Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes

Working Group on Water and Health

Ninth meeting
Geneva, 29 and 30 June 2016
Item 4c of the provisional agenda

Informal document
Water, sanitation and hygiene in schools

INFORMAL DOCUMENT

Advocacy document on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools

– Draft document for endorsement by the Working Group on Water and Health –

The Protocol on Water and Health is a key instrument towards achieving water- and sanitation-related goal of the Commitment to Act of the 2010 Parma Declaration on Environment and Health and the 2030 sustainable development agenda.

The first regional Member State meeting on advancing water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in schools (Bonn, 18-19 September 2014) identified priority actions under the Protocol, including development of an advocacy document for decision makers to raise profile of WASH in schools and call for action in the Region. The document specifically aims to position the Protocol as a main platform for streamlining improvement action on WASH in schools at national level.

The first Expert Group Meeting on WASH in Schools (Budapest, 16-17 April 2015) defined the scope and initial outline of the document. The draft advocacy document was prepared by the WHO Regional Office for Europe and further developed based on the feedback and inputs provided by the second Expert Group Meeting (Bonn, 8-9 October 2015), the eighth meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health (Geneva, 21-22 October 2015) and informal planning meeting on WASH in schools (Bonn, 9 February 2016).

The Working Group on Water and Health is requested to review the final draft and endorse a submission of the document to the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties for adoption.

The draft document is for use by the Working Group on Water and Health only and not for wider distribution.
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools in the WHO European Region

Educating Engineers and Financing Sustainability

Final Draft, June 2016
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# List of Acronyms and Abbreviation

GLAAS - Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking Water  
RPG - Regional Priority Goal  
WASH - Water, Sanitation and Hygiene  
WHO - World Health Organization
1 Summary

Health, dignity and education of school-children cannot be guaranteed without adequate water, sanitation and hygiene in schools. The unfortunate reality is that in a considerable part of the WHO European Region a large share of children spend their days at schools which don’t provide even basic sanitation, hygiene or drinking water services.

For example, 43% of schools in the Caucasus and Central Asia do not provide toilets and 37% of schools do not provide access to water supplies (see chart A1). Moreover, toilet-avoidance due to lack of privacy and cleanliness, poor hand hygiene and dehydration are common to pupils across all income zones in the Region.

Acknowledging that children do not lose their human rights by virtue of passing through a school gate, the ambition to attain healthy school environments for all children in the WHO European Region is a core pillar of the Parma Declaration on Environment and Health. In 2010 the 53 countries in this Region have committed to provide all child care centres, kindergartens and schools with safe water and sanitation and to revitalize hygiene practices (Regional Priority Goal (RPG) 1). It is underpinned by both the human right to water and sanitation and the right to education and supports fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular target on

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1 Unlike standardized monitoring of access to water and sanitation in households, the information that is available for schools often can't be compared across countries. Definitions, indicators, and data sources are underdeveloped and not always comparable between countries and thus provide an incomplete picture.
universal and equitable access to safe water and adequate sanitation. The universal target will not be met unless it is met for all, including schools. By underscoring how inadequate WASH in School compromises pupils' education and health, this document aims to help prioritize WASH in School among policy-makers of all involved sectors to incrementally realize the fulfilment of sustainable development goals and the Parma Declaration.

The shortcomings in schools often exist in spite of comprehensive national WASH in school policies and standards - whereas concrete plans, targets and routine surveillance are much less common. Another limiting factor is the amount of available governmental budget for the sector - not only for infrastructure - but particularly for routine maintenance, consumables and durable goods.

The impact of inadequate WASH in school services transcends sector boundaries (see below inset). Both children’s health and education are affected when facilities are not available or inadequate. It is common for pupils to report the absence of toilet paper, soap and bins for menstrual hygiene products and toilet avoidance rates in the region are very high.

Together with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, RPG 1 contributes to the realization of the right to water and sanitation in all spheres of life. This includes educational institutions.

The 1999 Protocol on Water and Health is the primary policy instrument in the WHO European region through which to implement the global and regional ambitions and commitments. As a progressive tool to develop integrated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Try to avoid school toilet</th>
<th>Never defecate at school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales-UK</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A - : Examples of studies in which pupils report to avoid the school toilets
policies on water management and health, the Protocol can be used to set clear targets and objectives and to work in partnership with all concerned sectors, particularly with the Education sector.

Nevertheless, the WASH in school sector has traditionally favoured linear thinking and has been infrastructure focussed. Targets are often output based and tend to result in facilities which are disconnected from pupils’ perceptions and implemented in isolation from the education sector’s financing system. Such approaches risk advancing inappropriate school facilities that are not used and not supported by budgets for repairs, cleaning and consumables.

It should be evident to engineers and public health specialists that improving learning environments for children cannot be achieved without acknowledging the central role of the education sector and the pupils.

In effect, the targets under the Protocol should focus on the safe and sustainable WASH services in schools - not simply on building new infrastructure. Reaching 100% WASH in School can only be attained in a meaningful way by taking into account pupils’ perspectives and the recurrent costs of all expenses – including soap, toilet paper and maintenance costs.

Progress towards fulfilling the universal access target and realization of children’s right will not be linear across the Region and requires incremental stepwise improvement approach depending on the country priorities and resources. Progressive realization of children’s rights implies that levels of service can increase over time in a step-wise
fashion. Improvements can be designed using a ‘laddered’ approach such that basic, intermediate, and high levels of service are defined. As such, even when budgets are constrained, incremental steps can be made to reach a basic level of service, and to make additional improvements over time. The cross-sectoral nature of the matter requires strong coordination and cooperation between the education sector and other sectors, such as health and finance.

To support the fulfilment of the regional and global policy goals, such as Parma Declaration and sustainable development agenda, this document finally promotes five key messages for policy makers:

1. Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in schools is a human right and a precondition for the health, wellbeing, education and dignity of school children. The Governments should take progressive action to ensure realization of this right. The Parma Declaration and the 2030 sustainable development agenda provide impetus to address the considerable and wide range of challenges in WASH in School within the WHO European Region.

2. Improving WASH in School inherently requires the leadership of the Ministry of Education in coordination and cooperation with the ministry of Health.

3. Reducing school-toilet avoidance and improving hygiene behaviours requires listening to and proactively engaging students. Such consultations should be proportionate and practical.

4. Reaching high levels of hygiene practices and functional WASH facilities in schools require that the Governments plan and allocate budgets reflecting the actual costs of operation, maintenance and hygiene promotion.

5. National targets on WASH in School can encourage step-wise improvements to progressively meet the ambitions of the Parma Declaration and sustainable development agenda. All countries merit/warrant targets that, at their core, aim at improving hand hygiene practices, reducing toilet-avoidance, improving hydration practices, ensuring proper menstrual hygiene management and ensuring sustainability of services. The guidance (UNECE 2010) accompanying the Protocol on Water and Health can be used to develop such targets.
2 The problem with WASH in School in the European Region

Summary: Although the school conditions in the region are diverse and uneven, all income zones face distinct challenges in the creation of healthy learning spaces that ensure dignity, health and wellbeing. Lack of privacy in school-toilets, absence of soap for hand-washing and poor hydration habits are examples of common problems in schools across the European Region. All the more, in parts of the region a large share of schools does not provide any water, sanitation or hygiene facility.

Challenges related to WASH in School in the WHO European region are diverse. They range from schools without access to drinking-water and toilets to schools providing toilets that do not meet pupils’ needs of privacy and cleanliness.

A growing number of countries regularly monitor compliance with national standards on WASH in School and track progress. Unlike standardized monitoring of access to water and sanitation in households, the information that is available for schools often can’t be compared across countries. Definitions, indicators, and data sources are underdeveloped and not always comparable between countries and thus provide an incomplete picture.

Analysis of available evidence related to WASH in schools for the European Region reveals that although problems within the region may differ in nature and magnitude, it is clear that all income zones experience challenges. Table 1 provides an overview of the range of issues that emerge from the available information. The issues are categorized using the framework provided by the Human Right to Water and Sanitation.

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2 UN 2014, Realising the human rights to water and sanitation: a handbook by the un special rapporteur Catarina de Albuquerque, Chapter 1
Table 1: Overview of the WASH in School conditions the European Region of the WHO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Availability of water supply and toilets in schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Central Asia and the Caucasus</strong> (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of schools with water supplies: 63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of schools with toilets: 57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eastern Europe</strong> (B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of schools with water supplies: 89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of schools with toilets: 89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Western Europe</strong> (C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal or near-universal availability of water supplies and toilets in schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Accessibility**

**Children living with a disability** - There is evidence underscoring that pupils living with a disability are less likely to have access to a school toilet. Limited accessibility can range from 10% of schools in high income zones to 47% in middle income zones.

**Available but not accessible** - There are, examples of cases in which far too many students have to share a single toilet exist (1 toilet for 55 pupils, or even 1 for 400 pupils), from both high and low income zones. Cases of discontinuous water supplies have also been reported, particularly in low and middle income zones.

**Quality and safety**

**Water quality** - Although the type of drinking water source is often known, information on the actual water quality in schools across the region is scarce. There is evidence from a small number of countries indicating that compliance with respective national water quality standards is not always guaranteed.

**Hydration Practices** - There is evidence that despite the availability of continuous water supplies at schools, pupils easily become dehydrated (studies from high-income countries).

**Hygiene Promotion** - Hygiene is not a standard part of the curriculum in various parts of the region.

**Presence of soap** - There is evidence that the absence of soap at handwashing stations near school toilets is a recurrent problem in all income-zones. The presence of soap can range from 82% in high income countries to close to none in some low- and middle income countries.

**Presence of toilet paper** - There is evidence that the absence of toilet paper is common in all income zones. The presence of toilet paper in school toilets can range from nearly zero in low- and middle income countries to 92% in high income countries. Student and NGO reports in high-income countries indicate that the consistent availability of toilet paper can however be much lower (e.g. France, Wales, UK, and Italy).

**Disposal of menstrual hygiene products** - There is a dearth of information on this matter. Some evidence exists indicating that in high-income countries the presence of sanitary bins inside girls' school toilets is irregular (24% - 94%). It is assumed that in low- and middle income countries the situation is less favorable.

**Acceptability, dignity, privacy**

Toilet avoidance is common across the region. As illustrated in Table XX, a study from Sweden reports that 15% of pupils never use the toilets, 16% would never urinate and 63% would never use the school toilets for defecation. Reports from France, Wales, Scotland and Serbia paint a very similar picture. The reasons why pupils deem toilets to be unacceptable relate to privacy, dignity, cleanliness, surveyance, the lack of consumables, bullying and embarrassment (and obliged to ask for permission to use the toilet).
3 Rights

Key Message: Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in schools is a human right and a precondition for health, wellbeing, learning and dignity of school children. The Governments should take progressive action to ensure realization of this right.

The Parma Declaration's RPG 1 on WASH in School is underpinned by both the Human right to water and sanitation and the right to education (see Box 1 and Box 2). The Parma Declaration's commitments further align with the recent international consensus to eliminate inequalities in access to quality education and to realize the right to water and sanitation in all spheres of life.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has set new global goals and targets on education and WASH (Box 3). An essential aspect is that they now explicitly reach beyond the household level. Water, sanitation and hygiene facilities and services must not only be available at home, but in all places where people spend their time. This includes educational institutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1</th>
<th>Box 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Right to Water</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Right to Education</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The human right to safe drinking water and sanitation entitles everyone, without discrimination, to have access to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic use.</td>
<td>The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) spells out the obligations of governments to facilitate pupils’ right to learn in a safe and secure environment, for example: Art 22: “Every child has the right to receive an education of good quality which in turn requires a focus on the quality of the learning environment (...)” Art 8: “Pupils do not lose their human rights by virtue of passing through the school gates. (...) education must be provided in a way that respects the inherent dignity of the child (...)”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Right to Sanitation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Convention on the Rights of the Child</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The human right to sanitation entitles everyone, without discrimination, to have physical and affordable access to sanitation, in all spheres of life, that is safe, hygienic, secure, socially and culturally acceptable and that provides privacy and ensures dignity</td>
<td>1989, Paragraph 24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health. (...) States Parties shall pursue full implementation of this right and, in particular, shall take appropriate measures (...) to combat disease (...) through the provision of (...) clean drinking-water (...) and to ensure that all segments of society and are supported in the use of basic knowledge of (...) hygiene and environmental sanitation.

Box 3 WASH and education goals and targets in the 2013 Agenda for Sustainable Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Target 6.1: By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking-water for all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Target 6.2: By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal 4: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Target 4A: Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Proposed Indicator 1: Percentage of schools with access to (i) electricity; (ii) drinking water; and (iii) single-sex sanitation facilities (as per the WASH indicator definitions)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 Benefits

Improving WASH in School brings tangible benefits in terms of education, health, wellbeing and dignity.

Over the past ten years there has been a surge in peer-reviewed research on the benefits of WASH in educational settings. Nevertheless, the large majority of such contemporary research originates from low- and middle income zones outside of the WHO European Region. This section will discuss the benefits while concentrating principally on the research conducted within schools in the European Region.

4.1 Hand hygiene: For Improved Health and Reduced Absenteeism

Handwashing with soap is the most cost effective way to reduce upper-respiratory (such as the common cold) and gastrointestinal infections. Previously, studies conducted in high-income settings outside of this region (namely the USA) already demonstrated that handwashing in primary schools and day-care centres reduce the incidence of diarrhoea by an average of 30%2 and the incidence of respiratory infections in schools by 16%.3 Studies focusing on absenteeism caused by such illnesses in high-income settings show that the number of days lost as a result of
these diseases can drop by around 25% following hand-hygiene interventions. Handwashing promotion initiatives in schools in middle-income countries outside of the region have generated similar results.

Various studies conducted in the European region also report a beneficial effect of hand hygiene interventions in schools, with a significant reduction of absenteeism due to infections.

- In Denmark, simply washing hands with soap three times a day (prior to the first lesson, lunch and before going home) reduced absenteeism due to infections by about 30%.
- In Spain an intensive hand-hygiene intervention also reduced absenteeism by about 37%.

Notwithstanding these results, the promotion of handwashing after toilet use in schools can be challenging. Besides having well stocked handwashing stations with soap and water present near the toilets, an effective promotion strategy is indispensable to increase the uptake of this critical life-long skill.

4.2 Water Supply: For improved Wellbeing and Learning

When pupils' fluid intake during the school is insufficient they easily experience dehydration. This can occur when pupils simply consume too little water or when no water source is available. Accumulating evidence supports the notion that hydration state affects cognitive ability and mood, especially in school children. For example, pupils in Italy and UK were found dehydrated as the result of a low level of fluid intake. The evidence demonstrates that short-term memory and vigour are twice as good in hydrated school pupils compared to dehydrated school pupils. Schools in a middle-income country outside the European Region showed that the introduction of drinking water inside the classroom can result in a 40% lower absenteeism rate. The provision of water can improve the child’s general wellbeing as well as learning as pupils are better hydrated. But school rules on water consumption determine to a large degree the extent to which pupils will actually consume the water. Studies documented a statistically-significant increase in water consumption when school pupils were explicitly allowed free access to water in school, and in the classroom in particular. It is important that the water needs to be safe and the location of the water tap or fountain need to be convenient for pupils (e.g. not inside the school bathrooms).
4.3 Accessibility and acceptability of toilets: For Privacy, Dignity and Wellbeing

In the European Region toilet avoidance is common (see below table). Privacy is a recurrent factor in toilet avoidance. Locks that don't work, doors that don't provide enough seclusion, no doors at all and bullying in toilets can make security and privacy a challenge for the pupils. Poor maintenance, especially of hand washing facilities, and unhygienic toilets with dirt, unpleasant smell and often lacking hygiene consumable (toilet paper, soap, hand drying towels) are other important reasons to avoid the toilet use.

There is evidence that links toilet avoidance with a decreased ability to concentrate, an increased risks of developing intestinal problems, functional bladder disturbances – like constipation or incontinence –, and urinary infections. Toilet avoidance can also result in a reduced fluid intake.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Try to avoid school toilet</strong></td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>X%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>X%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Never defecate at school</strong></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Examples of reports/studies showing avoidance of toilet by the schoolchildren

A recent WHO survey conducted in 5 countries in the Region shows the degree of pupils' dissatisfaction with the school toilets as well as the large differences between countries with similar income levels. Below figure presents the percentage of pupils answered positively to selected questions related to school sanitation facilities.
A large recent study in a middle-income country outside of this region demonstrate that the availability of acceptable latrines can increase school enrolment by 12%\textsuperscript{19}.

**Box 4: Toilet avoidance in Europe**

**France**

A recent study\textsuperscript{20} in a middle-school in France shows that:

- 10% of the girls regularly experience bladder leakage.
- 33% never visits the school toilet because they are considered dirty.
- 70% never felt secure in the toilet because a lack of privacy.
- Visiting the toilet was hardly ever allowed during class.
- 43% of the girls indicated to have abdominal pain as a result of not going to the toilet.
- The resulting discomfort had an impact on their ability to concentrate and learn at school.
- According to the cleaning personnel the pupils are responsible for the dirty toilets. “They do not respect that public space”.

### 4.4 Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM)

A matter of pupil’s dignity that transcends the issue of toilet acceptability is menstrual hygiene management (MHM). Often framed as a matter of equitable school participation, MHM is a complex\textsuperscript{21} matter involving social norms, taboos, misunderstandings, sexuality, coming-of-age and a technical dimension like the availability of disposal facilities and absorption pads in schools.

Girls experience menarche at different ages and for some that means before going to secondary school. There is little high quality evidence associating school attendance or drop-out with MHM, but girls' absence from school or school toilet avoidance during menstruation can have both physical and psychological causes\textsuperscript{22}. First, they may lack physical provisions for MHM such as lockable, single-sex, private toilets with water and soap for washing and a closed bin for used pads. Menstrual pain is another reason for girls to go absent themselves. Other reports highlight feelings of fear, confusion and shame in class.

There is little current information on education, support and disposal facilities for MHM in schools in the European Region. Limited evidence suggests that in high-income countries the presence of sanitary bins inside girls' school toilets is irregular (24% - 94\%\textsuperscript{3}). Furthermore, it occurs that - if sanitary towels are available - girls often have to ask an adult to obtain one\textsuperscript{23}.

MHM is not just about the biological aspects of the menstrual period but also the need to address societal beliefs and taboos surrounding the issue. Sufficient

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\textsuperscript{3} 94\% in Germany in Heudorf et al., 2011. 24\% in France in ONS 2007
knowledge, guidance and support for girls in preparation for and during menstruation are also part WASH in School.

Girls in puberty and female school staff cannot be expected to attend school when having to manage their personal hygiene while being deprived of a place that provides privacy, water and the opportunity to dispose of menstrual materials. The fundamental premise of WASH in School requires embedding the management of menstrual hygiene in education curricula and facilities.

5 Underlying Issues

Improving WASH in School inherently requires joint leadership of the education and health sectors.

Reaching high levels of hygiene practices and functional facilities in schools require that the Governments plan and allocate budgets reflecting the actual costs of operation, maintenance and hygiene promotion.

Reducing school-toilet avoidance and improving hygiene behaviours requires the consultation with and engagement of students. Such consultations should be proportionate and practical.

This section discusses the importance of the leadership of the Ministry of Education, to improve financing for safe and sustainable WASH services in schools and the importance of considering student feedback and opinions in taking actions to reducing toilet avoidance.

5.1 High Standards Low Compliance
The WASH in school challenges in the region diverse and are manifested in a multitude of contexts. The underlying causes for the suboptimal WASH in school situation in many countries, however, are less diverse. Analysing a series of parameters related to enabling environment in the large set of countries indicates an emergence of a common set of shortcomings (WHO 2016, WHO 2015).

The shortcomings in schools often exist in spite of comprehensive national WASH in school policies and standards - whereas concrete plans, targets and routine surveillance are much less common. A strong limiting factor is the amount of available governmental budget for the sector - not only for infrastructure - but particularly for routine maintenance, consumables and durable goods.

Table 5: Representation of the bottlenecks in WASH in School in the European Region (Source: Landscape Report 2016)

5.2 Financing Functionality and Privacy

Reaching 100% WASH in School can only be attained in a meaningful way by taking into account pupils’ perspectives and the recurrent costs of all expenses – including provision of soap, toilet paper, sanitary items and cleaning and maintenance costs. Yet, in countries that have large coverage gaps, programmes that focus on the construction of costly infrastructure have been quite dominant in the WASH in school
sector. Without emphasizing the sustained use of such infrastructure, schools can easily end up with unhygienic, poorly maintained or dysfunctional WASH facilities.

Recently the sector has undergone a shift that at its heart has the sustained use of WASH facilities. That focus has directed the sector’s attention towards infrastructure that students find appropriate and for which the operation and maintenance can be financed by the education sector. By means of such an approach compliance with national standards can be achieved in a step-wise fashion, incrementally improving the services based on the financial reality of a given education system. Box 5 describes two approaches that focus on hygiene practices

*Table 6: Overview of a recent shift in thinking about WASH in School interventions*

**Box 5: Cost-effective approaches that emphasise hygiene practices**

The Fit for School programme in the Philippines\(^25\) started from the premise that only simple and cost-effective interventions can be taken to scale. The programme developed a package of affordable healthy behaviours for primary school children: daily handwashing with soap, daily brushing with fluoride toothpaste and biannual deworming with 400 mg albendazole. Tooth brushing and handwashing are organized at set times of the day through daily group activities using affordable infrastructure in an enjoyable routine. Costing merely 3.5 USD per pupils per year, the programme was enthusiastically adopted by the Ministry of Education and has led to improvements in the nutritional status of primary school children (BMI). Based on the concepts “Simple, Scalable and Sustainable”, the Fit for School approach has since been introduced in various countries.

The 3-Star Approach\(^26\) also favours the promotion of cost-effective hygiene measures in schools to which, over time, additional services can be added. Cautioning against overestimating the available budgets for the operation and maintenance of complex infrastructure, the approach recommends starting with simple and affordable hygiene practices (1 star). Subsequent improvements can be made in a step-wise fashion, progressively working towards compliance with the national standards (3 stars). For example, having a single toilet which is used and properly maintained can be superior to having toilets blocks that fall into disrepair. Likewise, a school that makes water filters available can represent a more suitable temporary solution compared to upgrading the school water source. Inspired by the Fit for School approach, hygiene practices are repeated daily and performed in groups.

**Box: Focussing on sustainability in Azerbaijan**

A recent baseline assessment in 197 schools revealed that many schools, particularly those in rural areas, completely lack drinking water and sanitation facilities, or have facilities that are inadequate in quality, hygienic conditions and quantity. The assessment equally pointed out that the sustainability of the WASH facilities is a serious concern.

Consequently, the Ministry of Education has turned WASH in School as its top priority for 2016 and has developed a plan for secondary schools comprised of the following four objectives:

- Development of WASH standards and norms
- Renovation or building of sanitary facilities
Training of teachers and promotion among pupils
Creation of proper monitoring at educational facilities

A lack of appropriate services can render school toilets unhygienic or even dysfunctional after a few years. Yet operation and maintenance is rarely prioritized. Through cooperation with other partners the Ministry aims to develop a legislative framework. Future actions of the Ministry will also target the involvement of parents and other stakeholders to the creation of monitoring system, which in this context has a lot of potential to assure sustainability of WASH in School. The Ministry will start the renovation of 30 sanitary facilities in 2016 by creating a special budget line for regular funding of WASH in School.

5.3 Educating Engineers and Inspectors

The acceptability of school toilets is one of the most common WASH in school problems in the European region. Yet, students are rarely consulted about this matter. Without the input of school children it is unlikely that a significant reduction in toilet avoidance can be made. Security, privacy, dignity, comfort, shame and convenience are all dimensions of toilet use on which many engineers and surveillance staff need more user input and feedback.

It is important that engineers and public health specialists understand and acknowledge the central role of the education sector and the pupils in creating healthy learning environments for children.

Consulting with pupils should be an integrated part of ongoing surveillance activities. Their experiences, attitudes and perceptions are critical. Surveillance approaches and programmes are presented below on the example of three countries. In Hungary all WASH facilities in educational institutions are inspected through a rolling survey system. In France the perception of the pupils has been solicited into surveillance programme. Scotland’s example is unique demonstrating a large scale student consultation and action initiative.

Box 8: Improving hygiene in Hungary: Regular surveys in all childcare institutions

In Hungary, regular hygienic surveys have been performed in all childcare institutions (nurseries, kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, residential children institutions) since 2001. Such surveys function as a rolling system where each year the educational setting under investigation rotates. Surveys are conducted by the local public health authorities with the coordination of the National Institute of Environmental Health, using a standardized questionnaire. The in-depth surveys – covering various aspects of the school environment, including air quality, lighting, safety, heating, etc. in addition to the WASH aspects - are complementary to the routine yearly surveillance of the public health authorities, and aim to assess mid-term trends and needs. Surveys cover all type of children's facilities in the country.

"Everybody likes to build, nobody wants to maintain"
Schools, including primary and secondary schools, were surveyed three times (in 2001, 2006 and 2011/2012).
- Kindergartens were surveyed in 2003 and 2014.
- The survey of nurseries was performed in 2007 and 2014.
- Family day-cares and play-centres were surveyed in 2008.

**Box 7: Surveying pupil’s perspectives in primary and secondary schools in France**

In France the national observatory for the accessibility and security of school buildings (ONS) conducts annual surveys on the state of the school buildings and school equipment. Through occasional thematic surveys the condition of the toilets in primary and secondary schools has been assessed. Participation in the survey has been voluntary, anonymous and is based on self-reported data. Aside from questions targeting teachers and maintenance staff, the surveys strongly consider the perception of pupils. In particular, the surveys address the reasons for toilet-avoidance. These are interesting examples of how to obtain insightful information on sensitive issues. Below of the two surveys on school toilets:

- **2007 survey on toilets in primary schools** targeting teachers and pupils of CM1 and CM2 (4th and 5th grade)
- **2013 survey on toilets in secondary schools** targeting school surveillance staff, maintenance staff and pupils

Based on the surveys the ONS has put forward various recommendations, including updating existing standards, to promote the proper use of school toilets, reduce toilet-avoidance and related urinary troubles.

**Box 6: Consulting with young people in Scotland**

In 2010 a national consultation involving 74,059 Scottish children and young people was conducted by the Scotland’s Commissioner for Children and Young People. The issue of safe school toilets was raised repeatedly by children and young people when the Commissioner visits schools, youth clubs and care settings.

Under the same project, a survey was conducted involving 2,154 young people in 59 secondary schools that were asked what they thought about their school toilets (Ipsos MORI, 2013). The key findings from this survey were that:

- Only four in ten pupils say they use school toilets whenever they need to (41%);
- If pupils have to ask for permission to go to the toilet, 18% is rarely or never allowed to.
- A significant number of pupils feel uncomfortable when asking for permission (especially girls);
- Almost one third of pupils think the school toilets are poor or very poor (27%) and the majority of pupils’ reported issues concerning working locks, provision of hygiene consumables and overall cleanliness.

Approximately 100 pupils, staff, parents joined an expert working group to help and inform about the areas to prioritize in the guidance. The updated guidance is expected to be issued to all Scotland’s Local Authorities and Education Services in 2013. The expert group consists of members from the Scottish Government, Scottish Youth Parliament and different NGOs, with continuing involvement from
6  Target Setting under the Protocol on Water and Health

National WASH in School targets can encourage step-wise improvements to progressively meet the ambitions of the Parma Declaration and the sustainable development agenda.

All countries merit/warrant targets that at their core aim at improving hygiene practices to reduce toilet-avoidance, improve hydration practices, hand hygiene and menstrual hygiene management and ensuring sustainability of services.

The guidance accompanying the Protocol on Water and Health can be used to develop such targets.

The Parma Declaration on Environment and Health (2010) provides a regional push for action and accountability for WASH in School. The RPG 1 aims to provide all child care centres, kindergartens and schools with safe water and sanitation and to revitalize hygiene practices. It is underpinned by both the human right to water and sanitation and the right to education. The Protocol on Water and Health, adopted at the third Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (London, 1999), is the key regional policy instrument in supporting the implementation of the Parma commitments and the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, in particular the target on universal and equitable access to safe water and adequate sanitation at national level.

The Protocol’s overall objective is to prevent, control and reduce water-related disease through sustainable water management. It emphasises disease prevention, wellbeing and equitable access to WASH services. Through its core requirement to set national targets the Protocol has manifested itself as suitable tool to help national governments to progressively fulfil the ambitions of RPG 1 and SDG, including on WASH in School (see below table). As a tool to develop integrated policies, the Protocol stipulates Parties to work in partnership with all concerned sectors.
Table 7: the parallels between the principles of WASH in School and the Protocol on Water and Health

6.1 Redressing Inequalities and “Laddered” Approaches

In the WHO European Region, all income zones experiences WASH in School challenges, but the disparities between and within countries, between rural and urban populations and between different socioeconomic groups are broad (WHO 2015).

Realizing universal access to water and sanitation lies at the heart of the Protocol. Targets should call for progressive reduction in inequalities between rich and poor, urban and rural, slums and formal urban settlements, and disadvantaged groups and the general population. Inequalities related to individual status based on gender, disability and age should also be reduced.

Progressive realization implies that levels of service can increase over time in a step-wise fashion. Improvements can be made using a ‘laddered’ approach which includes basic, intermediate, and high levels of service. Schools may not suddenly provide comprehensive access but move upwards through a “ladder” of service levels, specified by multiple criteria and related to service thresholds derived from the normative criteria of the human right to water and sanitation. As such, even when budgets are constrained, incremental steps can be made to reach a basic level of service, and to make additional improvements over time.

For example, it can be advantageous to start with a small number of affordable toilets that are well maintained, hygienic and used by pupils. Although the WHO standards on student/toilet ratio may not be respected, small incremental improvements that bring public health benefits can be part of the progressive realization of pupils’ right to a healthy learning environment. Similarly, mandatory handwashing with soap at fixed moments during the school day (see example on Denmark in section 3) can be
an acceptable step up the handwashing ladder. In this instance handwashing with soap at all critical times is a longer term goal.

6.2 Example Targets
Under the Protocol on Water and Health, according to articles 6 and 7, Parties are required to set and publish national priority targets. Progress of their implementation needs to be reviewed and assessed periodically. A number of Parties to the Protocol have developed and implement specific WASH in school targets, as shown in Table 8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target area</th>
<th>Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target area I: Quality of the drinking-water supplied</strong></td>
<td>Azerbaijan*, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- ensuring children in preschool and secondary schools with quality drinking water;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- achieve compliance with chemical and microbiological drinking water quality standards for all schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target area II: Reduction of the scale of outbreaks and incidents of water-related diseases</strong></td>
<td>Armenia*, Azerbaijan*, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- sustain level achieved for viral hepatitis A and shigellosis</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- develop national programme for prevention and control of soil-transmitted helminthias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target area III: Access to drinking-water</strong></td>
<td>Armenia*, Azerbaijan*, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Tajikistan*</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- assess the situation and investment needs and develop rehabilitation programme for improving water supply in schools and preschools facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- increase the access of children in schools and pre-school institutions to improved water supply -100% by 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target area IV: Access to sanitation</strong></td>
<td>Armenia*, Azerbaijan*, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Tajikistan*, Ukraine</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- to estimate investment required to improve access to sanitary equipment, proper waste water disposal and regular emptying of septic tanks in schools and preschools</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- develop a plan for improving sanitation facilities in schools</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- provide improved sanitation in preschool and secondary education facilities in cities, towns and villages;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- provision of facilities for handwashing with soap in schools</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- raise awareness of teachers, school staff and pupils on hygiene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target area V: performance of collective systems</strong></td>
<td>Serbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- raise awareness on adequate water supply and sanitation in schools</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Target area VI: application of recognized good practice</strong></td>
<td>Serbia</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- improve WASH survey in schools introducing new</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Methodology**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional national target area: Improved national communication and education</th>
<th>Germany</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• improve communication and education of the general public on the topics of drinking-water, bathing and swimming, with particular consideration for children’s health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: The target areas for the WASH in School targets set by the countries under the Protocol for Water and Health

Note: * - the country is in the process of development or drafted the national targets under the Protocol. Based on the overview of the WASH in School challenges listed in section 2, specific targets can be set that aim to overcome the issues that various countries in the Region are facing, pertaining to the availability of adequate facilities, accessibility of facilities, quality and safety, and acceptability, dignity, and privacy.

Comprehensive guidance has been developed to assist member states in the development of targets. The guidance covers inter alia matters such as stakeholder involvement, baseline analysis, prioritization, and the selection of appropriate indicators for measuring progress in implementing the targets.

Example targets that can address all or part of the WASH in School challenges identified in section 2 are listed in the below table 9. The purpose of WASH in School is not only to have infrastructure, but that the hygiene practices are improved. It is therefore recommended to develop targets that aim at improvements in the use of facilities so as to reduce school-toilet avoidance, improve hydration practices, handwashing practices, and MHM. These targets are examples on different WASH in School areas and serve as an inspiration for countries to develop such targets for better outcome.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Example targets</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financing operation and maintenance</td>
<td>The education system has incorporated the budget necessary to finance operation, maintenance of WASH in School (including consumables and durable goods).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspectives of Pupils</td>
<td>The education system has launched a consultation process in which pupils are consulted about their experiences, attitudes and opinion regarding the WASH in School facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of adequate facilities</td>
<td>Schools provide all users with basic drinking water supply and adequate sanitation, handwashing facilities and menstrual hygiene management facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility for pupils living with a disability</td>
<td>Schools provide all schoolchildren living with disability sufficient, accessible, private, secure, clean and culturally appropriate toilets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality and</td>
<td>Schools provide sufficient toilets equipped with toilet paper, inside the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acceptability of toilets and use by pupils</strong></td>
<td>toilet facilities at all times.</td>
</tr>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools provide sufficient toilets that are hygienic to use and easy to clean. A cleaning and maintenance routine is in operation, and ensures that clean and functioning toilets are available at all times.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools provide sufficient toilets that provide privacy and security.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The rules for toilet visit are adapted to the children's physical and developmental needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schoolchildren consider the school toilets to be acceptable (or Toilet-Avoidance is reduced to a minimum)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Water Supply and Hydration habits</strong></th>
<th>Schools provide an improved source on premises and water points accessible to all users during school hours.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schools provide a water point for drinking (outside of the school bathrooms)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools have a “free access” water rule allowing children to drink when needed and at their desk.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Handwashing Stations and Handwashing habits</strong></th>
<th>Schools provide sufficient number of handwashing facilities, with soap and water at all times, available inside or immediately outside toilet facilities.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schools organize fixed daily handwashing moments</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **MHM facilities** | Schools provide a private place for washing hands, private parts and clothes; drying re-usable materials; and safe disposal of used menstrual materials. |

| **Water Quality** | Schools provide water for drinking, cooking, personal hygiene, cleaning and laundry that is safe for the purpose intended. |

*Table 9: example targets that emphasize use of appropriate facilities and hygiene practices*
7 References


Talaat M, Afifi S, Dueger E et al. (2011) Effects of hand hygiene campaigns on incidence of laboratory-confirmed influenza and absenteeism in schoolchildren, Cairo, Egypt. Emerging Infectious Diseases 17, 619–625

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Azor-Martinez, E. et al. (2014): The impact of common infections on school absenteeism during an academic year.


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(Barnes & Maddocks 2002; Croghan, 2002; Heudorf et al., 2011; Jones & Wilson, 2007; Lundblad et al., 2005; Rapoport et al., 2012; Zulkarnaev et al., 2009)


National targets set by the countries under the Protocol on Water and Health


Jones & Finlay (2001)

For example, in a menstrual hygiene management study conducted in 2009 by WaterAid, more than half of the girls reported being absent from school at some time during menstruation. The main reason cited was the lack of privacy for cleaning and washing, mentioned by 41% of respondents. WaterAid. ‘The State of School Sanitation in Nepal: District-wise (girl) students’ access to sanitation in community schools’, Kathmandu, August 2011.

