin at specific place		28		31
		%	90.3%	9.7%	
Total			122	54	176

Comparison of Absenteeism of Girl Students During Menstrual Period

The availability of girl’s appropriate toilets and water supplies is essential to comfortably change and dispose of sanitary pads and wash themselves in private if adolescent girls (including female teachers) attend schools during their menstruation. Naturally, the adolescent girl students of our country especially rural areas have been facing different types of problems in school. Due to inadequate of latrines and

"Now I don't miss class in school and I am very much happy for existing sanitation facilities in our school" said Laboni (15) with smiling face who read in class ten in Baromanik High School under Panchbibi Upazila.. Before constructing the present structure, there was no gender friendly sanitation facility in her school. Even though there was no separate latrine for boys and girls as well as teachers. There was no a specific place to put used pads/napkins. Eligible girls were put their used napkin or cloths behind of the school campus which was very unhygienic and naked to look at for them. At present, this is past. There are well-equipped toilet facilities in our school. There are separate toilets for girls, boys and teacher. Drinking water is available and dump is available. She said, "All student are enjoying in school especially girls and disable student and girls student are regular in school than previous."

unavailability of water (including safe drinking water), the eligible girl students do not want to come to school during their menstrual period. Sometime they come to schools but go back to home do missing class due to not access of various types of logistics toilet and sanitary facilities (like napkin/pad) from the schools. Sometimes they are accomplished such types of work at neighbor’s home do missing class. The evaluated data shows that during the menstrual period, the eligible adolescent girl students having various accesses of the proper hygienic sanitation facilities at school premises. The absenteeism of adolescent girl students has reduced significantly.

Table 4: School Attendance During Menstruation Period among Girl Student

		Attendance rate during menstrual period				Total
		No	Percent	Yes	Percent	
Respondent category	Experimental group	36	30	86	70	122
	Control group	21	39	33	61	54
Total		57	32	119	68	176

The study data revealed that the overall absenteeism rate among adolescent girl students aged 13-17 years during their menstrual period is 32 percent. The result shows, 30 percent of adolescent girl students (36 out of 122 students) of experimental group is absent at school during their menstrual period, whereas the result of school absenteeism among control group is 39 percent. It is also notable

that the baseline status was 83 percent (Source: Table 4 and baseline survey report December, 2013). The gender friendly WASH facilities, availability of napkin and proper knowledge regards health and hygiene practices contributed to make differences between experimental group and control group. It also noteworthy that a significant change has made amid baseline status and study result. Definitely, change is happening in the community. Government and non-government joint initiatives in terms of infrastructure development, awareness build up and capacity building among community groups is forcing the progress.

The study asked the question among the respondents what they done during menstruation period who were absent in school. The respondent provided multiple responses in response to delivered question. Among the experimental group, 36 respondents whom were absent in school during menstruation, 33.3 percent of eligible students don't come to school, 63.9 percent of eligible girl students came to school but go back at home, 5.6 percent of eligible girl students came to school and go to neighbor's house to fulfill their needs. On the other hand, 100 percent adolescent girls were not come to school, 90.5 percent adolescent were come to school but go back to home and 85.7 percent adolescent girls were come to schools and go to neighbor's house among the control group (Source: Table 5). Overall absenteeism during menstruation has been reduced significantly. Due to bad pain or severe condition during menstruation of adolescent girls till now many girls are not going school although well facilities exists.

Comparison of Number of Days absent During Menstruation Period

The study data expose that among the experimental group 69.67 percent respondents was no absence in school during menstruation period. On the contrary to 59.26 percent respondents among control groups were no absent in during their menstruated period. Some adolescents girl back to home or go neighbor's home due to less education about it in case of WASH facilities is exist. The result reveal that some adolescents The study data also shows that maximum 12.30 percent were absent 2 days, 5.74 percent were 3 days and similarly 3.28 percent were absent 01 day and 5 days in school among the experimental group. Among the control group whom were absent in school during their menstruation, maximum 14.81 percent (8 students out of 36) were absent 3 days, 12.96 percent (7 students out of 36) were absent 2 days, 5.56 percent (3 students out of 36) were absent 6 days and 3.70 percent (2 students out of 36) students were absent 5 days. Further investigating the data, it is found that absent in school among control group is high 40.74 percent and 2 & 3 days absent is also high among control group than experimental group. School absenteeism rate among the experimental group seem proportional high up to 2 days and after two days their absent rate reduced significantly. This trend keeps them more comfort and helps them to attentive in education. It helps to draw a decision that sanitation facilities are an important element of school attendance among adolescent girls during menstruation period.

Hygiene WASH behavioral practices are most important in our daily life. The said annotation is not only applicable for at community level but it has also same meaning for school level. Because thousands students passed their long time at school. So, Exist WASH facilities are not enough for students, hygiene practices and behavioral both at school and houses level are most significant. Hygiene practices and behavioral change is key indicator of school wash programs. Hand washing with soap before eating or preparing food and after using the toilet can reduce the diarrhea rates by more than 40 percent. It is one of the most cost effective means available to us to reduce diarrhea diseases for all aged people specially for young children. To bring health behavioral practices among the mass people including student NGOs named World Vision and brac were taken measures both in

experimental area and control area to educate and aware people about their health and hygiene practices. The study result shows among the experimental group, 100 percent student wash hand after defecation, only 5 percent wash hand with ash and water after defecation. On the contrary to, among the control group 90.7 percent student wash hand after defecation, only 16.7 percent wash hand with ash and water after defecation and 3.7 percent student 3.7 percent student wash hands with only water after defecation. The study report indicates that WASH behavioral practices creased a remarkable level for both groups.

Table 5: School Absence Scenario

		Student category		Total
		Experimental -control group	Control group	
Don't come at school	Count	12	21	33
	% within student _category	33.3%	100.0%	
	% of Total	21.1%	36.8%	57.9%
Come school but go back to home	Count	23	19	42
	% within student _category	63.9%	90.5%	
	% of Total	40.4%	33.3%	73.7%
Come school and go to neighbor's home	Count	2	18	20
	% within student _category	5.6%	85.7%	
	% of Total	3.5%	31.6%	35.1%
Don't come to school due to sanitation facilities	Count	0	5	5
	% within student _category	0.0%	23.8%	
	% of Total	0.0%	8.8%	8.8%
Total	Count	36	21	57

Parent they think that school authority as well as SMC should be ensured good sanitation facilities in the school and all kinds of logistics especially for adolescent girl students should be available in the school for reducing absenteeism. 22 out of 23 mothers said that they are using hygiene sanitary latrine at household. "Earlier we have poor knowledge regards WASH but now we have gained enough knowledge on personal hygiene through World Vision Initiative. Now we are practicing hygiene practices at household" said Sufia Begum (45) mother of adolescent girl. All the family members are habituate for hand washing before eating and after defecation in the family level. Parents are awaking their children of using specific latrine wash the hands before eating and after defecation, use sandal when go to latrine etc.

Recommendations

There are some lessons have been learnt through this study outputs and participatory observations. These are mentioned bellow-

- I. It is very essential to continue raising awareness among adolescent girl's students and close monitoring by SMC/school authority including ensuring logistics facilities for adolescent girls. They will perform as change agent of community.
- II. Gender friendly toilet facilities are closely related to ensure quality education and learning friendly school environment. It reflects to reduce school absenteeism of adolescent girl.

III. School WASH Committee is very important part of quality education. This committee works as agent of sustainability. They create fund, take responsibilities of cleaning and maintaining the School WASH Facilities.

IV. Due to lack of awareness regards menstruation hygiene and availability of sanitary napkin many students become irregular in school.

Table 6: Frequency of Days Absent

		Number of days absent								Total
		No absence	1 day	2 days	3 days	4 days	5 days	6 days	7 days	
Respondent category	Experimental group	85	4	15	7	3	4	2	2	122
	Percent	69.67	3.28	12.30	5.74	2.46	3.28	1.64	1.64	
	Control group	32	1	7	8	1	2	3	0	54
	Percent	59.26	1.85	12.96	14.81	1.85	3.70	5.56	0.00	
Total		117	5	22	15	4	6	5	2	176

Table 7: Hand Washing Behavior

		Student category		Total
		Experimental-control group	Control group	
Washed hands with soap and water after defecation	Count	121	49	170
	% within student _category	100.0%	90.7%	
Washing hands with ash and water after defecation	Count	6	9	15
	% within student _category	5.0%	16.7%	
Washing hands with only water after defecation	Count	3	2	5
	% within student _category	2.5%	3.7%	
Don't washed hands	Count	4	1	5
	% within student _category	3.3%	1.9%	
Count		121	54	175

Conclusion

Gender friendly environment is the prerequisite for quality education. Access to all elements of WASH is necessary for adequate menstrual hygiene management. Girls are attending schools with gender friendly toilet that provide a private place to wash and change and a reliable supply of water and soap are much more likely to be able to manage their menstruation periods with confidence and dignity. To ensure access to education for rural adolescent girl's school WASH facilities is very important. Despite the fact that many students are coming to school after the poor sanitation facilities in school, they are often feel discomfort. As a result, many of them cannot concentrate well on education in the school. The comparative analysis of the survey result describe that WASH facilities is an important factor of school attendance among the adolescent girl. Moreover, health education is a key factor of attending in study in the classroom. Therefore, in order to strengthen the foundation for the future development of the rural girl students, it is needed to ensure the WASH facilities in all schools. Government-Private coordinated initiatives can play an effective role in overall development of all children.

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