



CONCEPT FOR PILOTING

Blue Schools in Ethiopia

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GOOD PRACTICE

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1 INTRODUCTION

COOPI, Cooperazione Internazionale had secured funding from Caritas Switzerland for the implementation of Swiss Water and Sanitation Consortium Phase II project titled “**WASH and Small Scale Irrigation Support for Vulnerable Agro-pastoral Communities Living in Riverine Areas in Southern Ethiopia**” in Gorodola Woreda at Guji Zone and Medawelabu Woreda at Bale Zone of Oromiya Regional State.

The objective of the project is to improve the living conditions of the most disadvantaged population groups lagging far behind global targets for water and sanitation, through increased and sustainable access to safe drinking water, adequate sanitation, improved hygiene, and water for family farming.

The project plans to pilot the concept of **blue schools** in selected three schools, namely in Kerjul, Geda and Gobile. So far, COPPI has been working in schools mainly focusing on water and sanitation infrastructures, Operation and Maintenance (O&M), as well as hygiene promotion using the the Children’s Hygiene And Sanitation Training (CHAST) approach.

2 WHAT IS A BLUE SCHOOL?

The overall goal of the blue school concept is to improve children’s health and thus increase the retention rate at school, and to create a learning environment for children to replicate good practices at home in terms of hygiene and sanitation, agricultural techniques and environmental conservation measures.

A blue school¹ consists of the following components:

1. Sustainable access to safe drinking water;
2. Sustainable access to sanitation and hygiene;
3. A school garden as practical place to show relationships between food production and an efficient management of water; and
4. A demonstrative place for watershed and land management practices.

To improve the health of children, standard interventions of development agencies in school are to construct sanitary and water facilities and complement it with children’s awareness programmes in hygiene and sanitation.

However, in many cases, sustainability of the interventions once an agency has exited is a challenge. Often due to lack of financial resources, the facilities are not properly maintained and the consumables to practice good hygiene behaviour are not being renewed. By starting up a school garden and through the selling of vegetables, the idea is that the school gets an additional source of income that can be dedicated to finance spare parts and repair WASH structures, consumables such as water treatment agents, soap, tissue paper and other sanitary materials as

¹ <https://www.shareweb.ch/site/Water/resources/RsEAU%20Library/blue%20school%20concept.pdf>

well as buying the necessary items and material to sustain the school garden and the environmental measures.

In many areas in Ethiopia, environmental degradation and climate change, with more frequent and extreme drought periods, are real problems which will keep on negatively impacting the livelihoods of communities. Introducing sustainable agricultural techniques that conserve soil and water and promotion of multiple use of water, will equip the children with necessary baggage to improve their own livelihood, sustain their living environment, and be more resilient to climate variation in the future. The introduction of a school garden and good environmental practices related to integrated land and water management aims to move to a more integrated approach for a better school environment and learning and awareness of pupils.

Through learning in a participative way and practicing good hygiene behaviour, agricultural practices and environmental conservation measures in the school environment, children will become change agents in their communities and responsible citizen for the future.

3 HOW TO IMPLEMENT IT?

3.1 How to get the buy in of the key stakeholders?

Good 'school mobilization' is essential to ensure buy in from the different actors and to put in place an adequate set up for the implementation and sustainability of the blue school. School mobilization includes various meetings with key school stakeholders, or even by organizing awareness creation workshops. Key stakeholders include:

- *School administration and academic committee from the school*, responsible for the overall learning and teaching process and any activities taking place in the school compound;
- *Woreda education office*: Local government mandated to, among others, sign project agreement, control the schools, allocate budget and assignee teachers; etc.
- *Parents' committees*, involved in key decisions in the school, playing a key role in mobilizing community for fund raising in case of any additional activities in the school that can not be covered from the school budget nor from the support of the Education woreda office.

During those initial meetings, the concept, the expected roles of responsibilities of the school, the supporting agency and the respective woreda offices need to be clear and can be institutionalized in a memorandum of understanding. Discussions on whom is responsible for the O&M of the WASH infrastructures, and related to the school garden and environmental activities (when to farm, who should farm, who should sell the vegetables and what to do with the income) should already take place during these initial meetings.

Important note: The blue school concept needs to be implemented in schools that have already hygiene and sanitation facilities.

3.2 Water, Hygiene and sanitation interventions

CHAST and school health club

For hygiene and sanitation promotion, COOPI uses the Children Hygiene and Sanitation Training approach (CHAST)². CHAST is based on the Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation (PHAST) approach and uses a variety of exercises and educational games including posters, practical hygiene demonstrations, role plays, games and songs in a logical sequence of sessions to teach children at primary schools about the links between water, sanitation, hygiene and health. For lower primary, CHAST is composed of 13 sessions, and six sessions for upper primary.

The first step is for the school administration to select two teachers to become the CHAST teachers. They are responsible for rolling out CHAST to pupils. Their role is also to act as role models and demonstrate good hygiene and sanitation practices.

In addition to training pupils in CHAST, a School Health Club (SHC) is formed. The SHC is an important instrument to bring good hygiene behaviour among the children and to sustain the learning of CHAST. The SHC complements the CHAST sessions and implements activities to move from general awareness to good practices. Being part of the SHC should not be seen as a punishment! It is therefore important that the SHC does not end up being assigned to clean sanitation facilities. This is the responsibility of all pupils, and should be institutionalized through a cleaning rooster. The SHC members should act as role models, monitor the cleanliness of facilities and compound, but also be encouraged to undertake fun activities in the school but also outreach activities in the community.

The composition of the SHC can vary. One possible way is by selecting two boys and two girls from each class, to be headed by a patron, ideally one of the CHAST teachers.

Maintenance of the water and sanitation infrastructures

As far as the responsibility for O&M of the water and sanitation facilities is concerned (small repairs), it can vary per school. In general, it is the responsibility of the school care taker and/or the school administration. It is important that those persons receive a training on O&M, once the infrastructures are constructed.

3.3 Agricultural and environmental interventions

The first step is for the school administration to select two teachers to become the patrons of the agricultural club.

A group of 40 pupils drawn from each grade is selected to become members of the agricultural club. The agricultural club is responsible for supervising that each class carries out its responsibility regarding the school garden and the environmental conservation measures and for providing advice and ensure pupils motivation. It is not only them who do the gardening!

After selection of the members, the agricultural club undergoes a three days (afternoon only) training that includes school gardening principles, techniques and basics of watershed

² https://www.caritas.ch/fileadmin/media/caritas/Dokumente/Was_wir_tun_Welt/Landerseiten/Caritas_CHAST_Manual.pdf

management. The training is provided by the Woreda education office together with the Agriculturalist from COPPI.

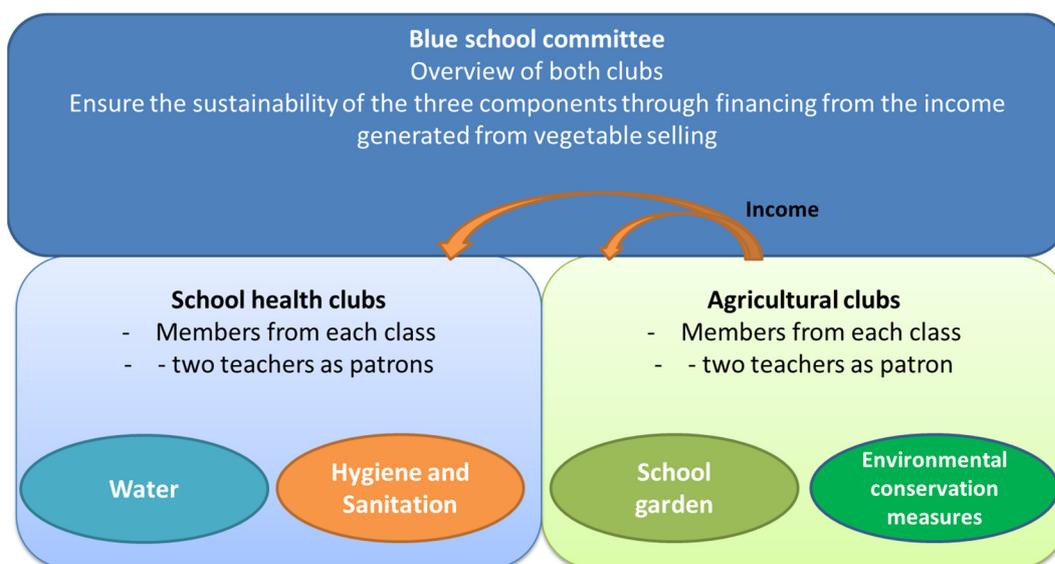
- ➔ At this moment, there is no kit developed for training of the agricultural club. There is a need to develop material for a more participative training such as cards with crop types, with information on how to grow it and its conditions. This could lead to a participative selection of crops to be introduced.

A key element of the training is to explain how the profit from the sales of vegetable is planned to be used. Therefore, during the training, it is recommended to develop the necessary budget required to be able to sustain the blue school. Materials for O&M for water and sanitation facilities and consumables for maintaining good hygiene conditions in the school should be listed, their costs estimated and the frequency of replacement indicated. Regarding the school garden and the conservation activity, costs for potential replacing of agricultural tools and buying of seedlings should be estimated.

Additionally, during the crop selection, harvesting time should be considered. It is best when pupils can see the whole process, from planting to harvesting and thus if harvesting time does not fall during the school holidays.

3.4 Overarching coordination by the blue school committee

The blue school committee is responsible for the functioning of both clubs (SHC and agricultural club) and the overall impact of the interventions for the school. Pupils from the SHC and from the agricultural club, as well as one teacher from each club, are selected and form the blue school committee. More specifically, the blue school committee is responsible for the budget to sustain the blue school, for organizing the sales of the vegetables, collecting the money from the selling and allocating this money for water infrastructure, hygiene and sanitation consumables or the school garden and the environmental measures. Parents can also be engaged in the blue school committee.



Who farms?

All pupils are involved in the farming! Each class is responsible for one plot and for growing one crop. One teacher with all his/her students takes the responsibility of managing one crop type. Lower classes are given the easier crop to grow. Pupils from lower classes can be tutored by pupils from upper classes. This division of tasks ensures that all the students are involved, develops ownership and create healthy competitions between different classes. Ideally, the selection of crops should be context specific and done in a participative way.

When do the pupils farm?

Finding the appropriate time for farming is a challenge. School gardening should not affect curriculum. Pupils can farm during special club time, or after classes. In Ethiopia, there is a rotational system, so pupils only attend class half a day. However, it is a fact that pupils are expected to return home as soon as possible to attend other duties with their parents. Therefore, the most appropriate time for farming can be discussed during school mobilisation. It is also advisable to include parents in this discussion.

How to know the market potential?

Availability of vegetables is a real problem in rural Ethiopia. The idea is that the vegetable from the school garden are sold directly to the surrounding community by taking the produce to the market during market day. The agricultural club can also organize events such as parent day or introduce school market day to promote the practice and the produce.

To assess the willingness of consumers in the community to buy vegetables, and the type of vegetable that would sell best, it is important to do a market analysis. As we are working in small communities and as our project staff are from the area, there is already some general understanding of the demand and therefore no need for a complicated market study (which would for example, be necessary in case of a school located in a bigger town).

- ➔ A number of questions related to the market potential can be added to our Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) survey questionnaires.

Who should be responsible for the selling of the vegetables?

Who is responsibility for marketing and sales of the agricultural produce and revenue collection can vary per school. The initial idea of COOPI was that it should be handled by the blue school committee. However, this poses a number of challenges: it should not overlap with school time and it is difficult to motivate a pupil to take this responsibility on a voluntary basis. On the other hand, payment of incentive to children is not advisable.

Another option would be to discuss with the parents' committee and to select minimum two parents who would be willing to take up the marketing and selling task. In that case, the parent could receive a payment for their work.

Note: In addition to selling vegetables, it can be considered to sell seedlings.

How will the money be handled?

The blue school committee should have a good accounting system, where all income from the vegetable is documented, as well as the expenditures made for the four component of the blue school. Support can be provided to put such a simple system in place, provide training and monitor the use of the system.

In case some vegetables are not sold, they can also be given to the most motivated pupils or to the active members of the blue school committee.

What is happening during school holidays?

In Ethiopia, schools close for two months during July and August. During this time, pupils can not take care of the school garden nor harvest. It is thus important to clearly assign those responsibilities to either the guard of the school, parents living in the vicinity or local government representatives. The best solution will depend on the context.

Scale up!

It is better to start with fewer crops and then, in the next cropping season, to scale up to more. Also, it can be recommended to start with smaller plots of land to later to increase the plot size per class.

How to encourage what the schools is doing?

The school should be proud to demonstrate what it is doing! The initiatives to improve the school's hygiene and sanitation condition, the agricultural practices and the land conservations activities can also benefit the adults. The school should act as a demonstration site: during certain key days or events, the agricultural club and the school health club can organise joint events where they demonstrate good practices to parents, including drama, songs, games...

4 WHAT ACTIVITIES WILL BE UNDERTAKEN BY COOPI/CARITAS SWITZERLAND FOR EACH COMPONENT

4.1 Sustainable access to safe drinking water

Roof water harvesting structures will be constructed in schools where there is no existing water source. The project plans to construct the roof catchment structures in the schools that have buildings in good condition and sufficient roof area. The activity includes strengthening of the roof and gutter system of the buildings, construction of cistern/or masonry water tanker beside the building and connecting it to the gutter system using pipes.

A training in O&M is planned for one female and one male student from the school health club, the two CHAST teacher, two parents from the parents' committee.

Note: in the course of the project, it became clear that the water collected from the roof would not be enough water for the school garden. Not to compete with the water for drinking purposes, an additional structure (underground open tank) was constructed to collect and store rain water.

4.2 Sustainable access to sanitation and hygiene

Construction of Ventilated Improved Pit (VIP) latrines will be undertaken in two schools where there are no latrines at all or that need improved latrines in order to fulfill minimum sanitary requirements (separate blocks of latrines for male and female students). The activity will be integrated with hygiene and sanitation promotion.

CHAST will be implemented in all schools.

Additional activities to sustain the learning of CHAST include:

- The formation and continuous guidance for the SHC;
 - Provision of hand washing facility;
 - Celebrating key days with the agricultural club;
 - Taking part in outreach out activities in the school;
 - Development of cleaning rooster fixed on the toilet;
 - Talking wall on the latrines wall.
- ➔ It could be interesting to add a chapter (or a adds-on) to CHAST on nutrition, to also make the link with the school garden.

4.3 The school garden

To start the school garden, activities include:

- Formation of the agricultural club;
- Training of the agricultural club;
- Formation of the blue school committee;
- Provision of agricultural tools (see annexe);
- Engagement of the community for mechanical ploughing;
- Provision of seedlings (see annexe);
- Preparation of the beds with all pupils;
- Demonstration and marketing of the produce.

Under this project four vegetable crops (onion, tomato, pepper and cabbage), fruit trees (papaya) and agro-forestry trees (Neem, Graviola and Moringa) are planted. For example, grade 4 produces cabbage, grade 5 peppers, grade 6 onions, grade 7 tomatoes and grade 8 students are responsible for the seed nursery bed.

Regarding who should be responsible for the school garden during the school holidays, consultation with the school community and the woreda administration have taken place and it was agreed that:

- As much as possible, the development agent of the kebele responsible for agricultural extension should take a leading role and mobilize community for watering and harvesting the crops;
- In case of absence of the development agent, the guard of the school should be made responsible for watering and weeding.

5 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES

Activities under watershed management include:

- Planting of trees inside school compound with seedlings produced at the school nursery bed;
- Construction of different soil and water conserving structures;

Water conservation methods include:

- Small stone bund: used in dry area with depleted soil and gentle slopes, crusted and shallow soil and marginal lands used for temporary grazing;
- Bench terrace: suitable mostly in semi-arid part of the country like a water harvesting structure where the riser acts as a catchment;
- Ridge: suitable mostly in semi-arid and arid parts of the country with deep and well drained soils. Tie ridges are small rectangular series of basins formed within the furrow of cultivated fields mainly to increase surface water storage and to allow more time for rain fall to infiltrate the soil;
- Planting pit system: suitable in most degraded gentle slope and restore degraded land and increase the degraded land for cultivation;
- Half moon: common structure in most dry land for tree planting increase infiltration and intercept ran off and decrease erosion.

Among the above listed types, those which are feasible for the particular schools and capacity of students will be used.

6 BLUE SCHOOL ACTION PLAN

During the SHC and the agricultural club training, an action plan should be developed by each club with their patron, to guide the activities that will be undertaken by the pupils and to monitor progress as well as the budget.

7 WHAT CHANGE DO WE WANT TO SEE AND HOW TO MONITOR IT?

Observable changes in the school will include:

- Well maintained sanitation and water facilities;
- Clean and greener compound;
- Clean and healthy students;
- Increased school income;
- Consumables and materials for sustaining hygiene in the school are always available.

More participative and innovative tools can also be added, such as:

- Photos monitoring, especially for the cleanliness and greenness of compound;
- Monitoring sheet for the school health club;
- Qualitative interviews to pupils (for example, the most significant change approach);
- Attendance rate at the health post.

8 ANNEX 1 TYPE OF EQUIPMENT DELIVERED FOR ONE SCHOOL

S.n	Kind of material delivered	Unit	Quantity
1	Shovel	No	5
2	pick axe	No	5
3	Localhoe	No	5
4	Rake	No	5
5	mattock	No	5
6	Machete	No	5
7	wheelbarrow	No	3
8	Polyethylene tube	Meter	800

9 ANNEX 2. TYPE OF SEED DELIVERED FOR ONE SCHOOL

S.n	Kind of seeds delivered	Unit	Quantity
1	Tomato	kg	0.25
2	onion	kg	0.25
3	pepper	kg	0.25
4	cabbage	kg	0.25
5	papaya	kg	0.25
6	Neem	kg	0.25
7	Gravilia	kg	0.25