



## Week 2: All Schools Must Have Adequate WASH Facilities

A school is more than classrooms and desks. Providing students with access to WASH facilities has been shown to boost attendance, increase achievement and promote equity. However, the stark reality indicates that there is much work to be done. Existing WASH in Schools data shows that 49 per cent of schools lack access to safe drinking water and 55 per cent of schools lack access to sanitation facilities in middle and low-income countries.

With more than 3,500 visitors, from 150 countries the WASH in Schools sub-consultation received the largest number of views and comments at the Water Consultation site of the World We Want website. Through the sharing of 242 comments it was evident that the consultation recognizes the right of every child's access to WASH facilities and hygiene education in schools and draws attention to the fact that ensuring the realization of this right remains a major challenge for policymakers, in many countries. Commenters shared valuable experiences from the field and called on decision makers and concerned stakeholders to support WASH in Schools to find its place at the post 2015 agenda – so that all children have the opportunity to go to a school with access to safe water, child-friendly sanitation facilities and hygiene education. Key recommendations and conclusions coming out of e-consultation are:

### **1. A school cannot be a school without the presence of toilets, taps and hygiene education.**

Participants of the online debate outlined their expectations that: “WASH must be part of every school”. Adaptation of national, regional and local standards for WASH in Schools and enforcement of standards are critical to ensure children's right to access to WASH. These standards should be the basis for national action plans that aim to reach all schools within a concrete time frame and should allow for gradual improvements to facilities and hygiene practices. Participants advocated for the monitoring of WASH in Schools coverage through Education Management Information Systems “EMIS”.

“Can you imagine a house without toilet? I think most of us couldn't imagine to live in a house without toilet, and I consider the same happens for schools. But unfortunately that's a reality in most developing countries. For instance, in Nicaragua around 75% of public schools have no adequate sanitation facilities.”

Quote from an anonymous online debate participant

### **2. Ministries of Education Should take the lead in providing WASH facilities in schools.**

The responders emphasized the role of government in ensuring that WASH facilities are present in schools. The ministry of education was cited as the key host in WASH in Schools programming and a focal point in mobilizing various stakeholders. In addition to other government ministries, Community members, civil society advocates, members of the media, students, school staff,



local and regional authorities, non-governmental organizations, faith-based groups, public-private partnerships can all support planning and action for WASH in Schools.

- 3. Empower gender equity through WASH in Schools:** Girls are particularly vulnerable to dropping out of school, partly because many are reluctant to continue their education when toilets and washstands are not private, not safe or simply not available. When schools have appropriate, gender-separated facilities, an obstacle to attendance is removed. Adequate WASH facilities and menstrual hygiene education improves the quality of education experience for both female students and teachers.

## The Road Ahead

In partnership with those who are dedicated to the health and education of children, we are committed to an ambitious but imperative vision: every child goes to a school that provides safe water, proper sanitation and hygiene education – a school where they will grow, learn and thrive. The recommendations coming out of the e-consultation will feed in to global advocacy on WASH in Schools. The WASH in Schools network with members from more than 70 organizations will advocate for setting a WASH in Schools related goal beyond 2015 and the inclusion of WASH in Schools indicators at the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring program.

For more information about WASH in Schools, please visit <http://www.unicef.org/wash/schools/>