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## THE SOUTH-WEST EXPERIENCE OF WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH) PROGRAM IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA: THE NEED FOR POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

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The provision of safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WaSH) in educational institutions is globally recognized as a key intervention to promote student's right to health and clean environment. This has been established to improve health, boost educational achievement, and promote gender equity which has a positive impact on the society.

However, most public schools in Nigeria are short of the basic water and sanitation facilities, and hygiene education programs are often inadequate. The aim of this study is to ascertain the state of WaSH program in the educational institutions in Nigeria, by using public secondary schools in South-Western Nigeria as a pilot study. This was assessed by investigating the causes of inadequate potable water supply, poor sanitation and deficient hygiene education in public secondary schools. A total of twelve public schools were selected for the study which span across three Cities (Lagos, Abeokuta and Ota) in two States (Lagos and Ogun), in South-Western Nigeria. The criteria for selecting these schools were based on their prominence in the society and the willingness of the school authorities to grant permit. The standard for WaSH in schools by UNICEF was used as the guiding principles to evaluate the adequacy of the various WaSH components. Sample size, in terms of both numbers of schools and number of students and teachers polled, was influenced by the willingness of the schools to provide information. Data collection methods involved the use of questionnaire, interviews, observation and focus group discussion methods. Out of the 12 public secondary schools visited, only 3 (20%) had drinking water points (boreholes) and 40% of the schools do not have separate latrines for boys and girls. The ratio of toilets to students in the schools ranges between 1:70 to 1:320. Only 1 (10%) of the schools had hand washing points but without soap. It was revealed that Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials are not provided in any of the public schools and there are no facilities and program in the schools for promoting safety, privacy and security of older girls. This study reveals that the present WaSH facilities and practices in many of the schools are not satisfactory. The possible underlying reasons for poor WASH in the public secondary schools surveyed can be connected to a lack of clear policy, insufficient budget allocations from government and lack of awareness and understanding on the part of the school management system. Evidence from literature reveals that these results and other findings are reflections of what is obtainable in other parts of the country. Therefore, to maximize the potential of students as the most persuasive advocates of good WaSH practices in the society, it is necessary to integrate WaSH program into national education program with full policy implementation back-up and schools should be provided with adequate facilities.

**keywords:** southwest nigeria, public secondary schools, wash program, education and intervention.