



Healthy Schools Project

Improving Conditions in Educational Centers to Strengthen Resilience and Prevent Diseases Derived from the Lack of Adequate WASH Services in 53 Schools in Chichicastenango, Quiché.

The latest progress report by the Joint Monitoring Programme for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (JMP) of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reveals that at least 30% of schools in Guatemala do not have access to drinking water services, which constitutes a critical situation. This disturbing state of WASH* services in schools is exacerbated by the effects of climate change, as extreme variations directly and rapidly affect health infrastructure. A UNICEF publication in 2025 concluded that in 2024 more than 242 million students in 85 countries will see their schooling interrupted by extreme weather events, including more than 2.3 million students in Guatemala affected by storms.

Faced with this scenario, the intervention seeks to urgently address these deficiencies, focusing on the comprehensive improvement of WASH services in 53 schools in the municipality of Chichicastenango. The proposal is aligned with the School Feeding Law (Decree 16-2017), which establishes the need to guarantee healthy environments and promote nutrition and comprehensive well-being in educational establishments. Likewise, the School Health Program (PAE) of the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC), which promotes the improvement of school environments as part of its initiatives to strengthen educational quality and promote health and comprehensive well-being in schools.

By focusing action on education and the practice of hygienic and sustainable habits, the proposal provides a differentiating element by progressively integrating the **"Blue Schools" approach**. This methodology not only improves basic WASH services in the short term, but also lays the groundwork for future phases that will include complementary indicators in areas such as menstrual hygiene, waste management and other environmental activities, thus expanding the impact and sustainability of the intervention.

The implementation of the intervention in 53 schools in Chichicastenango is carried out in four phases, with a participatory strategy and aligned with UNICEF guidelines:

1. **Participatory Diagnosis and Technical Evaluation:** Tools such as KoboCollect are used for data collection and Power BI for interactive visualization of results. The baseline and infrastructure assessment allows the identification of initial WASH infrastructure conditions, hygiene practices and equity gaps, serving as a basis for prioritizing physical and educational interventions in each of the 53 schools.
2. **Action Planning and Intervention Design:** Based on the diagnosis, behavior change activities are designed organized into three thematic phases: (1) menstrual hygiene management with 5th and 6th grade students, (2) the Clean Hands Festival to promote handwashing and other sanitation practices through educational stations, and (3) solid waste management through participatory dynamics on recycling and waste disposal. At the same time, infrastructure adaptations are planned based on technical findings, prioritizing criteria of safety, privacy, gender separation and accessibility for all, depending on the specific needs of each school.
3. **Training and Community Promotion for Behavior Change:** Training sessions are held for teachers, community leaders, and parents, with the aim of strengthening local capacities for the promotion of hygiene, the proper use of improved services, and the sustainability of actions. The activities are developed with playful methodologies and visual tools, promoting appropriation and inclusion from the school community.

*WASH, water, sanitation and hygiene.

4. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** The progress of the project is monitored periodically through field visits, collection of photographic evidence, participation records and use of performance indicators. Likewise, the participation of school governments and local education authorities is promoted as key actors in the social control of the process.

At the same time, preventive measures against sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), child protection and compliance with the code of conduct are reinforced. HELVETAS has institutional policies in place on these issues, including specific protocols for the prevention of harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority, as well as regulations on child protection and ethical conduct of staff.

RESULTS

1. Improved student access to water, sanitation and hygiene services in 53 schools in Chichicastenango, Quiché.
2. Improved knowledge of students and the community in sanitation, health and hygiene

WORK APPROACHES

Gender:

In terms of gender, separate and adapted sanitary facilities for girls are guaranteed, including adequate spaces for menstrual hygiene. In addition, specific workshops are held for teachers and parents, promoting cultural changes that eliminate taboos on menstrual health. The application of the "GES scoreboard" – a tool that systematically measures our commitment as HELVETAS to equality – will support transformative actions.

In addition, participatory methods (surveys and focus groups based on the Blue Schools experience) are used to measure specific indicators: proportion of trained teachers, student perception of privacy and accessibility of toilets.

Equity:

Equity is promoted through the production and use of educational materials in the Quiché language, ensuring the linguistic inclusion of Mayan communities. In addition, the active and inclusive participation of school governments, teachers, students, and parents is encouraged in all phases of the project, from planning to monitoring. Special attention is paid to traditionally excluded groups, such as girls, adolescents and people with disabilities, promoting safe and accessible school spaces.

Sustainability:

For sustainability, agreements are made to establish agreements with the Departmental Directorate of Education (DIDEDUC) and the municipality (through OMAS), seeking resources and monitoring for the permanent maintenance of school infrastructure. A specific operation and maintenance plan is designed with periodic training aimed at teachers and parents, integrating the intervention into the School Health Program (PAE) and with the participation of COCODE. This approach will allow improvements to remain, expanding in the future as a possible replicable model at the national level.

Social and Environmental Capacity Building:

Local ownership is strengthened through participatory activities that include teachers, students and parents. In addition, operation and maintenance plans are prepared and implemented in coordination with COCODE, OPF and the teaching staff, seeking to integrate the actions into the daily life of the educational community. Educational and recreational activities, such as Clean Hands Festivals, will reinforce these behaviors. Gender equity and proper management of menstrual hygiene are also promoted as essential elements of the social sustainability approach.

FAST FACTS

Geographical Location:

Quiché Department, Chichicastenango, Chichicastenango

Start Date: July 08, 2025

End Date: May 08, 2026

Budget: Q 3,760,455.09

Partners and Strategic Actors:

Among the key allies are the **Department of Health Promotion and Education (PROEDUSA) of the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance (MSPAS)**, a fundamental actor for the coordination and linkage in the promotion of health education, through educators and those responsible for promotion at the departmental level.

Also, the **Municipal Office of Water and Sanitation (OMAS)** is an essential actor in promoting hygiene and sanitation practices and can act as a liaison with the municipality to ensure the follow-up and sustainability of interventions.

It works directly with the **Ministry of Education (MINEDUC)** and the **Departmental Directorate of Education (DIDEDUC)** to ensure the alignment of educational policies and facilitate activities in the school calendar.

Donors:

- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- Global Partnership for Education (GPE): Transforming Education
- HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation

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