

ACCESS TO WASH FACILITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH REDUCED MOBILITY

In 640 institutions, the toilets are inaccessible to people with reduced mobility, while in 224 institutions, access is partially available. Furthermore, in 430 institutions, sinks are not accessible to those individuals, while in 226, only some sinks are accessible to students and employees with special needs.

Note: The form used in the voluntary evaluation process includes the indicators of the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Monitoring Program, managed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) - www.washdata.org.

NEEDS AND SOLUTIONS IDENTIFIED BY MANAGERS OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

During the evaluation, managers provided input on the WASH improvement interventions required at the school level.

No.	Needs/Recommendations
573	Provision of soap, toilet paper, and/or menstrual hygiene materials
427	Increasing allocations for operation and maintenance of WASH facilities, including supplies
421	Renovation of indoor sanitary blocks
393	Raising awareness on the use of toilet blocks
356	Improvement of waste collection and transport mechanisms
356	Improving the cleaning and disinfection practices in the WASH facilities
321	Improving the accessibility of sanitary blocks considering the age
326	Connecting the institution to the public sewer/ sewerage system
194	Construction of additional sanitary blocks inside the building
178	Connecting the institution to the local sewage network
102	Rehabilitation of internal water supply and sewage systems
96	Construction of additional sanitary blocks inside the building
74	Installation of water treatment systems/improvement of water quality
20	Improvement of waste collection and transport mechanisms
18	Rehabilitation of the sanitary blocks in the area of the sports hall
4	Liquidation of the latrine in the yard

WHY UNICEF

The human rights to water and sanitation are at the core of the UNICEF mandate for children. WASH is a critical part of our portfolio and UNICEF is a global lead on this issue. In Moldova, UNICEF provided WASH services to more than 95,000 Ukraine refugees since the onset of the refugee crises. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we procured supplies, promoted handwashing, and supported capacity building of health providers in infection prevention and control. The Climate Landscape Analysis for Children (CLAC), recently conducted by UNICEF in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment and Infrastructure highlighted that 28 out of Moldova's 34 districts face a high or extremely high risk of climate change. The poorest children are the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation.

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BACKGROUND

UNICEF, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Research, conducted a comprehensive assessment of water supply, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities with the participation of 968 schools, representing more than 80% of the total number of educational institutions in Moldova.

The intervention took place from October 2023 - February 2024, with active and voluntary participation from institution managers who previously attended orientation sessions. They were briefed on the technical aspects requiring monitoring to ensure minimum WASH standards for students and staff. The data collected serves as the basis for developing medium and long-term intervention plans and mobilizing the financial resources necessary to improve WASH conditions in schools.

81,2%
PARTICIPATION RATE

217 Schools in urban areas
751 Schools in rural areas

This voluntary assessment exercise is part of the Rehabilitation and Construction of Sanitary Blocks in Schools Programme, initiated by the Ministry of Education and Research and UNICEF and funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development through the German Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW). The content of the publication belongs to the authors and does not necessarily reflect the donor's vision.

WATER SUPPLY SERVICE

Assessment revealed that 809 educational institutions are connected to the public water supply system. Among these, in 783 schools, water is provided within the school building. For the other 26 institutions, the water is provided only on the school yard due to the absence of internal distribution networks.

Additionally, 129 of the 809 schools use the water from shallow wells. In 124 cases, the wells are on the institution premises and utilized by school personnel, whereas in five schools, the wells serve as the primary water source for personnel and neighboring residents. Moreover, 26 educational institutions rely on a borehole situated on the school premises, and two are using the water from the deep wells located on neighboring households. One manager reported utilizing spring water, while another indicated a lack of a water supply source since 2022. Furthermore, 63 schools reported water supply interruptions.

The Territorial Public Health Centres took water samples from all participating educational institutions and carried out laboratory tests. Of the total number of participating schools, in 167 it was found that the water supplied is not potable.

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE COLLECTION, STORAGE, AND TREATMENT OF WASTEWATER

The quality and capacities of sanitation systems used in educational institutions depend on local infrastructure. Of the 968 schools participating in the assessment, 341 are connected to a centralized sewage system, while 136 other schools reported being connected to a local sewage system. Additionally, 449 educational institutions store wastewater and solid waste in pits, and 42 other schools reported using septic tanks. During the assessment exercise, there were identified and documented cases where wastewater is discharged into the public sewage system without any functional treatment system in place.

TYPES OF TOILETS USED BY STUDENTS AND SCHOOL PERSONNEL

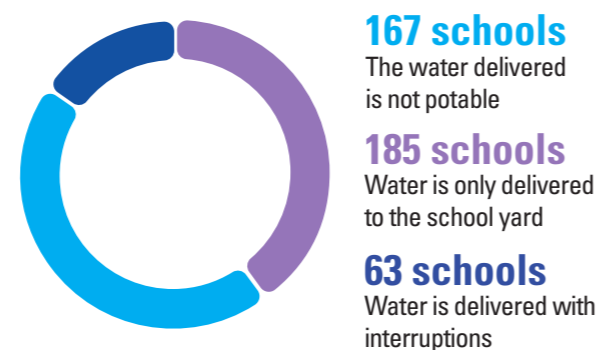
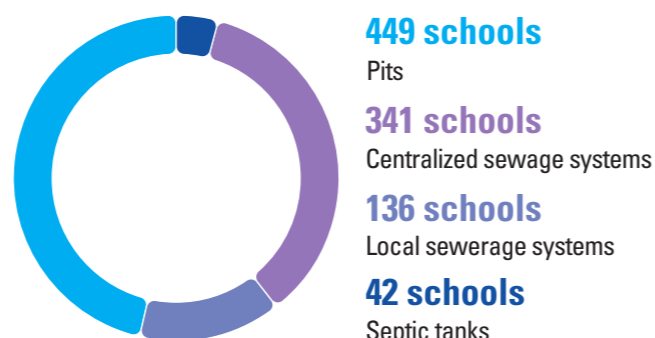
In some schools with sanitary blocks inside the buildings, pit latrine toilets continue to be used due to the challenge of storing and transporting wastewater in the absence of sewerage networks. Thus, in 278 schools, both indoor and outdoor toilets are used by students and teachers. In five other institutions, Ecosan toilets and pit latrine toilets are used, while in 88 schools, students only have access to outdoor pit toilets. Additionally, 39 schools reported using exclusively Ecosan toilets.

Furthermore, in the evaluation process, the level of privacy in the sanitary blocks was analyzed. The results indicate that in 205 schools, the toilets have only partitions but no doors, while in 67 other institutions, no privacy is provided in the toilets.

The availability of trash bins was also assessed. In 109 institutions, trash bins are only present in common areas of the sanitary blocks, while in 79 schools, such bins are entirely absent. Only in 262 institutions have sanitary blocks been equipped with bins for the collection of used menstrual hygiene products.



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Location of sanitation facilities



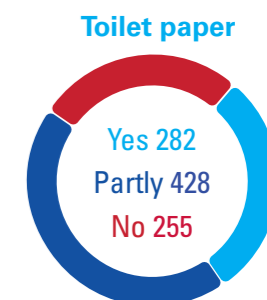
HYGIENE PRACTICES

In 182 schools, students can only wash their hands near or inside the sanitary blocks where the toilets are located. In three institutions, handwashing facilities are only available in classrooms, in 62 schools only in the canteens, and in 28 institutions in common areas such as hallways. On the other hand, in 631 educational institutions, access to sinks equipped with water, soap, and hand-drying facilities is provided near the canteen and close to the toilets as recommended by sanitary standards.

According to sanitary norms, each educational institution must have at least one functional sink equipped with water, soap, and hand-drying facilities for every 40 students. This norm is not met in 215 schools out of 968. In 177 institutions, one sink is available for approximately 100 students, in 31 institutions - for more than 100 students, and in seven other schools - for more than 200 students.

In 830 institutions, sinks are equipped with soap throughout the school year; in 134 schools, the administration purchases and provides soap, but the quantity is insufficient. Students in four educational institutions do not have soap because the administration lacks the necessary financial resources. Additionally, only 285 schools provide sufficient toilet paper throughout the school year. 428 institutions offer toilet paper but not enough, and 255 do not provide toilet paper for students.

Similarly, only eight schools provide menstrual hygiene products for all girls on a permanent basis. Another 208 institutions have menstrual hygiene products only for emergency situations, while 752 schools do not provide menstrual hygiene products.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions:

- Students in rural areas have limited access to water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities in their schools;
- The infrastructure for collecting, transporting, and treating wastewater in rural areas jeopardizes environmental conditions;
- Expenditures for solid waste transportation and treatment services are not adequately budgeted according to environmental norms. Consequently, due to high costs and insufficient financial resources, managers choose not to empty reservoirs/pits as frequently as necessary. This situation has a negative impact on both public health and the environment;
- Approximately 50% of educational institutions in the Republic of Moldova do not possess a system for collecting and treating wastewater, significantly affecting water resources.

Recommendations:

- Construction of indoor sanitary blocks in educational institutions lacking interior facilities, ensuring they are accessible for children and adults with disabilities;
- Rehabilitation and repair of sanitary blocks where the existing ones do not comply with sanitary standards, and increasing the number of handwashing facilities;
- Rehabilitation of water supply and sanitation infrastructure, including the installation of wastewater treatment plants;
- Training students and teachers on the proper use, maintenance, and operation of sanitary facilities;
- Budgeting operational and maintenance costs of sanitary blocks according to environmental norms and the number of students;
- Strengthening the capacities for management and maintenance of water supply, sanitation, and hygiene infrastructure and services.

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