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WASH in schools in Vanuatu; moving from pilot to national scale

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Abstract

Background: Enhanced WASH services and hygiene education at schools is a key strategy to adopted improved hygiene practices for current and future generations and will contribute to make communities more resilient to climate change and future pandemics.

Methods: The Ministry of Education and Training of the Government of Vanuatu with support of UNICEF implemented a pilot in PENAMA province targeting all (62) primary and (12) secondary schools to improve the WASH services from 2019-2022. The pilot aimed to improve WASH services by empowering schools to driver their own improvements process. Schools were trained and received materials to assess, plan and construct improved WASH services at their own schools and improve hygiene education practices. This pilot was complimented with supporting the enabling environment at national level, creating the conditions for national scale.

Results: This pilot was highly successful, as all 74 schools were able to make significant improvements in their WASH services. The monitoring mechanism used, the 3-star monitoring framework, shows that all schools were able to make significant improvements, and the average score increased from 0.9 stars to 2.0 stars. The pilot has demonstrated, that if schools are adequately empowered and supported, they can drive their own improvement process. The inputs provided at national level have also been instrumental in strengthening the enabling environment, which assisted in re-opening of schools after school closure due to community outbreak of COVID-19.

Discussion: In 2020, the Ministry of Education adopted access to equitable WASH services into its 10-year strategy, and targets to achieve 100% equitable quality services by 2030. The learnings of this pilot are fundamental to inform a national implementation framework and upscaled WASH in schools program across the six provinces of Vanuatu.

Descriptive analysis of national tuberculosis data, Vanuatu, 2016 to 2020