

HSS Alemayehu
Your Excellency Ato Kebede Gerba

State Minister for Ministry of Water/Irrigation and energy.

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Your Excellency Dr. Kebede Worku

State Minister for Ministry of Health

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to be here representing the Ministry of Education to make this keynote speech on this very essential 6th annual Multi-Stakeholders Forum. I would also like to express my deep gratitude and highest regard to all our partners supporting the WASH program

As you may know well, access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene facilities and education are basic needs of human life and dignity. These basic needs remain a dream for millions of people, in particular for women and children across the world. Poor hygiene, inadequate quantity and quality drinking water and sanitation facilities cause millions' of people to be affected by preventable diseases every year.

Inadequate access to safe water and sanitation services, coupled with poor hygiene practices, sickens and kills thousands of children every day, and leads to impoverishment and diminished opportunities for many people. It is also true that many children are facing difficulties in their learning abilities because of frequent illness that leads to low

attendance and dropping out of schools. The provision of safe and adequate water supply and basic sanitation for school children has significant effects on their learning activities.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Ethiopia is also facing the same challenges, inaccessibility to safe water and inadequate sanitation facilities and hygiene education. In spite of massive expansions in school construction and increasing of enrolment, the provision of quality and adequate water, latrine and hygiene has not improved as much as the expansion of schools, because of this effect the number of female student dropouts is significant in each year.

Thus, the national WASH inventory shows that in many schools the drinking water coverage is low, the quantity of water in many schools where there is a supply found to be inadequate, the physical accessibility of water sources is far from schools, most of the latrines are predominated by traditional pit latrine, the overall latrine seat to students ratio is low and hand washing facilities are not sufficiently available in schools. Moreover, many of the designs of water and sanitation facilities do not reflect gender and special needs of physically challenged students, although there have been improvements currently.

It is our conviction that children can be used as best change agents who can play an effective role in creating a healthy, clean and active learning

environment in schools and they can also help to convey messages back home and motivate their families for improved behavior. This in turn can help water supply and sanitation facilities to have a great influence on the quality of education. To this effect, the Ministry of education has made concerted efforts to supply safe drinking water and sanitation facilities at school level. With regard to latrine, significant number of schools have latrines. WASH program has been given a high priority activity and included in the five year sector plan. It is also incorporated in school curriculum, particularly in environmental science subjects. WASH indicators have been revised and included in the MOE annual abstract in order to capture appropriate and reliable information.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The provisions of safe drinking water, sanitation facilities and hygiene education were undertaken under the responsibilities of different sectors in uncoordinated manner. After it was realized that provision of water, sanitation and hygiene as a package would have significant impacts on the health of school children and consequently affects the quality of education. Thus why, the Ethiopian government initiated to establish a harmonious working modality between the Ministry of water, Irrigation and Energy, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance and Economy Development and other potential partners in the implementation of water supply, sanitation and hygiene education

activities to realize the full rights and benefits of the program for school children and people at large scale..

Since the implementation of the WASH program, many changes have been taken place in terms of the organizational structure and service delivery of education office at Federal, Regional, woreda and school level with the commitment of development partners to align and harmonize their support for the effective implementation of the program.

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my conviction that the implementation of the WASH program will definitely contribute to improving the water supply, sanitation and hygiene situation of schools thereby improving educational access, equity, efficiency and quality which will accelerate the attainment of the Growth and Transformation plan. This in turn greatly contributes to reduce child and maternal morbidity.

Finally, the objective of the program can be achieved if and only if we could work collectively rather than in a separate manner. Please allow me to thank you all, who are here to make your best contribution for this very important meeting ***“Innovative One WASH for Sustainable Development.”***

Thank you