

WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE IN SCHOOLS

IMPROVING WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE IN SCHOOLS

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in Schools is a component of the UNICEF Child-Friendly, Equitable and Quality Basic Education programme (see the separate briefing note). WASH in Schools provides safe drinking water, improves access to and maintenance of clean, gender-friendly and inclusive sanitation facilities and promotes hygienic behaviours and lifelong good health. WASH in Schools enhances the well-being of children and their families. It contributes towards healthy and secure school environments that can protect children from illness, abuse and exclusion.



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A handwashing campaign encourages young children in Beichuan County, Sichuan Province to be diligent with hygiene

Protection of children's rights requires a healthy environment. Every child has the right to survive, grow and develop. Access to safe water and basic sanitation is vital for the realization of each of these rights.

Basic sanitation is necessary for children's health, safety and development. Without access to sanitation facilities, including clean water and toilets, and without hygienic practices like handwashing with soap, children may get sick. Lack of sanitation can impact their development potential.

The overall WASH objective for UNICEF is to contribute to the realization of children's rights to survival and development through support to national programmes that increase equitable and sustainable access to, and use of, safe water and basic sanitation services and promote improved hygiene.

BRIGHTER FUTURES FLOW FROM BETTER WASH IN SCHOOLS

Evidence on the difference WASH stimulates

WASH in Schools significantly reduces hygiene-related diseases. It increases school attendance and contributes to a child's dignity and inclusion. These strengths then feed ongoing individual development and even a country's economic growth.

WASH in Schools promotes equity. All children are entitled to equally access WASH facilities and all children benefit from improved hygiene practices promoted by WASH in Schools activities.



Global evidence on WASH in Schools has shown:

- In China, WASH programmes reduced the number of missed school days by 54% per year and reduced absenteeism by 42%.¹
- In Kenya, a WASH strategy led to a 50% reduction in diarrhoea illness.²
- In India, a sanitation programme helped increase girls' enrolment in Alwar District by one third and improved academic performance for boys and girls by 25%.³
- In the Philippines, school absenteeism reduced by 27% through daily handwashing, a deworming programme and improved oral hygiene.⁴



1/3
of all schools in China
do not have
proper water and
sanitation facilities

Safe water and sanitation access: The numbers

Globally, 2.4 billion people lack improved sanitation facilities, and 663 million people still use unimproved drinking water sources.* In China, around 60% of schools have access to safe water and adequate sanitation—lower than the global average of 66%–69%.**

* WHO/UNICEF, "Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for Water Supply and Sanitation Report", 2015.

** China Education Management Information System, 2014; UNICEF, 2012.

¹ Bowen, Anna et al., "A Cluster-Randomized Controlled Trial Evaluating the Effect of a Handwashing-Promotion Program in Chinese Primary Schools", *American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, vol. 76, no. 6, 2007, pp 1166-1173.

² Freeman, Matthew C. et al., "Assessing the Impact of a School-based Water Treatment, Hygiene and Sanitation Programme on Pupil Absence in Nyanza Province, Kenya: A cluster-randomized trial", *Tropical Medicine and International Health*, vol. 17, no. 3, March 2012, pp. 380-391.

³ UN-Water, "Sanitation Contributes to Dignity and Social Development-Factsheet No. 3", 2008.

⁴ Monse, Bella et al., "The Fit for School Health Outcome Study: A Longitudinal Survey to Assess Health Impacts of An Integrated School Health Programme in the Philippines", *BMC Public Health*, vol. 13, no. 256, 2013, pp. 1-10.



Children understand the importance of washing their hands through WASH in Schools, as this drawing from a student in No. 2 kindergarten in Shifang County of Sichuan Province illustrates

Challenges for WASH in Schools

Fulfilling every child's right to safe water, sanitation and hygiene education remains a major challenge for policy makers, school administrators and communities in many countries, including China—especially the most disadvantaged parts of China's western provinces and rural areas.

Globally, challenges include entrenched social norms, weak coordination and lack of quality data. These situations may hinder the development of WASH in Schools, impacting on incentives in investing in facilities evidence to determine programme needs and monitor progress and, ultimately, in challenges to appropriately planning programmes.



An unsanitary school latrine in Sanjiang County, Guangxi Province



An uncovered school septic tank in Zhong County, Chongqing Municipality

UNICEF AND CHINA GOVERNMENT PARTNER TO MAKE SCHOOLS HEALTHIER

UNICEF runs the WASH in Schools programme in 250 schools in five disadvantaged counties to demonstrate the rehabilitation and maintenance of suitable water and sanitation facilities and how to work with teachers, children and communities on positive WASH practices, such as washing with soap, and on addressing climate, environment and disaster education in schools.

China's support to WASH in Schools

In recent years, the Government of China has increased its commitment towards WASH in Schools, which helped achieve the sanitation-related Millennium Development Goal target in 2010. Yet, special efforts are still needed to improve the sanitation status of less developed areas of the country.



New latrine in on kindergarten, Zhong County, Chongqing

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WASH in Schools in China expands over time

2001 • Introduction of WASH in Schools concept in China

2004 • First school latrine construction regulation issued specifying requirements for school latrines

2006 • Launch of first Ministry of Education and UNICEF WASH in Schools project in China in 5 counties in 5 provinces

2007 • First School Latrine Construction Technical Guideline developed with UNICEF-assistance

2011 • School water supply and latrine indicators integrated into Education Management Information System
• Second five-year UNICEF WASH in Schools project in 13 counties in 7 provinces

2014 • WASH integrated into National Guidelines on the Overall Improvement of Basic Conditions for Compulsory Schools in Poor Areas
• WASH integrated into Ministry of Education's national school management standards

WASH IS CRITICAL FOR CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOLS IN CHINA

The UNICEF China's Child-Friendly, Equitable and Quality Basic Education programme incorporated the WASH in Schools programme in 2012 to maximize the impacts of four Child-Friendly School programme dimensions, as well as encouraging new ideas and innovations for improving students' health and learning outcomes.



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Students participate in the World Water Day Campaign in March at Zhongzhou Primary School in Zhong County, Chongqing Province

Where are we? WASH in Schools in China

The WASH in Schools programme is implemented in five counties in five western provinces, chosen to reflect different groups of vulnerable children: areas with a large proportion of migrant children, rural counties with a large proportion of children left behind by migrating parents who migrate to cities for work and counties with large ethnic minority populations.



Project components

- Development of a WASH in Schools action plan, integrated into the local education development plan.
- Support to the design and construction of child-friendly and environment-friendly WASH facilities.
- Capacity upgrading for school principals, teachers and schoolchildren on WASH facilities management and maintenance.
- School-based hygiene promotion activities.
- Capacity upgrading for the improved provision of school nutrition and food safety.
- Disaster risk reduction and resilience building in schools.
- Community WASH and environmental awareness campaigns.
- Exchange of project experiences and the replication and scaling up of WASH in Schools activities.



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One school girl drawing the Global Handwashing Day logo in Shule County, Xinjiang

Future plans

From 2016 to 2020, WASH in Schools interventions will include:

- Collecting evidence to advocate for improved WASH facilities and practices in schools, through a study that seeks to determine the benefits for children and impact on educational outcomes.
- Rehabilitation of facilities in some schools to demonstrate gender-friendly and inclusive WASH facilities to county education bureaus.
- Improving WASH practices in schools, households and communities through training, advocacy and communication for development.
- Capacity upgrading with local education authorities, headmasters and teachers on WASH education.
- Community and school campaigns on WASH to change social norms and increase awareness of the importance of safe water and good sanitation and hygiene.
- Capacity upgrading for project schools on improving nutrition, disaster risk reduction and resilience building and green and sustainable school development.
- Piloting of emerging WASH innovations in schools, with approaches to help schools meet the essential criteria for healthy and protective learning environments, such as the Five Star Beauty School rating system linking water, sanitation, hygiene with environmental and ecological initiatives.
- At the national level and to help develop policies, standards and guidelines, UNICEF will work with government partners to ensure the modelling of WASH in Schools approaches, the development of innovations and the monitoring system such as refining the current Education Management Information System to include more WASH indicators.



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LEARNING HYGIENE BEHAVIOUR THROUGH FLASHCARDS

Children in Ganjing Primary School in Zhong County, Chongqing Province, learn about good hygiene behaviour in schools and at home through a playful game with flashcards developed by UNICEF. The game encourages students to talk about specific hygiene behaviours as good, bad or uncertain. Through their group discussion, students begin to understand the messages about personal hygiene issues, helping them to develop good personal hygiene habits.



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A SCHOOL HANDWASHING ADVOCATE

Wang Yuchen, 12, is a handwashing advocate in her Ba-shan Primary School in Zhong County, Chongqing Province. Yuchen received first prize for her story about the new school facilities in a writing contest involving all students in her grade. "My school has become much more beautiful," she boasted cheerfully. "I can drink the hot water in our canteen, and the new school toilets are very clean and safe. More importantly, we now have a very long sink with lots of taps and handwashing soap. I will encourage my classmates to use these new facilities properly."

Clean water and sanitation in the Sustainable Development Goals

In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution that recognized access to safe drinking water and sanitation as human rights. This means that for the United Nations, the rights to water and sanitation are contained in existing human rights treaties and are thus legally binding.

In September 2015, the 193 countries of the United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Development Agenda, which specifically emphasizes WASH priorities in Sustainable Development Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

UNICEF ADVOCATING FOR EDUCATION GLOBALLY AND SOUTH-SOUTH INSPIRATION

UNICEF will continue working with partners in China to ensure that education and WASH in Schools are central pillars of the post-2015 development agenda. UNICEF will also share the many good practices from China's disadvantaged schools with schools in developing countries in Asia and Africa.



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Group discussion on control and sanitation-borne diseases in Zhangliu Primary School, Xihe County, Gansu



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