Sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene services in Mozambique schools: Covid-19 as an opportunity for positive change.
Foreword

The link between access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and education has never been more hotly debated than it is today. And the reason is obvious – Covid-19. There is no doubt the pandemic has had a huge negative impact on the world, but it has also provided an opportunity for profound reflection on the challenges of access to water, sanitation and hygiene in schools across Mozambique.

The subject is of crucial importance, since existing data shows that 69% of schools across the country have no access to safe drinking water, less than half (47%) have access to basic sanitation, and only 15% can access hygiene services. The issue is more visible in primary schools, particularly in rural areas. Primary education represents an important time for human development, and it is essential that all children have continuous access to water and are introduced to good hygiene practices from an early age.

It is in this context that the Mozambique National Teachers’ Organisation/National Union of Teachers (ONP/SNP), the Movement Education for All (MEPT), and WaterAid Mozambique jointly undertook a reflection on access to WASH services in schools. The result is this briefing note, containing crucial information to advise decision makers on sustainable access to WASH services in our schools, especially in terms of infrastructure. This is without doubt an essential element for the future safety of both students and teachers in our education system.

The methodology used to gather information was as follows:

• A document review, which consisted of consulting/reading documents from the WASH and education sectors;
• Interviews with various partners from both the WASH and education sectors
• Visits to schools.

While recognizing the great efforts of the government and its partners in improving WASH services in the country’s schools, we also list some challenges that will require combined interventions from actors from different spheres: public, private, national and international NGOs, donors and multilateral agencies. The following challenges stand out:
Foreword

• The fundamental issue of insufficient data on access to WASH services in schools: without reliable and updated information, we cannot establish the size of investment needs, and obtain the support needed.

• Insufficient funding: additional investment in WASH infrastructure will be needed to increase reliability and promote students’ attendance at school in a healthy environment. However, these investments need to be ongoing in order to cover operation and maintenance costs, and accompanied by parallel interventions in sanitation, hygiene and associated behaviours to ensure that students, teachers, and administrative staff can access hygienic facilities for handwashing.

• The above two challenges are complicated by the multiplicity of models of WASH infrastructure in schools, and lack of a coordinated communications strategy for behaviour change: elements of extreme importance for sustainable interventions.

While we invite you to read this briefing note, we also invite you to reflect on how we can use the Covid-19 pandemic as a window of opportunity to improve WASH services in our schools. You can engage with us on this issue, via: wateraidMozambique@wateraid.org; onp.snpm@gmail.com or meptinfo@gmail.com
Context

Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) envisages ensuring access to inclusive, quality and equitable education, and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030. The provision of WASH services is a fundamental condition to ensuring regular attendance of children in a healthy school environment, allowing them to freely enjoy the human right to quality education. Schools with difficulties in providing these services record higher levels of absenteeism, and severely limit the progression of children, particularly girls, through the different levels of education. Therefore, ensuring access to WASH is a fundamental premise for achieving SDG4.

In Mozambique, Joint Monitoring Programme 2018 data estimates that about 69% of schools have no access to safe drinking water, less than half (47%) have access to basic sanitation, and only 15% can access hygiene services. Graph 1 shows the level of service by type of school (reception, primary, secondary), and by area (rural vs urban). Monitoring this type of data is still a challenge: in some categories there is simply no sufficiently robust data to report.

Graph 1 WASH service levels by school level in Mozambique (2018)
COVID-19, and the “new normal” in schools

The advent of Covid-19 brought with it severe challenges for Mozambique. However the government was quick to react, and before the first case was diagnosed\(^1\) on 20 March 2020, it decreed the closure of all schools at all levels of education. But, as in many other countries, the uncertainty generated by the pandemic brought about an added challenge: how to ensure the safe return of students when most schools could not guarantee access to safe drinking water, sanitation or hygiene?

Recognising the problem, and seeking to minimise the impact of the suspension of educational activities on Mozambican children and young people, the government outlined a robust programme as an emergency response to Covid-19, so that school reopenings could safely be carried out by the entire educational community. Among other actions, this programme involved:

- Collection of information on the level of access to WASH services in all schools in the country
- Mobilisation of additional resources for the purchase and distribution of cleaning and hygiene material (buckets, soap, disinfectant materials etc).
- Development of communications campaigns targeting parents, teachers and students for a safe return to school, promoting handwashing, social distancing, and the use of masks in and out of school
- Construction and rehabilitation of improved water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure in schools, boarding schools and teacher training centres across the country.

Various Mozambican government bodies and development partners came together in a joint effort to address the pandemic and accelerate the return to school. The Ministry of Economy and Finance mobilised its own financial resources and those of development partners, including over four billion meticals for the construction and rehabilitation\(^2\) of WASH infrastructure in secondary schools. Meanwhile, with the support of the World Bank, 124 primary schools in four provinces (Manica, Sofala, Zambézia, and Tete) will benefit from this type of infrastructure after an investment of around USD15 million.

The Ministry of Public Works, Housing and Water Resources is responsible for the procurement of contractors and for

\(^2\) [https://www.moprh.gov.mz/?aiovg_videos=face-a-pandemia-governo-cria-condicoes-de-higiene-e-saneamento-nos-estabelecimentos-de-ensino](https://www.moprh.gov.mz/?aiovg_videos=face-a-pandemia-governo-cria-condicoes-de-higiene-e-saneamento-nos-estabelecimentos-de-ensino)
supervising the construction of sanitation infrastructure, in coordination with the Ministry of Education and Human Development. The latter has led the process, together with the Ministry of Health, of developing guidelines for safe return to school, as well as communications campaigns for the promotion of hygiene and sanitation among the education community. Several coordination fora between government and partners were (re)activated to ensure a concerted response to the pandemic, including the Education Cluster, led by the Ministry of Education and Human Development, and the WASH Cluster, led by the Ministry of Public Works, Housing and Water Resources.

At the same time, the government continues to mobilise additional funding for the construction of sanitation infrastructure in primary schools, which represent more than 90% of schools in the country.

It is expected that, at least in the short term, these efforts will bring significant improvement in WASH indicators in Mozambican schools, reversing the statistics reported in recent years (and represented in Graph 1). However, how can we ensure that this improvement will be sustained, and this collective effort to adapt to the new normal will not be lost over the coming years?
Objectives of this briefing note

Based on these principles, and envisaging to contribute to an in-depth reflection on sustainability of interventions developed in Mozambican schools in response to COVID 19, and to mobilise additional resources, WaterAid, the National Organisation of Teachers (ONP) and the Education for All Movement (MEPT) sought to understand some of the challenges facing the sector that will impact on the sustained improvement of WASH services in schools post-pandemic.

To this end, the organizations interviewed a number of government actors at central, provincial, and district levels, civil society organisations, international organisations, and donors in the education, and WASH sectors. Furthermore, it visited some schools, and conducted reference literature review. This briefing note is a summary of the main findings of this work aiming for making some recommendations for the sub-sector, with a view to contributing significantly.

1 See references at the end of the document
Major challenges identified
A. Lack of WASH data

The Ministry of Education and Human Development’s Statistical Information System for Education (SIEE) is used by schools at all education levels. This system, described in the SIEE Handbook,\(^4\) outlines procedures for collection, processing, analysis and dissemination of statistical information for the management of the national education system.

Instituted in 1976, SIEE is considered “a fundamental pillar in the field of statistics production for diagnosing, monitoring, and evaluation of educational development and, in general, it constitutes an important basis for education management, administration and planning, as well as for supporting the decision-making process\(^5\)”. Basically, it collects statistical data on school results, but it also collects data on the number of classrooms by type of construction (see Table 5), which allows the sector to know and plan for the needs of schools under these criteria.


\(^5\)Source: MINEDH
Currently, the Ministry of Education and Human Development carries out this school survey twice a year, in the form of a Statistical Survey on 3 March, and a Survey on School Performance which, at the end of each academic year, presents in a more summarised way the results of the teaching-learning process throughout the year.

Reports are handwritten by the school directorate, and the completed forms are submitted annually to higher levels: at the local level to ZIP (School Cluster Zone), at district level to the District Service of Education Youth and Technology (SDEJT), and at provincial level to the Directorate of Education (DPE).

Based on the nominal list of schools received by the SDEJT, the Provincial Education Directorate maintains the schools’ register using software that allows for the production of short reports on the education situation in a province/district, including academic records by level of education. The Ministry of Education and Human Development uses these tools annually to produce a general school data report in Mozambique, including the number of students by class and age, as well as the number of students progressing from one academic level to the next.

The education sector also has a tool to identify infrastructure needs: the School Charter (Carta Escolar) is intended to be a cartographic representation of schools, making a spatial distribution of educational institutions according to their distance from children’s homes. It also characterises the type of infrastructure in each school, including the type of WASH infrastructure, access to electricity, fencing of school premises, etc. However, updating the School Charter depends on technical capacity at provincial and district levels, as well as on the availability of resources. Lack of funds for capacity building and travel expenses for district and provincial officers’ schools visits has caused significant delays in updating School Charter data, including the situation of WASH services in schools.

Due to these limitations, the sector has been focusing on data management, reporting on students’ academic performance and number of classrooms through the SIEE surveys. This is one of the reasons why, at the time of the outbreak of Covid-19, the sector did not have full knowledge of the real situation regarding access to WASH services in schools, and this also explains the lack of systematised data in the annual reports of the Joint Monitoring Programme, which depend on national data.
B. Scarcity of funds for the operation and maintenance of schools

Another challenge for Mozambican schools is the scarcity of funds for their operation. The sector consumes the largest share of the state budget, and also has the support of a number of development partners who finance the Education Sector Support Fund (FASE). However, the sector’s budget is still not enough to guarantee not only the necessary investment, but also the operation of schools.

To ensure their operation, public schools are allocated two types of funds: state budget channeled through District Education, Youth and Technology Services using the electronic platform of the state administration system, Sistafe. This fund allows schools to cover some of their operating costs (teaching materials, water and electricity, among others). Additionally, Direct Support to Schools (ADE) aims to improve teaching-learning conditions, by making funds available for the purchase of materials and services including school supplies for students and teaching materials, as well as strengthening school management through the involvement of the community and School Councils in the allocation and use of school resources. ADE also aims to contribute to retention of the poorest students, by providing them with school materials, schoolbags, uniforms and personal hygiene kits etc. ADE is allocated to each school according to the number of students, and is funded by FASE.

A 2018 study conducted by the World Bank measuring the quality of service delivery in schools concluded that schools in the southern region receive more ADE by student than schools in the central and northern regions. This is despite the fact that schools in the south appear to have more access to other sources of revenue (such as School Boards), and that literacy and educational performance levels are higher among the population in this region. The 2018 education sector budget report also provides data of the Education Activity Plan, disaggregating resources by level of education and by province.
Graph 2 also shows the imbalance between provinces in the budget allocation by student at all levels of education.

From the various sector reports, it is possible to see not only the imbalance in distribution of funds between provinces, but also the scarcity of funds for the management of schools, including for the operation and maintenance of WASH infrastructure. It is common to find schools with inoperative or even non-existent infrastructure, especially in rural schools in central and northern Mozambique, including some of the most densely populated provinces and districts in the country.

On the other hand, and for schools with no other resources, the responsibility for cleaning and hygiene of school premises has been transferred to school health committees, which are partially made up of students. With Covid-19, the Ministry of Education and Human Development gave clear instructions that, in the absence of specialised staff, the responsibility for hygiene and cleaning of school premises should be handed over to teachers and administrative staff, prohibiting students’ participation.

Those investments in WASH infrastructure currently in progress will certainly increase school running costs: electricity to guarantee the operation of pumps used in water supply systems; water supply, when connected to public or private supply networks; sanitary materials for cleaning toilets; and soap for handwashing. Lack of additional funds for the operation of this infrastructure could quickly make them obsolete.
C. Lack of communications strategy for behaviour change.

Defined as a strategic use of communications approaches to promote changes in knowledge, attitudes, norms, beliefs, and behaviours, behaviour change communication involves the analysis of the barriers and motivations associated with unwanted behaviour of an individual or group, for the coordinated development of communications messages and activities that promote certain behaviours.

Behaviour change communication has gained special prominence over the past year. Prevented from implementing more traditional approaches due to the pandemic, various actors used communications as a central tool for the dissemination of messages. Campaigns promoting behaviour to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus were disseminated through different media, including television, radio, social networks, billboards, murals, etc.

In the education sector, several initiatives sought to illustrate the Ministry of Education and Human Development’s guidelines for reopening schools. The images below depict the different communication materials produced to support schools in returning safely to classes.

This diversity of campaigns, materials, layouts, characters and even key messages associated with back to school seem to reflect the need for a concerted communications strategy for behaviour change in the education sector on school hygiene and sanitation issues. Some recent initiatives by the Ministry of Education and Human Development, supported by partners such as SNV and Be Girl, seem to want to counter this trend; however, the education sector’s communications approach still lacks a clear analysis of the barriers and motivations to change, or tailored interventions focused on students and their motivations that would promote the desired behaviours: body hygiene (including handwashing and girls’ menstrual hygiene) and adequate use of school water and sanitation facilities.

8 https://snv.org/update/snv-minedh-comic-strip-contributes-remote-hygiene-learning-students
9 https://www.begirl.org/moz
D. The multiplicity of WASH infrastructure models in schools

As mentioned earlier, the low rates of access to WASH services in Mozambican schools reflected, among other things, a school infrastructure policy that prioritised the construction of classrooms. In fact, the sector still faces major challenges regarding the number of classrooms, as well as school equipment such as desks and tables for students and teachers. Nevertheless, and at least until the outbreak of the pandemic, WASH infrastructure was not always prioritised by the education sector, and it is very common to find schools of conventional construction, but with precarious or non-existent WASH infrastructure.

The reality seems to be changing for planned investments, with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Public Works, Housing and Water Resources leading the process of construction and rehabilitation of school toilets and water sources in schools with the greatest needs. However, there does not yet seem to be a harmonised sanitation and hygiene infrastructure model. In recent years, several initiatives have been developed by the government and its partners for the standardisation of school sanitation infrastructure, without, however, having yet managed to define a model (or set of models) appropriate to the different specificities: typology of school, level of education, number of students, available resources, etc.

According to the Education Strategy Plan 2020-2029, it is estimated that around 800 new classrooms of conventional material will be needed annually for primary education alone.
The new models from the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Public Works developed respectively for primary and secondary schools are mostly under construction. Although these contain many of the constructive elements recommended in reference documentation (accessibility, privacy, inclusiveness, etc.) these are new models that have not yet been tested or harmonised, based on the use and perceptions of users themselves, and replicated at national level. The cost associated with the construction of these models (over 3,000,000 meticais per school) may also constitute a barrier to universal access to WASH services, especially in smaller primary schools.

On the other hand, the appropriate use of conventional infrastructure will require an additional capacity building effort, especially in contexts where for years access to WASH services has been limited. Here again, behaviour change communication can play an important role in empowering the education community.
Recommendations for improving WASH services in schools
Recommendations for improving WASH services in schools

In light of the issues discussed above, WaterAid, ONP and MEPT, believe that, together with major efforts undertaken so far, a set of coordinated actions led by the Ministry of Education and Human Development with the support of different partners will be required to significantly improve WASH services in schools. These fall into the following areas:

Prioritisation of WASH actions for all primary and secondary schools

- Strengthen the Ministry’s leadership role, as well as its capacity for the management of WASH in schools, without neglecting the importance of inter-sectoral coordination (health, public works and finance) for the design and implementation of policies and programmes that ensure delivery of human rights.

- Adopt the concept of public schools where young citizens can enjoy quality education in all its dimensions. A school without access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene cannot be considered a school. Efforts must be made to increase continuous investment not only in the construction of sanitation facilities, but also in their operation and maintenance. Students and teachers should not be responsible for cleaning the school premises so as not to affect the quality of teaching and hygiene at the school, and non-teaching staff should be hired for this purpose.

- Mobilise additional funds so that, through Direct Support to Schools, the effective operation and maintenance of school infrastructure can be ensured, thereby guaranteeing sustainability, facilitating decentralisation of financial resources to the local level, and accountability of the educational community for the good management of equipment.

- Undertake institutional capacity building of the education sector at all levels on WASH issues in schools.
Strengthening education sector monitoring systems

- Align indicators for analysing the situation of WASH in each school to facilitate the clear definition of actions, leading to a streamlined universal service.

- Review the 3 March statistical survey to include other indicators, in particular: number and type of WASH infrastructure, access to electricity, existence of fencing at the school premises. The inclusion of these indicators in the sector’s main monitoring tool will make it possible to quickly, and with no great additional costs, know the real situation of schools in terms of access to basic services (WASH and electricity), and to plan the necessary investments for an increasingly inclusive school.

- Progressively computerise the data reporting system for schools/zones of teaching influence at district and provincial levels through open source systems, to facilitate the sector’s strategic planning and synchronisation of data with other platforms.

Institutional adoption of behaviour change communication as a strategy for improving the WASH situation in schools

- Define target behaviours (body and hand hygiene, good use of toilets, etc) and, through formative research, identify motivations, barriers and appropriate communications channels for disseminating key messages to the educational community, particularly to male and female students at the different educational levels.

- Mobilise multidisciplinary teams, including designers, artists, social media experts and representatives of the target groups, to design a package of innovative and appealing communications actions that will motivate the education community to adopt new hygiene behaviours and practices based on their motivations and social norms.

- Support the sector in mass dissemination of these actions, through different media in different national languages under the leadership of the Ministry of Education.
Harmonisation of WASH infrastructure models for different types of schools, and improvement of existing models

- Analyse the suitability of existing models for different types of schools, and their use based on norms and construction standards for school WASH infrastructure.

- Develop recommendations for improving the technical design of existing models to ensure that issues of privacy, safety, dignity, accessibility and age appropriateness are guaranteed, including the ease for girls and teachers to manage their menstrual hygiene.

- Develop models of WASH services adapted to primary schools in smaller rural settings, enabling their rapid replication and universalisation.

- Develop procedures and define responsibilities for preventive and corrective operation and maintenance of school infrastructure, and develop training materials and actions for the actors involved (teachers, non-teaching staff, students, school councils, ...) to facilitate their dissemination.

WaterAid stands ready to support the government of Mozambique to – in partnership with other sector actors – address the challenge and ensure that all schools have sustainable access to quality water, sanitation and hygiene services.
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About WaterAid

As a Non-Government Organization for Development, WaterAid has been working in partnership with the Government of Mozambique since 1995, with a mission to transform the lives of the poorest, and most marginalized people, improving access to safe drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene.

Seeking transformative, and sustainable change, and access to universal WASH services by 2030, WaterAid operates in the country in two distinct ways: 1) as an organization that catalyze change, developing innovative, adaptable, and sustainable models, and influencing decision-makers to replicate these, through the construction of robust alliances to mobilize the necessary resources; 2) as an organization that mediates partnerships with different stakeholders, including the government, donors, civil society, citizens, leaders at all levels, in order to define an ambitious agenda for change.

About the National Organisation of Teachers

The National Organization of Teachers (ONP) was established on 12 October 1981. The following year, 1982, the structures of the organisation at all levels were created and it was also the year of the admission of the members. In 1998, the ONP took a turning point with the holding of its first Congress and was transformed into the National Union of Teachers of Mozambique. It currently has over 85000 affiliated members. Its main objective is the improvement of teachers’ living and working conditions, and consequently the improvement of the quality of education in our country.
About the Education for All Movement (MEPT)

MEPT is a network of Non Governmental Organisations, Associations, Community Based Organisations and Individuals working and/or interested in improving the quality of education in Mozambique. MEPT was established in 1999 with the objective of empowering Civil Society Organisations to become fully involved in education issues and to advocate for Quality Basic Education For All. The coalition operates nationwide, with a focal point in each province, responsible for ensuring the implementation of strategies, plans, policies and the achievement of results defined by the network, as well as the dialogue between MEPT and Provincial and District Governments.

The coalition promotes in its work, an Approach Focused on Human Rights, Gender Equity and Inclusion, having at this moment and as a corollary of this approach, member organizations that have as leaders, coordinators women, youth and people with disabilities. MEPT guides all its action according to its general objective: to contribute so that a larger number of the Mozambican population has access to quality education and that their rights are respected and guaranteed through an effective and efficient performance of the National Education System.
Changing normal together