WASH in Schools in Mongolia
Facilities matter for girls

WASH Challenges
- Many poorly constructed and unhygienic outdoor pit latrines.
- Extremely cold winter temperatures, as low as -40°C.
- Limited or no water supply for handwashing, some dormitories lack bathing facilities.

Gender Challenges
- A challenge for girls to manage menstruation with dignity, safety and privacy.
- Taboos are a barrier to adequate menstrual hygiene management (MHM).
- Girls are reluctant to participate in various school based activities due to worry of leakage and harassment by boys.

Action
- Research on menstruation and girls specific sanitation needs.
- Girls involved in design of sanitation facilities and implementation of the WASH Standards and in its monitoring.
- Piloting of innovative solutions: prefabricated container WASH facilities; ventilated latrines.
- Advocacy for improved WASH for girls in schools based on research evidence.
- Technical guidance and capacity building for facility specification.
- Support to implement gender-sensitive standards and to develop practical guidelines on MHM.

National norms and requirements include:
- Sex-segregated latrines (1 latrine for 30 girls, 1 latrine + 1 urinal for 40 boys).
- Lighting, lockable doors and access to clean water.
- Clean water, toilet paper and waste bin with lid.
- Health education, body change counselling, laundry facilities, and menstrual hygiene management support in dormitories.

Gender-Sensitive National Standards for WASH in Schools
Taboos surrounding menstruation have contributed to a lack of knowledge regarding menstrual hygiene management (MHM). The topic is barely addressed in school curricula and misconceptions still exist. Many parents believe the school is responsible for MHM education whilst teachers think it is the mother’s role.

Sanitary pads are not available in rural schools for imminent menstrual needs. Girls can feel embarrassed to buy pads in shops when boys and men are around. Many girls dread leakage and stains, and are particularly worried about boys teasing them. Teachers generally do not have adequate knowledge and skills to address menstruation related issues.

During the nine months of the school year, herders’ children in rural areas mostly live in dormitories. As a result, girls lack traditional support systems, provided by female family members. Dormitory teachers are often reported not to have provided sufficient age-appropriate support to girls. Many dormitory girls may also be struggling with financial access to sanitary napkins as well as inadequate sanitary and bathing facilities. These factors contribute to make management of personal hygiene very challenging.

**Key Findings**

- Research allows dialogue about taboos like menstruation and girls specific needs.
- Facilities for WASH in Schools need to be girl-friendly.
- Focused actions for implementation of government standards are essential for nation-wide scale up to maximise gender-responsive benefits.

**Research Goals**

- Evidence-based advocacy for improved WASH in schools for girls.
- Encourage discussion about menstrual hygiene management.
- Identify appropriate language to discuss menstrual hygiene management.
- Partnership with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science & Sports.

**What's Next?**

- Scale up operationalisation of WASH in Schools Norms & Requirements, innovative facilities, standardised hygiene promotion and dissemination of menstrual hygiene management research.
- Upstream continued technical support for WASH in Schools Norms & Requirements including sexual reproductive health and menstrual hygiene management education, and strengthening regular monitoring and evaluation.