Improving water and sanitation education in Ethiopia

Ethiopian students can now learn what they need to know about improving water and sanitation in Ethiopia.

Access to water, sanitation and hygiene related health problems greatly affects communities in Ethiopia today. Acute respiratory infections, fever, and dehydration from diarrhea are important causes of childhood morbidity and mortality in developing countries (WHO 2003) which are exacerbated by poor nutrition. Water, sanitation and hygiene related challenges are among the major contributing factors for these health risks.

The availability of skilled human power at grassroots level has a significant contribution to addressing challenges faced by communities in accessing safe water and promoting sanitation and hygiene services. Most mid-level water technology graduating students in Ethiopia lack the necessary competencies to address water, sanitation, and hygiene in the country due to poorly designed, inconsistent curricula and a general disregard for water quality and sanitation in courses being taught.

USAID’s Growth through Nutrition Activity, implemented by Save the Children and its partners, works to build the capacity of mid-level water technology professionals to serve their communities. In 2017, the project, in collaboration with Ethiopian Water Technology Institute, and Technical, Vocational, Education, and Training Agency, revised the existing curriculum and worked towards integrating four new WASH occupational standards for mid-level water technology cadres.

Standard teaching materials were also developed and instructors were technically updated so that they can provided the courses effectively. Ato Alemayehu Gudeta, Directorate Director of the Water Technology Institute stated, “The revision will not only add value to the sector but ensure consistency of programs across the country.”

In 2018, the newly developed occupational standards and the model curricula were validated and rolled out to all colleges of the country with water technology departments. Today, water technology students are using the newly developed curricula with core water, sanitation, and hygiene competencies.

The Ministry of Water Irrigation and Electricity is also working closely with the Water Technology Institute, and TVET Agency and colleges for the effective implementation of the courses and expecting competent graduates to join the community to achieve goals set by the sector.

This intervention is an invaluable input to the country’s effort to curb water and sanitation challenges it has faced for years as investing in education is always a sustainable means to an end. USAID is enabling institutions to cultivate local capacity, and a generation of experts in the field.