



SAFE AND EQUITABLE WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE PRACTICES IN HOUSEHOLDS SITUATION OF CHILDREN IN THE PHILIPPINES REPORT



**SITUATION
OF
CHILDREN**
IN THE PHILIPPINES

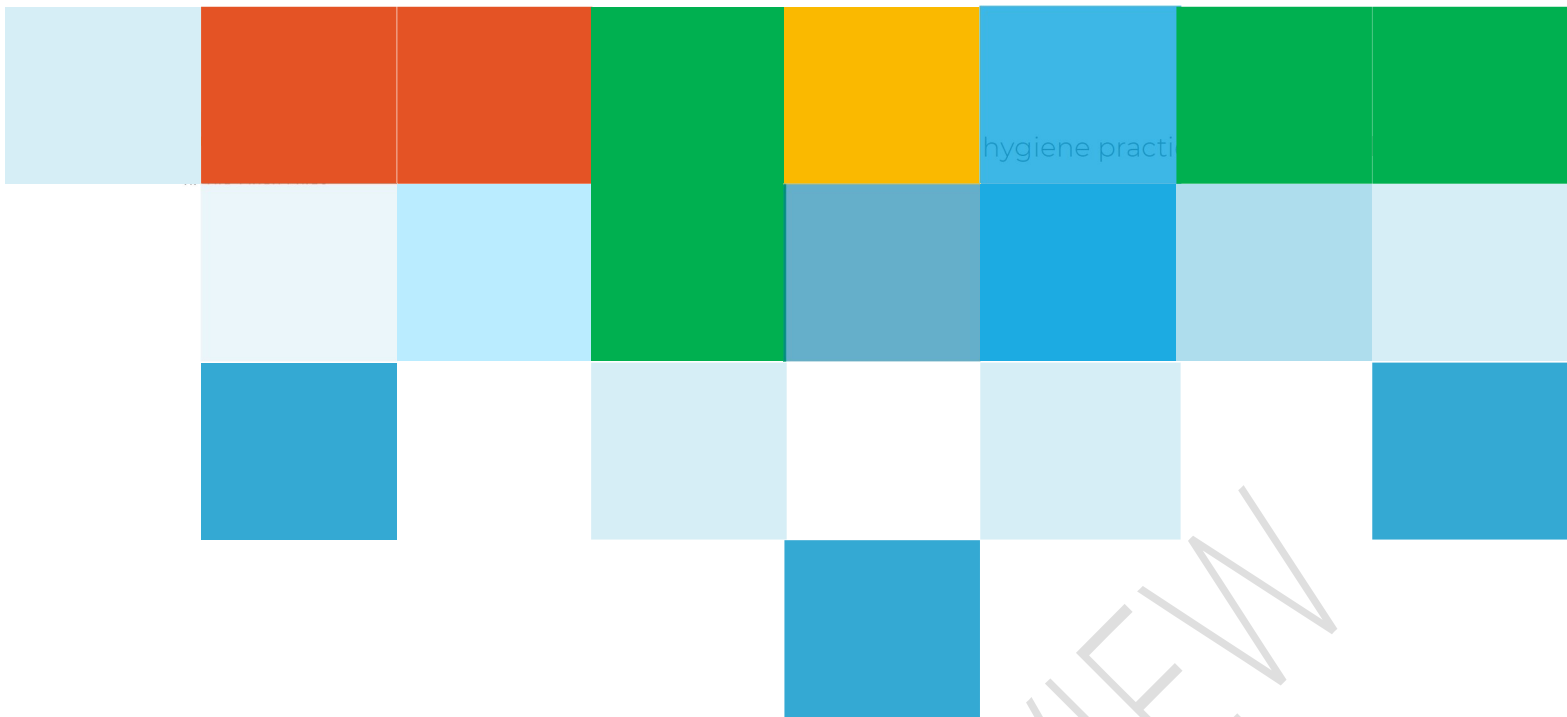


Publication Date

2023

Reports available at situationofchildren.org/latest-evidence

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Access to safe, affordable, and reliable drinking water and sanitation services is a fundamental human need and right.

Safe drinking water and basic sanitation facilities are vital to human survival and dignity. Ensuring and securing access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene for all is a basic step toward reducing risk of illness and death, especially among children.

Universal access to safe water and sanitation is also essential to reducing poverty, supporting livelihoods, and attaining sustainable development.

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The Philippines, as all countries are obliged by international human rights law, to work towards achieving universal and inclusive access to water and sanitation with priority for the most vulnerable and deprived population and locations.

The key elements to fulfilling the right to safe water and sanitation are availability, accessibility, affordability, quality and safety, and acceptability.

In order to track progress of the SDGs on water and sanitation, a service ladder approach is used with the concept of “safely managed” services introduced as a new and most preferred level.

In the Philippines, access to both safe water and sanitation as well as basic handwashing have generally improved in the past few years. However, there remain inequities which are thought to have been brought about or affected by the fragmented nature of the water and sanitation sector in the country leaving some people, especially children, still vulnerable and likely hindered for growth and development.

Child Rights Situation Analysis

Indicators for this subdimension include the proportion of population and families/households with access to at least basic drinking water services and improved sources of drinking water; the proportion of population and families/households with access to at least basic sanitation services and improved sanitation facilities, and the percentage of population practicing open defecation; and the percentage of the population and families with access to basic handwashing facilities.

Water

Overall, 97 per cent of the population has access to at least basic drinking water services in 2022, which still leaves 3 out of 100 or an

estimated 3.3 million people with access to limited or unimproved drinking water services and sources. While most regions are above or near the 90 per cent mark, BARMM has only 80.2 per cent of the population with access to

at least basic drinking water service, with 2.1 per cent still using surface water as their primary source. Access to basic safe water services increases with wealth, from 88.9 per cent in the lowest wealth quintile to 99.7 per cent in the highest wealth quintile and is higher in urban areas at 99.3 per cent than in rural areas at 94.4 per cent.

Among families, 96.3 per cent have access to at least basic drinking water services in 2022, coming from the steady increase in the previous years which seems to have been pushed by more families getting access to improved water sources, including those that are found on their own premises. Families in Luzon have better access to drinking water than those in the Visayas and in Mindanao. BARMM and Regions IX and V have the lowest proportion of families with access to basic drinking water.

Notably though, BARMM has improved the most with the proportion of families increasing by 14.5 percentage points since 2020. More families living in urban areas, 98.4 per cent, have access to basic drinking water due to availability of more improved sources mostly within their premises than those in rural areas at 94.1 per cent.

Sanitation

About 19.5 million people or 2 out of every ten persons lack access to basic sanitation services representing 17.5 per cent of the projected population in 2022. Of that number, 3.4 million or 3 per cent of the population still practice open defecation due to lack of access to any sanitation facility.

Overall, the proportion of population with access to at least basic sanitation services is 82.5 per cent.

CALABARZON, and Regions III and X have the highest proportion of population with access to at least basic sanitation services.

While there is an average of 8 in ten people with access to basic sanitation services across regions, in BARMM, there are only at most 6 in ten people having access to the same services. At 55.3 per cent, BARMM has the lowest proportion of population with access to basic sanitation and the highest prevalence of open defecation at 17.8 per cent, or approximately 2 in ten persons with no access to any sanitation facility.

Populations living in urban areas have greater access to at least basic sanitation services at 84 per cent than those in rural areas at 80.7 per cent, with prevalence of open defecation markedly higher in rural areas at 5 per cent than in urban areas at 1.2 per cent. In general, the proportion of population with access to basic sanitation increases with wealth status with a significant gap between the lowest and highest wealth quintiles, 57.8 per cent to 97.5 per cent, respectively. There is a substantially high rate of open defecation among population in the lowest wealth bracket at 13.6 per cent while there is no open defecation among those in the highest wealth quintile.

In 2022, 84 per cent of families have access to at least basic sanitation services, much higher than the 73.7 per cent prevalence in 2017 and 80.4 per cent in 2020. The proportion of families with no sanitation facility has similarly improved at 2.6 per cent down from 3.5-3.7 per cent and 5.7 per cent in 2020-2019 and 2017, respectively.

Region III, CALABARZON and Region II are the top three regions while BARMM, and Regions XII and VII have the least proportions. In terms of open defecation however, BARMM, Regions V and VI, and MIMAROPA have the highest rates, at 9.7 per cent, 8.1 per cent, 7.1 per cent, and 6.4 per cent, respectively.

Handwashing

In 2022, 94.9 per cent of the country's population have access to basic handwashing facilities with rates ranging from 90.1 per cent

to 98.6 per cent across the regions except in BARMM where only 80.8 per cent of its population have access. Higher proportions are observed among populations in urban areas and upper wealth categories than among those in rural areas and lower wealth brackets.

Prevalence of handwashing among families is similarly high in 2022 at 93.2 per cent but represents only a modest increase from 2019 and 2020. BARMM also has the lowest proportion of families with access to basic handwashing at 75.7 per cent but is not very

far from Regions VIII and XII with 81.2 per cent and 81.4 per cent, respectively.

Seven out of ten families have fixed handwashing facility in their dwelling. Families with fixed handwashing facility in yard or plot and those that use mobile object for handwashing comprise 21.9 per cent.

Only 3.3 percent of families have no handwashing facility while 4.2 per cent of the families did not give permission to see if they have any.

Equity & Risk

EQUITY

Gender

Lack of access to WASH services can impact adolescent girls particularly with regard to menstrual hygiene. A critical enabling factor for good menstrual hygiene is a clean toilet and with rates of open defecation found to be comparatively high in the BARMM region, this may indicate that girls 12-17 years who are menstruating and do not have access to a clean toilet are likely to be deprived with regard to realization of their hygiene rights.

Disability

This situation analysis has not been able to determine any data which disaggregates by disability under this subdimension. However, children with disabilities are often subject to inequities in their access to WASH services which suit and respond to the particular needs they may have, particularly affecting those with physical disabilities.

Subnational

Residents of the BARMM region are impacted by particularly inequitable progress on the provision of basic water and sanitation in the Philippines. For example, only 80.2 per cent of BARMM residents have access to basic water services compared to 97 per cent of the population at the national level.

Poor WASH services at the household level have knock-on impacts for other child rights, increasing the risk of other inequities for those impacted in BARMM. For example, water insecurity and untreated water are underlying drivers of poor nutrition outcomes in early childhood: water “determines disease environments

and therefore the ability to physically utilize nutrients for health growth” as well as impacting food supplies and the nutrients people have access to, and livelihoods which “indirectly affects nutrition through income, time use and education of caregivers.”

This is a recognized issue by BARMM authorities who are seeking to address the challenge with prioritized WASH activities under its Bangsamoro Development Planning 2023-2028. It must also be noted that in November 2022 the province of Iloilo became the first province to achieve zero open defecation (ZOD). According to UNICEF the “province’s journey towards achieving the ZOD G1 status of the Philippine Approach to Sustainable Sanitation (PhATSS) will serve as model for other local governments in the country.”

RISKS

- Natural hazards
- **Climate change and severe weather events will pose a risk to WASH infrastructure, damaging that which has been built and meaning that future infrastructure plans may soon not be climate resilient.** One key informant cautioned that WASH infrastructure is already fundamentally lacking in some areas of the Philippines, and that building basic infrastructure that is as climate resilient as possible, should be prioritized.
 - **Climate change may make access to water more difficult,** increasing displacement and changing internal migration patterns. In turn, this may increase the risk of resource conflict.
 - **The development of urban sprawl in many parts of the Philippines means that a high proportion of inhabitants live in informal settlements.** For example in the greater Manila Metro Area it is estimated that one third of residents live in informal settlements. Among other issues these settlements suffer from inadequate solid waste management systems.
 - **The geographic remoteness of some regions and provinces poses an ongoing challenge** with regards to both the implementation of programme and advocacy work, particularly with regard to WASH as limited infrastructure can be built.

Conflict

Conflict can result in the destruction of WASH infrastructure. This was seen in Mindanao during the Marawi Siege of 2017, indicating that conflict poses a risk to the development of WASH infrastructure where incidence remains in the Philippines.

Health Crisis/Pandemic

There is increased risk of waterborne diseases such as cholera where there is improper waste management. This is a well-documented risk globally and is relevant to the Philippines’ context in areas where there are limited WASH

capacities and infrastructure, and high prevalence of open defecation. This has knock-on impacts for rights realization under other child rights fields, like health and nutrition.

Other risks

- **Changes to personnel and leadership among WASH actors affect the delivery of WASH services in the Philippines.** Each new senior official or representative appointed or elected may introduce new structures and priorities, which can make it challenging for INGOs and other partners to work effectively as they need to rebuild connections, networks and relationships, particularly for advocacy work and for training and capacitating new personnel on protection approaches. This is particularly a challenge for the WASH sector, characterized by mandates split across actors requiring strong and coordinated leadership.
- **Sanitary positions are not professionalized.** Sanitary inspectors are reportedly covering between 40-55 barangays, rather than the 10-15 which should be under their mandate. They also often come from other professions, working on short term contracts, which is a key risk to their ability to conduct their work effectively. “The Philippine Society of Sanitary Engineers, Inc (PSSE) is the only professional organization of Sanitary Engineers in the Philippines.” This is also a risk to the operations of INGOs aiming to improve WASH services as there are few actors whom they can hold accountable for this lack of professionalization.
- **A key WASH-related risk is that a systems-level approach where all stakeholders are integrated into the approach is not being fully pursued.** That is, although some sewers and other WASH facilities are being built, there is limited effort and financing to ensure that clean water will run through pipes which means the infrastructure will be ineffective. This is particularly a challenge in the BARMM region.

Legislation & Policy Analysis

The Water Supply and Sanitation (WSS) sector in the Philippines is fragmented, with the mandates and efforts of a number of government agencies in this sector uncoordinated and overlapping.

Currently, the key national agencies involved in the water supply subsector are the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), the National Water Resources Board (NWRB), the Department of Health, the Department of the Interior and Local Government, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Department of Public Works and Highways, and the Local Water Utilities Administration. In addition, LGUs have also been given legal mandates over water and sanitation

services as stipulated under the Local Government Code (LGC) of 1991. At the provincial, city and municipal level, the LGUs' responsibilities include WSS planning, financing and implementation.

The new Philippine Water Supply and Sanitation Master Plan launched in 2021 is a national action plan to achieve universal access to water and sanitation services by 2030. The PWSSMP is in line with Chapter 19: Accelerating Infrastructure Development of the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2017-2022. The Philippine Water Supply and Sanitation Master Plan aims to not only provide safe water supply and sanitation services for all Filipinos, but also ensure that these services can withstand disasters and protect the environment. To achieve this goal, the new master plan focuses on eight key reform agenda: establishing effective water supply and sanitation sector institutions; strengthening the regulatory environment; creating and ensuring effective water supply and sanitation services; balancing water supply and demand; building climate resilience; enabling access to funding and financing; managing data and information; and driving research and development in the sector. It is hoped the new master plan will create a unifying framework for planning, implementing and funding in the sector. The plan calls for a total investment of PHP 1.07 trillion in the sector until 2030.

Republic Act 6234 established the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) on June 19, 1971. The MWSS is government owned and controlled. Its stated primary objective is "to ensure an uninterrupted and adequate supply and distribution of potable water for domestic and other purposes at just and equitable rates." As the chief regulator in the country, the MWSS has the power to impose penalties on local water companies if they are deemed to not be reaching their minimum targets or in cases of negligence, incompetence or even corruption. For example, in 2019 the MWSS imposed a fine of PHP 1.13 billion (\$21.7 million) following the capital city's water shortages.

Republic Act 9275, also known as the Clean Water Act was enacted in 2004. "The law aims to protect the country's water bodies from pollution from land-based sources and by penalizing acts of polluting them." It also allows for the provision of multi-sectoral governing boards to oversee the management of water quality in rivers and other local water resources.

In addition, a number of administrative and executive orders have been passed pertaining to WASH. One such order is the Department of Health (DoH) administrative order 2017-0010 also known as the Philippine National Standards for Drinking Water of 2017. The order formalizes standards around the following: standards for drinking water quality; standards for water sampling and examination; standards for other modes of distribution of drinking water; evaluation of (test) results; classification of drinking water quality parameters; and quality assurance / quality control for water laboratories.

Executive Order No. 22 was passed by the President on 27 April 2023. It mandated the creation of the "Water Resources Management Office in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources." The stated role of the new office is to be responsible for the "integration and harmonization of all government efforts and regulatory activities to ensure availability and sustainable management of water resources in the whole country."

Bottleneck Analysis

Demand

- **Limited prioritization of WASH matters at the household level.** One bottleneck is limited prioritization at community levels around safe WASH practices, including safe drinking water and safe sanitation practices such

as regular handwashing. This is an issue among local officials as well as within households and families. For example, there are challenges with solid waste management at both community and household level, with garbage including diapers and sanitary pads often thrown in the sea or rivers, or burned, as means of disposal and inadequate work to de-sludge septic tanks in schools. Additionally, it is noted that households are often not aware of when they should empty septic tanks despite the existence of legislation on this, which may indicate there is insufficient awareness of the key guidelines and policies on this matter.

- **Social stigma attached to menstruation.** At the community level, there remain elements of stigma relating to menstruation which can act as a bottleneck to rights realization on menstrual hygiene-related rights. For example, one recent advert on TV included derogatory messages about menstruation including the phrase “naamoy ko na sya” (“I can smell it already”).

Supply

- **Limited functional WASH facilities at a household level.** The data set out in this report indicates that many households in the Philippines do not have a Basic Safe Water Supply or Basic Sanitation; these issues are particularly prevalent in the BARMM region. Furthermore, poorer households often have limited means to purchase hygiene kits including soap, an issue which also impacts those affected by crises. Aside from the obvious deprivations this results in on access to water and sanitation, this is a bottleneck affecting other areas of rights realization including menstrual hygiene, as access to toilet facilities is an important factor enabling this.
- **Limited functional sewerage and septage processing systems at community levels.** This is particularly a bottleneck in geographically remote regions where WASH infrastructure is more limited.
- **Limited access to Hot Water Service Providers (WSPs).** This is an issue in more geographically remote parts of the country. Some parts of the Philippines still do not have access to WSPs and many existing WSPs are neither financially nor technically capable of providing the required services.
- **A shortage of adequately trained WASH personnel due to unfavorable employment conditions in the WASH sector.** In the Philippines, employment in the WASH sector (and in the sanitation sector in particular) is not formalized. As a result, due to low salaries, low job satisfaction and low job security, the sector fails to attract skilled labor. Instead, local-level WASH personnel are often persons who have other primary jobs but are hired on short term contracts or jump orders. This was cited to be a major bottleneck in the provision of adequate WASH services.

- **No definition on the standard toilet facilities.** The Building Code does not set a definition indicating the minimum standard toilet facilities; the code contains only information indicating that “Every dwelling shall be provided with at least one sanitary toilet and adequate washing and drainage facilities”, without clarifying the meaning of “sanitary toilet” and “adequate”.

This makes it hard to regulate and monitor the quality of facilities installed. Additionally, this lack of detailed definition includes no consideration of those with disabilities or of gender (for example, dimensions including usability, security, gender segregation and disability are not included).

Enabling environment

- **Limited coordination between national and local levels of government.** The provision of WASH services to households is devolved in the Philippines, and thus requires robust coordination and coherence between different levels of government. While the introduction of policies and passing of laws happens at the national level, LGUs are the main duty bearers for implementation.

Although a range of policies and laws have been introduced (see Legislation and Policy analysis), there are major gaps in implementation due to issues of capacity, financing, human resources and motivation at the LGU level.

Additionally, it was also stated that the introduction of too many policies and guidelines at the national level often translates to confusion and a lack of clarity at the subnational level. At the root of these issues is the overarching bottleneck of a lack of coordination between national and local levels of government.

- **A lack of coherent and robust data being collected to inform policymaking and knowledge practices.** This is a critical bottleneck, as without the right data, it is difficult to determine where challenges lie and how they should be addressed. A particular source of inconsistency is the use of DHS versus JMP data.

While government programs are often designed based on evidence from DHS data sets, organizations such as UNICEF rely on JMP data. It has been suggested that the indicators included in the DHS, and the way they have been measured provides a more favorable view of the WASH situation in the country, rather than reflecting the full reality.

On the other hand, JMP indicators are in line with international SDG standards, and have therefore been recommended as the more reliable source of evidence on WASH. Data limitations at the household level - including few tools through which to collect household-level data - are

also a bottleneck in that it makes it difficult to determine what the key knowledge gaps are which limit households' ability to conduct effective WASH practices.

DRAFT FOR REVIEW

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