Improving toilet hygiene and handwashing practices during and post- COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesian schools

This summary covers a quick assessment of the situation of WASH facilities, norms, standards and practices in schools as of late 2020 and discusses policy implications and recommendations for reopening schools safely.

Key findings

- Indonesian schools do not have enough functional toilets
  - 8.2 percent of schools in Indonesia did not have a functional toilet in 2019. West Java, North Sumatera, East Java and Papua, have more than 1,000 schools each without functional toilets.
  - 41 percent of schools in Indonesia do not meet the criteria of the minimum three functional toilets, and 75.9 percent of schools do not meet the WHO-UNICEF recommended toilet-to-student ratio of 1:25.
  - Where schools do have toilets, 92 percent have gooseneck while eight percent have septic tank toilets or toilets above the river.
  - Even if toilets are available in schools, they may not be available to students if there are insufficient facilities and they are not separated by gender.

- Water supply is an issue, as is soap and sanitation...
  - 22 percent of Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (MoECRT) schools have no access to water.
  - In West Java and East Java, more than 5,000 schools have no water. East Nusa Tenggara has more than 4,000 schools with no water availability.
  - Almost half of schools have no soap and flowing water (47%).

- …and gender segregation for students and teachers
  - More than 25 percent of schools had no gender-segregated toilets for students or teachers.
  - 45 percent of special schools do not have separate and decent toilets.
  - Similar conditions are observed in the primary madrasahs under the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA). 19.6 percent of MoRA primary schools do not have toilets and more than half do not have hand-washing facilities with soap.
  - The ratio of students per toilet is 1:86 in public madrasahs and 1:75 in private madrasahs, three times higher than the international standard.

- Assessment criteria are often misinterpreted and WASH needs underestimated
  - School principals are typically unaware of the standards for WASH facilities and do not know how to assess them against standards.
  - Principals tend to say that the conditions of WASH facilities are compliant with the standards as long as they do not have any broken or unusable toilets.
  - There is a lack of objective and pragmatic criteria for assessing WASH functionality.
  - Schools are responsible for maintaining school WASH facilities, but they may not be adequately incentivized to do so. They also may underestimate needs, as they lack civil engineering expertise, and while they are entitled to funds from the government for major repairs or new construction, WASH is not usually prioritized.
  - Subnational government decision making relies on the MoECRT’s basic education data (Dapodik) on school facilities, and WASH tends not to be prioritized.
Immediate recommended actions to be taken to support school reopening

### School WASH facilities
- Supply necessary hand soap
- Install handwashing facilities with running water if currently unavailable as well as maintaining soap supply and handwashing facilities
- Maintain consistent messaging on handwashing as key strategy for COVID-19 prevention.

### National regulations and funds for implementation
- Consider additional budgets for constructing gender-separated toilets for students and teachers.
- Develop awareness and training materials to improve diagnosis, planning, and budgeting process for WASH at subnational level.
- Provide targeted support to specific geographical areas and private madrasahs that show low performance on key WASH indicators.

### Standards versus practices in schools
- Provide information and training for all school principals about the standards for WASH facilities and expected hygiene practices and ensure they are well informed about them (notification of regulations; information packages, with confirmation of their understanding of the regulations).
- Develop an assessment tool for WASH facilities for principals and provide training in its use.
- Introduce a community monitoring and reporting hotline. Brochures and posters for awareness raising will be useful.

### International versus national standards
- Review the current policy framework against international standards and update as needed to meet the 1:25 toilet-to-student ratio.

Medium to long-term recommended actions (Post-COVID-19)

- Develop subnational government-wide yearly plans for upgrading all toilets to functional status, instead of relying on ad hoc budget allocations.
- Shift funding mechanisms to incentivize preventive maintenance over waiting for major repairs.
- Conduct a stock-take of the use of BOS (Bantuan Operasional Sekolah/School Operational Grants) and how much flexibility schools have to spend on non-salary expenses from BOS, clarifying the guidelines on BOS for salary and non-salary expenses.
- Update data collection and reporting protocols for more consistent and standardized information about WASH facilities across districts.
- Strengthen coordination between central, subnational, and village governments on the funding for WASH facilities in schools.
- Re-evaluate, revise and update the regulations to align standards for WASH facilities to international standards, including accessibility for children with special needs.
- Ensure the updated standards apply to all types of schools.
- Develop an online training program for school principals and staff (including teachers) for school maintenance, including maintenance of WASH facilities.
- Promote a culture of preventive maintenance in schools.
- Continue promoting good handwashing practice in schools for disease prevention and hygiene.
- Integrate hygiene education and practices in the curriculum as well as in school regulations.
- Provide relevant information on hygiene education and its practices in school for parents and communities.

Full findings and recommendations can be accessed here.