

# Setting standards for WASH in schools

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**EPW core priorities and flagships**  
Promoting health and well-being

**WHO collaboration**  
Technical guidance  
Partnership between the Regional  
Office and Country Office

Every child needs easy access to adequate and safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) at school to stay healthy, learn and thrive. Of the 7700 schools across Kazakhstan, 5200 are in rural areas where the provision of WASH can be challenging. In 2020 a baseline assessment of access to WASH was conducted in 153 schools; in 2022 it found that some schools did not comply with safe sanitation requirements.

With guidance from the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health, the Country Office built on the results of a national public awareness campaign organized by social activists. Called “Toile”, it focused attention on the problem of school toilets. WHO established a platform for civil society and government to come together to take action, and presented findings to the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Kazakhstan Parliament. A multisectoral working group was then established to develop a new national standard for school WASH services in Kazakhstan, which came into force in January 2024.

### The impact

This standard sets requirements for toilet facilities based on the number of students and makes provisions for children with special needs. It ensures that schools adopt modern facilities and comprehensive measures for the safety, hygiene and comfort of students.

### Lessons learned

- Raising public awareness of the health issue helped to accelerate action at the national level.
- WHO played a key role in bringing different ministries together, establishing a timeline for action and providing technical guidance on international standards.
- Adopting new standards quickly is possible when stakeholders have a shared goal.

### Donors and partners

Ministry of Health; Ministry of Education; Parliament of Kazakhstan



Children use new hand-washing facilities at school, based on national standards.  
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“Every child deserves the opportunity to grow up in a healthy and safe environment, with quality conditions and access to health care, education and emotional support.”

**Dr Nurkan Sadvakassov**, Acting Chairman of the Sanitary and Epidemiological Control Committee, Ministry of Health, Kazakhstan

### What's next?

An education model has also been developed for school health-care and teaching staff, and will be rolled out shortly.