



Republic of the Philippines Department of Education

Tanggapan ng Kalihim
Office of the Secretary

MESSAGE

It is my pleasure to welcome all of you to the 7th WASH in Schools International Learning Exchange here in Manila, Philippines.

It is wonderful to see our fellow ministries of education from around Asia and the Pacific gathering here this week to focus on this important issue.

From our own daily lives, we all clearly understand the basic necessity of having water to drink; a clean, usable toilet available; and a space to wash your hands with water and soap. Naturally, in schools, these needs persist, and children must access these fundamental services to be able to maximize their education.

Water, sanitation, and hygiene services are needed for all children to thrive. However, in schools – where children spend half their day – access to drinking water, usable toilets and handwashing facilities with water and soap are not always available. These simple services are not only necessary to keep children clean and healthy, but they are a question of basic dignity.

Through the Sustainable Development goals, we have all committed to making WinS a reality for every school by 2030.

According to the Joint Monitoring Programme of the WHO and UNICEF, around the world, over two-thirds of schools have access to drinking water from an improved source, two-thirds have usable gender-segregated toilets, and over half of schools have handwashing facilities with water and soap.¹

These results are promising, and countries are continuing to improve, yet there are still schools that are left behind without the basic WASH services that are needed for a conducive learning environment.

Here in the Philippines, the image is similar. Half of the schools have access to drinking water. Slightly less than half have handwashing facilities with water and soap. And nearly 40% have gender-segregated, usable toilets. These figures show that we have space to improve.²

The Department of Education made huge efforts to act on the figures. Within the week, you will learn more about how we mobilized our workforce and entire school communities to improve WASH in schools. In 2016, the Department of Education issued the National WASH in Schools policy to realize WinS in all schools. This

¹ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization. (2018). *Drinking water, sanitation and hygiene in schools: Global baseline report 2018*. Retrieved from <https://washdata.org/report/jmp-2018-wash-in-schools-highlights-en>

² United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization. (2018). *Drinking water, sanitation and hygiene in schools: Global baseline report 2018*. Retrieved from <https://washdata.org/data/school#1/>

policy lays out the standards for schools to meet across five categories: water, sanitation, hygiene, deworming, and health education. We have set ambitious standards for ourselves. DepEd encourages schools to make gradual incremental improvements towards reaching these standards and we categorize their progress based on the Three Star Approach. Recognition is given based on progress towards these targets to incentivize further improvements.

In the first two years of implementation, we have already seen improvements across the country towards reaching these policy standards. Around three-quarters of schools nationwide have participated in WinS monitoring to report their WinS status, and the proportion of schools reaching a star level has doubled in the past year.³

As the Philippines continues to strive to improve WinS, we are grateful to have the support of this WinS network throughout Asia and the Pacific. It is inspiring to see the leadership shown by so many ministries of education to take on this important topic and strive to have basic WASH services in each and every school.

Today, we will have the opportunity to identify our priorities on WinS. The principles laid out this week will allow us to vocalize a common direction for WinS in Asia and the Pacific. We hope that in this way, we can continue to align our work.

Throughout this week we will have the chance to share experiences and learn from each other's successes and challenges. In the spirit of openness, we hope to have a lively exchange and continue to work in a common direction towards realizing the SDG target for WinS.



LEONOR MAGTOLIS BRIONES
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³ Department of Education. (2019). *WinS monitoring results: School year 2018/2019*.