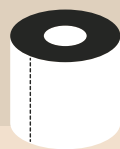
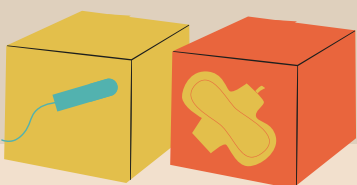
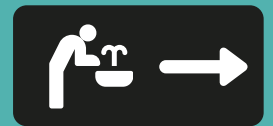
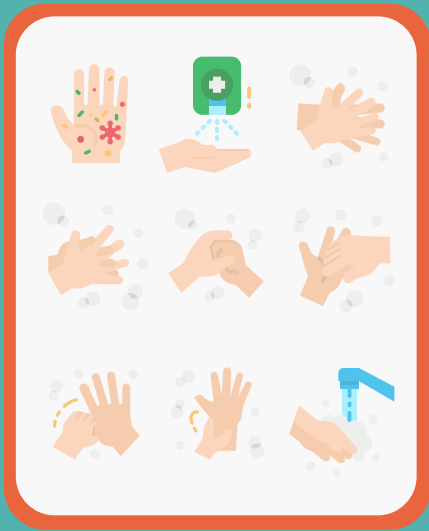


INTERRELATIONS BETWEEN THE HUMAN RIGHTS TO EDUCATION, WATER, AND SANITATION

United Nations Special Rapporteur
on the Right to Education



Education is critical for the safety and well-being of society, in times of crisis and stability alike.

Access to water, sanitation and hygiene education equips school-aged children with life-long skills with which they can integrate good hygiene practices in their daily lives and become change agents beyond their education institutions.

Lack of access to water and sanitation, including hygiene, negatively affects the nutritional status of school-aged children.

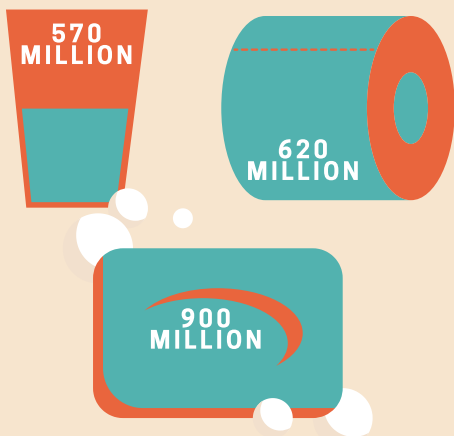
Access to facilities and services alone does not guarantee good hygiene practices in the absence of appropriate hygiene education.

The rights of all persons involved in educational settings, at all levels, whether public or private, formal and informal, should be ensured; these persons include learners, teachers, maintenance staff and others.

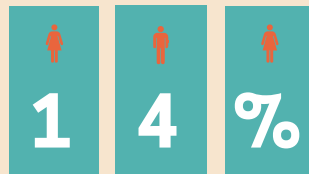
Experiences with environmental and health crises place beyond doubt the need for proper education as a tool for preparedness, prevention, effective management and response during crises.

Access to water, sanitation and hygiene is a key part of the management and response to a health crisis, and crucial in protecting the right to education in this context.

SYNERGIES BETWEEN THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION AND THE RIGHTS TO WATER AND SANITATION



The available data, which are disparate across countries and regions, show that, while around 570 million children lack access to **basic drinking water services** in school, nearly 620 million lack access to **basic sanitation** and 900 million lack access to **hand-washing services**.*

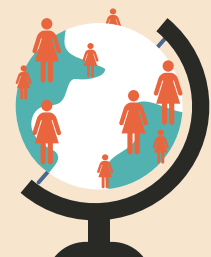


Even where basic services are available, they are not always used. A survey conducted in a developed country showed that concerns about privacy or security and fear of stigmatization caused 14 per cent of students to be **scared of using the toilets**.*



Hygiene interventions can significantly reduce **absenteeism linked to diarrhoea and respiratory illness**, among other things.

335 million girls around the world attend primary and secondary schools without adequate water and soap for hand-washing as part of their menstrual hygiene management.*



In some countries, girls or children from **minority ethnic groups, poor households or other groups in vulnerable or marginalized situations** are singled-out to clean and maintain the facilities, or to fetch water.

*UNICEF, WHO, *Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools: Global Baseline Report 2018*

STATE OBLIGATIONS

AVAILABILITY



- Sufficient education establishments with an environment conducive to learning
- Timely and appropriate water, sanitation and hygiene educational programmes



- Sufficient water for drinking, food preparation, personal sanitation, and educational uses



- Sufficient sanitation facilities and services
- Gender-segregated facilities
- Gender neutral facilities where appropriate and in consultation with concerned persons



- Sufficient hygiene products, facilities and services
- Regular and good quality cleaning

ACCEPTABILITY

- Relevant, culturally appropriate and good quality education programmes
- Water of an acceptable colour, odour and taste for personal or domestic uses
- Culturally appropriate facilities and services that meet standards of gender-sensitivity, privacy and life cycle sustainability
- Respecting all human rights, including the cultural rights of all persons and the rights of people belonging to minorities

ACCESSIBILITY

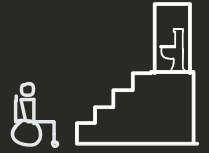
Non-discrimination



- All aspects of education institutions and programmes accessible to everyone, without any overt or latent discrimination

Physical accessibility

- Within safe physical reach of all users, at all times, within schools or within close access



Economic accessibility



- Particular attention must be paid to the direct and hidden costs of water, sanitation, and hygiene, (monetary costs, time invested, maintenance, health costs)

Information accessibility

- Full and equal access to education
- Right to seek, receive and impart information concerning water and sanitation issues, tailored to the specific needs and abilities of groups and individuals
- Right of individuals and groups to participate in decision-making processes that may affect their rights to education, water and sanitation, and to express concerns without fear of retribution



ADAPTABILITY

- Flexible education institutions and programmes
- Adapt to the needs of students in diverse social and cultural settings
- Adapt to changing needs of communities, even during crises
- Able to accommodate response measures to environment and health crises, such as COVID-19

OTHER RESPONSIBLE STAKEHOLDERS



International and development partners, including donor agencies



Teachers and education associations



School administrators and managers



Private actors or private educational institutions



Water, sanitation and hygiene sector workers



Civil society and international research organizations



Health-care authorities and workers



Learners, parents and communities



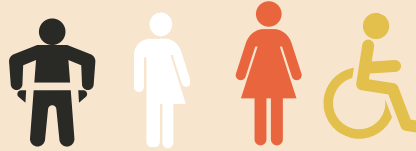
INAPPROPRIATE DESIGN, LOCATION AND MAINTENANCE OF FACILITIES

When the process of technology selection and design related to water, sanitation and hygiene facilities and services for education institutions excludes participation by people in vulnerable or marginalized situations, the conditions for implementing the right to education will most probably not be respected. These people and groups will likely remain unserved or underserved.



INSUFFICIENT AND POORLY TARGETED RESOURCES

Many States fail to commit their maximum available resources to ensuring the progressive realization of the rights to education, water and sanitation. The resources required for water and sanitation, including hygiene and menstrual health and hygiene, include both finance and other resources, such as technology, human capital, land and water.



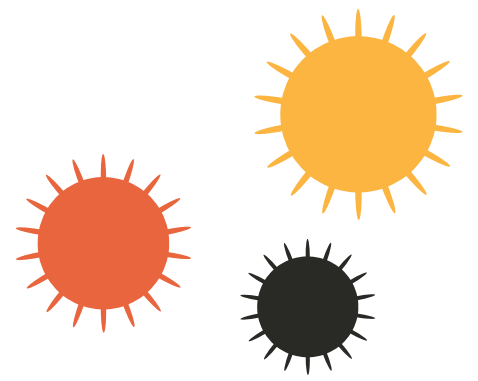
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST GROUPS IN SITUATIONS OF VULNERABILITY OR MARGINALIZATION

Lack of water and sanitation, including hygiene and menstrual health and hygiene facilities and services, often intersects with and exacerbates multiple forms of inequality related to poverty, ethnicity, gender identity, age, disability, level of education or geographical location.



LACK OF LEGISLATION AND POLICY INCOHERENCE

A lack of coherence in laws and policies on the right to education, on the one hand, and the rights to water and sanitation, on the other, can also lead to situations where rights are not upheld.



NON-PRIORITIZATION DURING CRISES

It is anticipated that the wider impacts of COVID-19 will affect government revenues and spending on social services, such as education, and will also hamper the demand for education, as families will be faced with competing demands on their resources and inadequate social safety nets. Insufficient water, sanitation and hygiene facilities and services also increase the risk of transmission of COVID-19.



INSUFFICIENT MONITORING

There is a significant gap in the data on water, sanitation and hygiene in public settings such as schools. The available data are mainly disaggregated on the basis of spatial factors, for example, whether they relate to urban or rural areas, not accounting for any additional inequities affecting individuals and groups in vulnerable or marginalized situations.

The human rights approach emphasizes the need for a **contextualized approach**, taking into account the special circumstances of individual rights holders and prevailing conditions, while taking steps to progressively realize human rights.

GUIDELINES

WATER QUALITY

With regard to quality, water for **drinking, food preparation, personal hygiene and cleaning** must be **safe** for the intended use. It is important to treat water to ensure that it is **free from tastes, odours or colours** that would hamper consumption.

WATER QUANTITY

Sufficient water should be reliably and **continuously** available for **drinking, food preparation, personal hygiene, cleaning** and the operation of the **amenities required for learning**.

Education institutions without sufficient access to water, sanitation and hygiene need to be prioritized for service provision.

WATER FACILITIES AND ACCESS

Sufficient water-collection points and water-use facilities should be available in education institutions to allow convenient access to, and use of, water for **drinking, food preparation, personal hygiene, cleaning and amenities**.

TOILETS

Sufficient, accessible, private, secure, clean, age- and gender-appropriate, and culturally appropriate toilets should be reliably and **continuously** accessible to all learners and education workers. **Gender-segregated** toilets should always be available, and **gender-neutral** toilets should be accessible where appropriate.

HYGIENE

The correct **use and maintenance** of water and sanitation facilities and the **destigmatization** of menstrual health and hygiene should be encouraged through sustained and good quality **hygiene education**.

Recommended hygiene behaviours during **health crises** must be respected.

MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE

Sufficient, accessible, private, secure, clean, absorbent and culturally appropriate menstrual hygiene materials and facilities should be provided at all times, including groups in vulnerable or marginalized situations in order to **prevent period poverty**.

Menstrual health education should be addressed in the curriculum.

CLEANING, DRAINAGE AND WASTE DISPOSAL

The learning environment, including classrooms and laboratories, as well as other parts of the education institution, such as kitchens, offices and recreational areas, should be kept **clean and safe**. Sanitation includes not only the provision of facilities but also the **safe treatment and disposal of excreta and wastewater** from the facilities.

FOOD PREPARATION AND STORAGE

Where food is cooked or served in education institutions, it is important to ensure **safe storage** and preparation to minimize the risk of disease transmission to learners and education workers. The quality of food ingredients and the water used for preparation should be safe.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Learners and education workers, and parents and communities, including groups in vulnerable or marginalized situations, should be **involved in decision-making**, and be given full and equal **access to information**.

The level of access to water, sanitation and hygiene, including menstrual health and hygiene facilities and services, should be **monitored** closely, and data should be **disaggregated**.

Clear and effective **mechanisms for complaints and remedies** should be provided to learners and education workers who allege a violation of their rights to education, water and sanitation.

ABOUT THE REPORT

In the report presented to the United Nations General Assembly ([A/75/178](#)), the Special Rapporteur on the right to education focuses on the interrelations between the right to education and the rights to water and sanitation, including hygiene and menstrual health and hygiene. She explores situations in which the failure to respect, protect and fulfil the rights to water and sanitation in education institutions impedes the realization of the right to education. She underlines that, conversely, the rights to water and sanitation, like many other human rights, cannot be fully implemented without the realization of the right to education, which enables people's understanding, agency and autonomy in those areas.

ABOUT THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR

The Special Rapporteur is mandated by the United Nations Human Rights Council to report on "the status, throughout the world, of the progressive realization of the right to education, including access to primary education, and the difficulties encountered in the implementation of this right, taking into account information and comments received from Governments, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, other relevant international organizations and non-governmental organizations". The Special Rapporteur reports to the Human Rights Council and to the General Assembly on a yearly basis.

Contact the mandate at: sreducation@ohchr.org

