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**PERFORMANCE AUDIT
REPORT ON WASH
FACILITIES AND SERVICES
IN GOVERNMENT
SCHOOLS UNDER
THIMPHU THROMDE**

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མཐུན་ཆུན་དང་ཞབས་ཏྲུག་གི་ལས་
འབྲེལ་ཕྱི་ལྷན་ཁུངས་ཀྱི་

MAY 2025



Disclaimer Note

The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards of Supreme Audit Institutions (ISSAIs). The review was confined to assessing the adequacy of the WASH facilities and Services in Government Schools under Thimphu Thromde. The audit was based on the audit objectives and criteria determined in the audit plan and program prepared by the Royal Audit Authority and the findings are based on the information and data made available by relevant agencies.

This is also to certify that the auditors during the audit had neither yielded to pressure nor dispensed any favour or resorted to any unethical means that would be considered a violation of the Royal Audit Authority's Oath of Good Conduct, Ethics and Secrecy.



ཀྲུལ་གཞུང་ཕྱི་མ་ཞིབ་དབང་འཛིན།
ROYAL AUDIT AUTHORITY
Bhutan Integrity House
Reporting on Economy, Efficiency & Effectiveness in the use of Public Resources



RAA/DPCA/PAD (PA-WASH)/2024-2025/4352

Dated: 28 May 2025

Secretary
Ministry of Education and Skills Development
Thimphu

Subject: Performance Audit Report on provision of WASH facilities and Services in Government Schools under Thimphu Thromde

Dear Sir,

Enclosed herewith please find the Performance Audit Report on WASH facilities and services across 20 Government Schools under Thimphu Thromde. The Royal Audit Authority (RAA) conducted the audit under the mandate bestowed by the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan and the Audit Act of Bhutan 2018. The audit was conducted as per the International Standards of Supreme Audit Institutions on performance auditing (ISSAI 3000) and RAA's Performance Audit Guidelines 2019.

The audit was conducted with the audit objective to assess the adequacy of WASH facilities and services in government schools under Thimphu Thromde.

The report contains shortcomings and deficiencies in Chapter 3 as well as recommendations that are desirable for improving the WASH facilities and services in Schools in Chapter 4. The findings were issued in the form of a draft report on 28 March 2025 to the Department of Education Programme, Ministry of Education and Skills Development, Thimphu Thromde and School Management for factual confirmation and comments.

In line with the Audit Act of Bhutan 2018, the audited agencies are required to submit a Management Action Plan (MAP) specifying the action plans for implementing the recommendations within a definite timeframe. The RAA will follow up on the implementation of the corrective actions and recommendations based on this MAP.

Therefore, the RAA would like to request the agencies concerned to submit a MAP for the implementation of recommendations with a definite timeframe on or before 15 June 2025 (format attached under Appendix A). In the event of non-submission, the RAA shall invariably fix the overall supervisory accountability on the head of the audited agency in line with Section 55(17) of the Audit Act of Bhutan 2018.

We take this opportunity to acknowledge the officials of the audited entities and the school management for rendering necessary cooperation and support, which facilitated the timely completion of the audit.

Yours sincerely,



(Tashi)
Auditor General

Copy to:

1. Hon'ble Prime Minister, Royal Government of Bhutan;
2. Hon'ble Gyalpoi Zimpon, Office of the Gyalpoi Zimpon;
3. Hon'ble Speaker, National Assembly of Bhutan;
4. Hon'ble Chairperson, National Council of Bhutan;
5. Hon'ble Opposition Leader, National Assembly of Bhutan;
6. Hon'ble Chairperson, Public Accounts Committee, National Assembly of Bhutan;
7. Hon'ble Members, Public Accounts Committee, National Assembly of Bhutan;
8. Thrompon, Thimphu Thromde;
9. Executive Secretary, Thimphu Thromde;
10. Director, Department of Education Programme, MoESD;
11. Principals, 20 Schools under Thimphu Thromde;
12. Assistant Auditor General, Planning and Policy Division, RAA; and
13. Office copy.

"Every individual must strive to be principled. And individuals in positions of responsibility must even strive harder."
- His Majesty the King Jigme Khiesar Namgyel Wangchuck

TITLE SHEET

1.	Title of the Report	:	Performance Audit Report on Provision of WASH Facilities and Services in Government Schools under Thimphu Thromde
2.	AIN	:	PAD-2024-460
3.	Audited Entity	:	Ministry of Education and Skills Development, Thimphu Thromde and School management
5.	Audit Schedule	:	August- October 2024 (Field Work)
6.	Audit Team	:	1. Samdrup Dema, Deputy Chief Auditor
		:	2. Sonam Choden, Asst. Audit Officer
		:	3. Phub Dem, Asst. Audit Officer
7.	Supervisor	:	Sonam Delma, Asst. Auditor General
8.	Overall Supervisor	:	Dorji Wangchuk, Deputy Auditor General

ACRONYMS

DEP	:	Department of Education Programme
EMIS	:	Education Management Information System
FY	:	Financial Year
HPE	:	Health and Physical Education
HRD	:	Human Resources Development
HSS	:	Higher Secondary School
ISSAIs	:	International Standards for Supreme Audit Institutions
LSS	:	Lower Secondary School
MAP	:	Management Action Plan
MoESD	:	Ministry of Education and Skills Development
MoF	:	Ministry of Finance
MSS	:	Middle Secondary School
O&M	:	Operation and Maintenance
PHC	:	Primary Healthcare Center
PS	:	Primary School
RAA	:	Royal Audit Authority
RCDC	:	Royal Centre for Disease Control
RGoB	:	Royal Government of Bhutan
SDF	:	School Development Fund
SPMS	:	School Performance Management System
ToD	:	Teachers on Duty
UNICEF	:	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WASH	:	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHO	:	World Health Organisation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Access to safe water, adequate sanitation, and proper hygiene practices is important for preventing disease and promoting well-being. WASH facilities in schools play a pivotal role in promoting students' health, enhancing their well-being, and creating a supportive learning environment. Recognising the significant benefits of WASH in enhancing children's health and well-being, the Royal Audit Authority (RAA) conducted the performance audit of "Provision of WASH facilities and services in government schools under Thimphu Thromde" mainly to identify gaps and challenges in the implementation of WASH facilities in the schools and drive actionable recommendations for improvement. This audit represents a proactive effort to ensure that WASH facilities in government schools are sufficient, aligned with national standards, and contribute to student health and a positive learning environment.

The audit was conducted under the mandate bestowed by Article 25.1 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan and Sections 68(b) and 69 of the Audit Act of Bhutan 2018. The audit was conducted following the Performance Audit Guidelines 2019 which is in line with the International Standards of Supreme Audit Institutions (ISSAIs).

The team visited implementing agencies particularly the Department of Education Programme under the Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD), Thimphu Thromde, and 20 government schools under Thimphu Thromde.

The RAA noted gaps that potentially may undermine the functionality, accessibility, and management of these facilities, with far-reaching implications on students' health, well-being, and educational outcomes. The inadequacies of WASH facilities in most schools were generally due to old infrastructure that were built prior to the development of National Standards for WASH, which highlights the need for upgradation and retrofitting to meet the current needs of the students.

Some significant findings are briefly highlighted below:

- i. Notable gaps in the adequacy of WASH facilities, with issues ranging from insufficient toilets for both male and female, inadequate water supply, and inadequate sanitation and hygiene provisions.
- ii. Schools lack toilet facilities that meet all the specified design features outlined in the National Standards for WASH in Schools (2024).
- iii. Several facilities are observed to require structure and timely maintenance to remain hygienic and functional in line with the National Standards for WASH.
- iv. Some schools lack adequate accessibility to WASH facilities, including the lack of inclusive facilities for students with disabilities, and improperly designed fixtures.
- v. Water quality testing in schools is found to be inconsistent and there is a lack of clear communication and coordination between schools and agencies concerned about water sources to be tested, testing schedules, and test results.

- vi. There is a lack of a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to track the progress of WASH programs in schools that could potentially hinder progress tracking, informed decision-making, and the effectiveness of the WASH Programs.
- vii. Limited training is offered to health coordinators, students, and others involved in leading awareness efforts.
- viii. The current staffing practices allocate cleaners according to school level, as per the Ministry's HR policy, rather than considering the actual student population.
- ix. Insufficient budget allocated to their upkeep severely restricts the school management's capacity to perform necessary upgrades, repairs, and routine maintenance.

In order to improve the WASH facilities, the RAA provided ten recommendations which are highlighted below:

- i. The Ministry of Education and Skills Development, in consultation with Thimphu Thromde and school management, should develop a prioritised plan to ensure the adequacy of WASH facilities as per the National Standard.
- ii. The Ministry of Education and Skills Development should prioritise upgrading WASH facilities to ensure inclusiveness.
- iii. The Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD), in consultation with Royal Civil Service Commission, should specify the requirements of cleaners (WASH facilities based on the student population).
- iv. MoESD, in consultation with the Ministry of Finance and Thimphu Thromde, should prioritise and secure an adequate, sustained budget allocation for the maintenance, upgrading, and improvement of WASH facilities in schools.
- v. Thimphu Thromde should institute mechanisms for water quality tests and remediation.
- vi. Thimphu Thromde should ensure a reliable water supply in schools and alternative storage facilities.
- vii. The school management should develop a comprehensive management plan for the operations and maintenance of WASH in schools.
- viii. The Ministry should develop an integrated awareness program on WASH for students, coordinators, and staff.
- ix. The Ministry should ensure a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to track the progress of WASH programs in schools nationwide.
- x. The Ministry should conduct a comprehensive assessment of WASH facilities in all government schools nationwide.

Addressing these areas will support a healthier school environment, improve students' learning conditions, and foster a greater commitment to hygiene standards across government schools.

Student`s priority for improved WASH facilities

Enhanced cleanliness

More hygiene & sanitation supplies

Better maintenance

Better quality of water

More toilets

Increased accessibility

18 Schools

Meet the required standard for hand-washing taps

5 Schools

meet the required standard for drinking water taps

71% of Students rated toilet

as average or below, indicating potential gaps in the maintenance and cleaning

12 Schools

faced a shortage of male toilets

17 schools

faced a shortage of urinals

15 schools

faced a shortage of female toilets

Over 64% of students uses the school toilets once daily or rarely, highlighting the need for adequate, accessible and well-maintained facilities

44% of students expressed their interest about learning hygiene practices and waste management

Survey results indicated that student absenteeism is mostly due to waterborne diseases and menstruation-related issues.



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CHAPTER 1: ABOUT THE AUDIT

1.1 Mandate

The Royal Audit Authority (RAA) conducted the “Performance Audit on Provision of WASH facilities in Schools under Thimphu Thromde” as mandated by Article 25.1 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan to audit and report on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of public resources. Further, Chapter 5, Section 69 of the Audit Act of Bhutan 2018 stipulates that “the authority shall carry out performance, financial, compliance, special audit and any other form of audits that the Auditor General may consider appropriate”.

1.2 Audit Standard

The audit was conducted in accordance with ISSAI 3000 and followed audit procedures as prescribed under the RAA’s Performance Audit Guidelines 2019 to maintain uniformity and consistency of approaches in auditing.

1.3 Audit objectives

The RAA conducted the audit with an objective to assess the adequacy of WASH facilities and services.

1.4 Audit Scope

The audit was aimed at assessing the adequacy of WASH facilities including the functionality and accessibility, Monitoring and Evaluation, Management and Promotion and Awareness of WASH covering all 20 Government Schools under Thimphu Thromde.

The audit covered agencies namely the Health and Wellbeing Division under the Department of Education Programme, Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD), Thimphu Thromde and all the school management.

1.5 Audit Approach

Result-oriented approach was used to assess the activities, ways and means to provide adequate WASH facilities and services in schools under Thimphu Thromde. The audit will focus on assessing if the provision of WASH facilities and services is adequate to improve the health and wellbeing of the students in schools.

1.6 Audit Methodology

The following methodologies were used for the audit:

i. Documents review

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter, the RAA reviewed National Standard for WASH in schools, National Sanitation and Hygiene standards, National Education Statistics, Draft strategy for WASH, School Policy, Health Action plan of the schools, UNICEF guidelines for WASH, List of activities for promotion and awareness of WASH, Proposed and

approved budget of Education sector under Thimphu Thromde for review of budget and resource allocation, other documents related to operations and maintenance of WASH in schools.

ii. Site inspection and observations

To assess the current condition, functionality and adequacy of the WASH facilities at the site, the RAA conducted site inspections of WASH facilities at each school. A checklist, based on WASH standards, was used to systematically inspect elements such as water supply, sanitation infrastructure, cleanliness, functionality, hygiene supplies, and accessibility.

iii. Interview

To gather insights into the challenges, priorities, and maintenance practices from those responsible for WASH facilities, The RAA interviewed school management, and health coordinators, waste management coordinators. Also, considered discussions with officials from Thimphu Thromde and the Ministry of Education and Skills Development to understand resource allocation, policy support, and accountability mechanisms.

iv. Survey of Students and School management

To gather user perspectives on the adequacy, accessibility, and cleanliness of WASH facilities, as well as their impact, the RAA distributed surveys to students via Google Forms among the students in grades IV to XII. Out of a student population of 14,672, 11,890 responded with a response rate of 81.03% and distributed the survey to the management of 20 schools in hard copy. The survey aimed to collect feedback on the usability and cleanliness of WASH facilities, the availability of supplies (e.g., soap, water), and challenges faced, such as limited access to toilets or water quality issues, across all participating schools.

CHAPTER 2: INTRODUCTION

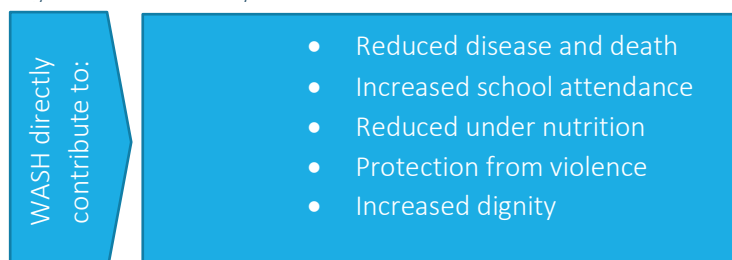
2.1. Rationale for this audit

Access to safe water, adequate sanitation, and proper hygiene practices is important for preventing disease and promoting well-being. Recognising this, the United Nations declared water and sanitation as basic human rights in 2010, emphasising their imperative role in living a healthy life. Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) are fundamental to human health, dignity, and development. WASH facilities in schools play a pivotal role in promoting students' health, enhancing their well-being, and creating a supportive learning environment. Proper WASH facilities ensure a safe and clean environment, reduce health risks, and support the physical and psychological well-being of students.

Further, the WASH initiatives offer broader benefits:

- They improve the health and well-being of students, creating safer learning environments.
- They address persistent challenges in providing safe water and sanitation.
- They encourage urgent behavioral changes necessary for long-term health practices.
- They support progress across multiple Sustainable Development Goals, advancing global efforts for a better future.

Figure 1: Contribution of WASH



Source: UNICEF Strategy for WASH 2016-2030

According to UNICEF (figure 1), WASH directly contributes to the following:

Considering the significant benefits of WASH in enhancing children's health and well-being, the RAA conducted the audit of WASH facilities and services in schools to assess the adequacy in delivering these benefits. This audit represents a proactive effort to ensure that WASH facilities in government schools are sufficient, aligned with national standards, and contribute to student health and a positive learning environment.

Overall, this audit is a proactive step to ensure that WASH facilities in government schools are adequate, aligned to the national standards and global best practices, support student's health, and enable a positive learning environment. The audit aims to identify gaps and challenges in the

implementation of WASH facilities in the schools and drive actionable recommendations for improvement. Ultimately, this audit seeks to foster a safe and healthy school environment that supports the holistic development of students.

2.2 WASH in Schools

- Access to sufficient quantities of safe water for: Drinking, handwashing and personal hygiene.
- Sufficient water for cleaning, flushing toilets and maintenance.
- Toilet facilities that are child-friendly, inclusive, gender-specific, culturally appropriate, private and well-maintained.
- Personal hygiene materials such as toilet paper, water, soap, sanitary napkins and changing room.
- Hygiene education: Curriculum, wall-paintings, competitions, posters, global days.
- Safe disposal of waste: Garbage bins/pits, routine school cleaning.

2.3 Roles and functions:

a. Department of Education Programme, Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD)

The Health and Wellbeing Division, is the lead agency responsible for planning, mobilising resources, and constructing water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in schools in partnership with the relevant agencies.

- Ensure reliable access to safe and sufficient water in schools.
- Promote and support adequate, gender-segregated toilets.
- Establish functional and strategically placed hand-washing stations.
- Coordinate facilities for all students, including those with disabilities and special needs, specifically for menstrual hygiene management.
- Include hygiene education and supplementary hygiene promotion activities.
- Train School Health Coordinators.
- Monitor the WASH Program in schools.

b. Thimphu Thromde for WASH in schools

The Thromde Education Division is essential in ensuring that schools provide safe and effective WASH facilities, supporting a healthy environment for students. Its core responsibilities in WASH include:

- Policy Implementation and Compliance
- Planning and Resource Allocation
- Infrastructure Development and Maintenance
- Training and Capacity Building
- Monitoring and Evaluation through SPMS (School Performance Management System)
- Emergency Preparedness and Response

2.4 Management of WASH facilities

Schools are responsible for the day-to-day operation and upkeep of WASH facilities, ensuring that they remain safe, clean, and functional for students. This includes routine maintenance of toilets, handwashing stations, and drinking water systems to meet health and sanitation standards. Schools also promote hygiene practices, such as handwashing and menstrual hygiene management, through ongoing education and awareness activities. In collaboration with the Thromde Education Division, schools monitor the effectiveness of WASH facilities and respond to any immediate needs or repairs. During emergencies, schools coordinate with the Division to manage resources and ensure uninterrupted access to safe water and sanitation services.

CHAPTER 3: AUDIT FINDINGS

This chapter highlights the audit findings in four parts viz. adequacy of WASH facilities, monitoring and evaluation, promotion and awareness of WASH, and management of WASH facilities.

3.1 Adequacy of WASH facilities in schools

WASH has been a priority area for the Ministry of Education & Skills Development in successive five-year plans and it was explicitly articulated that “the Ministry will also continue to support the WASH program to strengthen healthy and hygienic habits and to prevent health-related issues faced by school children” in the 12th FYP. The Ministry continues to accord high priority to WASH in the 13th FYP.

The Ministry developed the National Standards for WASH in Schools and Monastic Institutions in 2024 to guide the implementation of WASH Programs.

As per the National Standards, access to clean water, adequate and inclusive sanitation, and proper hygiene practices in schools are fundamental for students’ well-being, better health, and overall development. These facilities should meet key standards such as sufficiency, functionality, and accessibility to create a safe and healthy learning environment. Proper access to well-designed toilets can also significantly influence school attendance. Providing an adequate number of toilets along with thoughtful design to cater to the diverse needs of all students, promotes a comfortable, hygienic, and inclusive environment. UNICEF manual on child-friendly schools requires ‘accessible, gender-appropriate toilets and handwashing facilities, access to potable drinking water, proper solid waste management, and schools should teach appropriate hygiene practices.’ UNICEF believes that WASH in schools is a pathway to a healthier learning environment and better-performing children.

The Royal Audit Authority (RAA) reviewed the adequacy of WASH facilities in schools and noted the following:

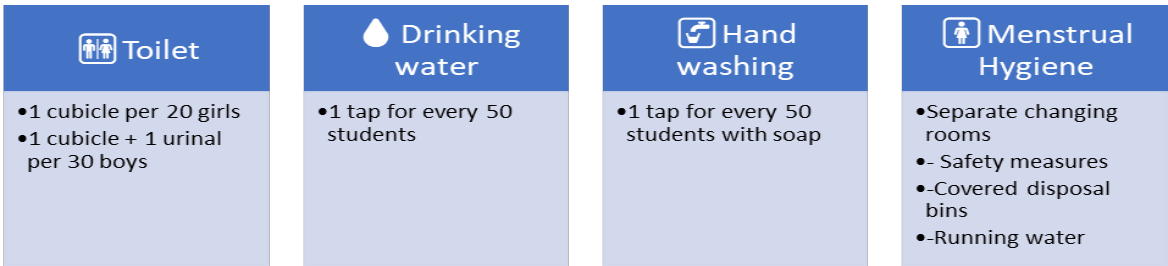
3.1.1 Availability, sufficiency and design compliance of the WASH facilities

i. Toilet Facilities

Recognising the importance of having adequate WASH facilities in schools, the National Standards for WASH for Schools 2024 mandate schools to provide adequate, accessible, safe, and clean toilets for their children and staff.

The Standard specifically stipulates that there should be:

Figure 2: Standard for WASH facilities



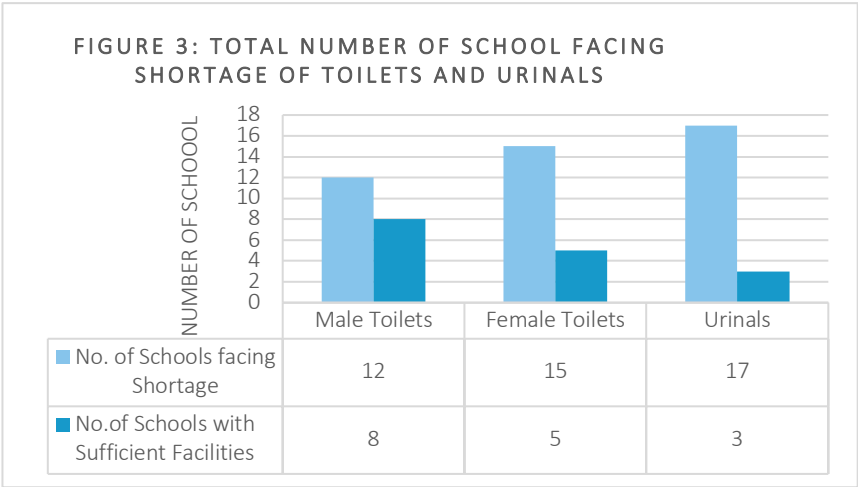
Source: National Standard for WASH in schools 2024

The RAA noted that Thimphu Thromde, in collaboration with MoESD, initiated the construction of new toilet blocks and integrated academic blocks in schools such as Changzamtog MSS, Loselling MSS, and YHSS. These efforts indicate progress toward expanding access to inclusive and student-friendly sanitation infrastructure, although gaps in meeting the National Standards persist.

During the field visits to 20 schools under Thimphu Thromde, the RAA observed that the WASH facilities are generally available in terms of basic physical infrastructure such as toilets, drinking water stations, hand washing facilities and water supply stations.

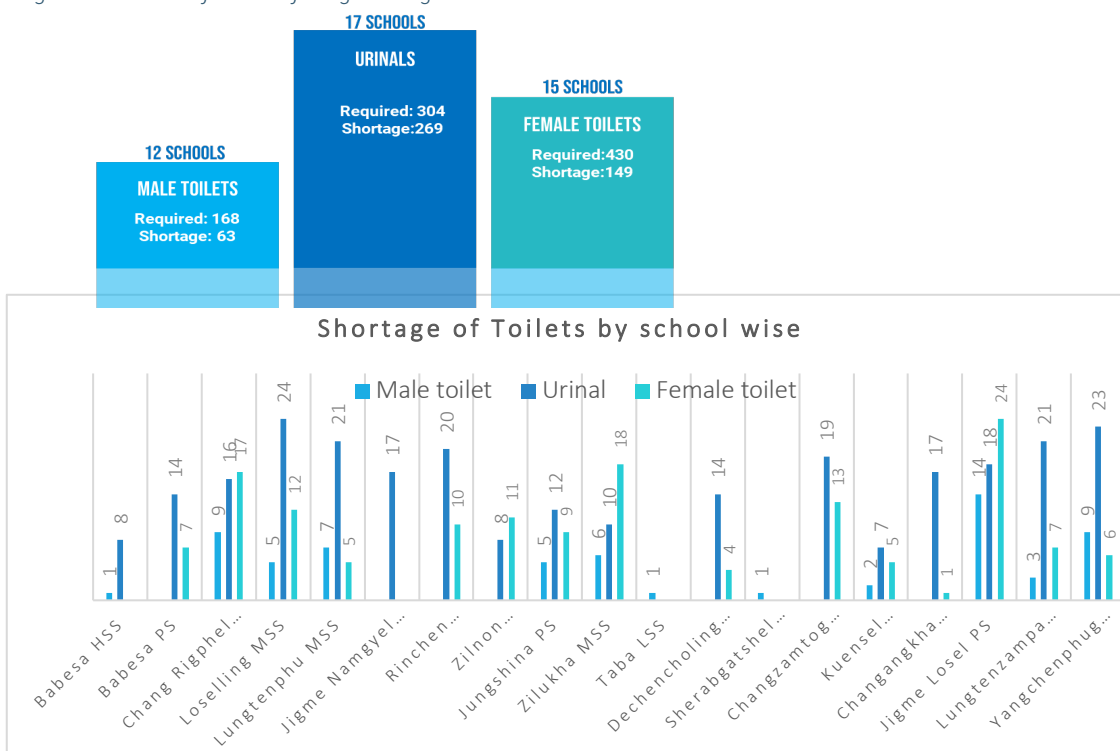
However, out of 20 schools, only eight schools meet the required standards for male toilets, and five schools meet the required standards for female toilets. While eight schools have separate urinals for boys, only three schools meet the required standards as shown in Figure 3.

12 schools are experiencing a total shortfall of 63 male toilets and a deficit of 269 urinals across 17 schools. For female toilets, there is a shortage of 149 toilets across 15 schools. The overall shortages of toilets and urinals are illustrated in Figure 4 and detailed in Appendix I.



Source: RAA’s Inspection Report

Figure 4: Number of Schools facing Shortages in Toilets and Urinals



Source: RAA's Inspection Report

Upon comparison, one school has only 4 male toilets, which is short of 14 from the required numbers of 18 and 3 female toilets, falling short by 24. The RAA also noted that some schools have adequate provision of facilities, even exceeding the standards, indicating a strong commitment to better sanitation.

These findings highlight a significant gap in the provision of adequate sanitation facilities across schools, as the current number of toilets falls short of meeting the student population's needs in some schools.

ii. Handwashing and Drinking Water Facilities

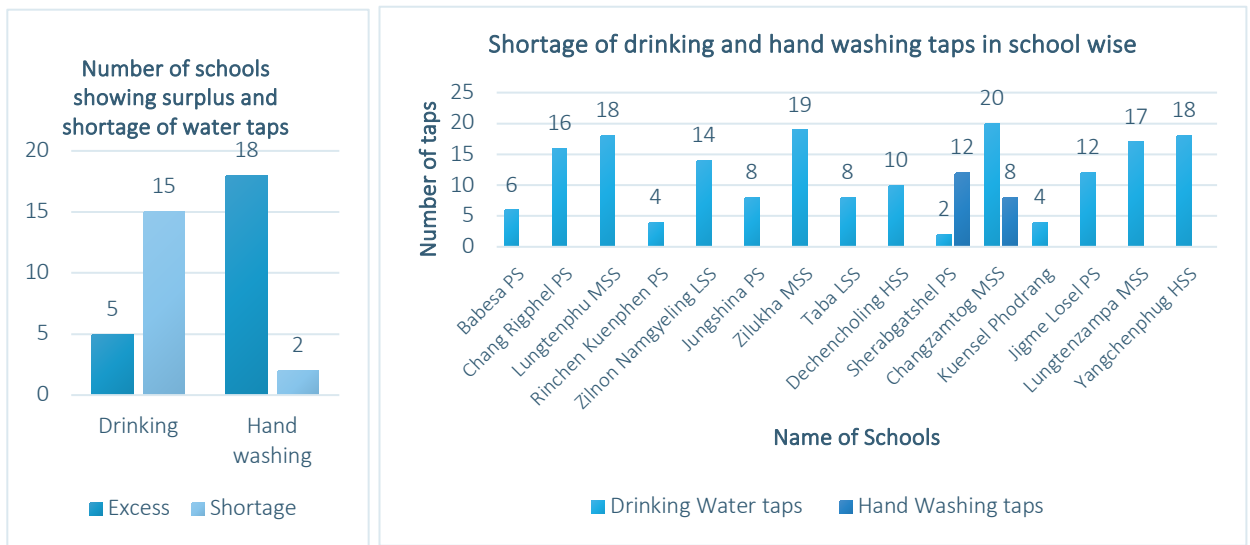
Regarding handwashing stations, the RAA noted that all schools, except for two schools, have an adequate number of facilities. This is due to the installation of numerous handwashing stations during the COVID-19 pandemic. The schools also acknowledge that the pandemic had a significant impact on the improvement of handwashing facilities in the schools and the handwashing habits of the school children.

The RAA noted that 18 schools have commendable handwashing facilities exceeding national standards, except for two schools, indicating a substantial improvement in handwashing facilities.

In terms of drinking water, all 20 schools are either using potable water filters or filtration systems (some donated) to ensure clean drinking water. Nevertheless, only five schools meet the required standards of 1 tap for every 50 students.

The imbalance highlights the need for better planning and resource distribution to ensure that drinking water is sufficiently provided across all schools. The abstract of the status of the provision of water taps are shown in Figure 5 and detailed in Appendix I

Figure 5: Shortage of water taps for both drinking and handwashing



Source: RAA’s Inspection Report

Thimphu Thromde, in their responses, acknowledges the audit observation highlighting the imbalance in the distribution of drinking water facilities across schools. The Thromde recognises that equitable access to safe drinking water is critical to ensuring student health, well-being, and a conducive learning environment.

It was noted that many of the existing WASH facilities were developed prior to the introduction of the WASH Standards by the Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD) in 2024. As a result, some infrastructure may not yet fully conform to the updated requirements. These gaps are being progressively addressed through ongoing improvement initiatives.

Despite challenges related to demographic shifts, urban expansion, and fluctuating school enrollments, Thimphu Thromde continues to implement WASH infrastructure improvements based on assessed needs and within the constraints of available resources. It stated that moving forward, all planning and resource allocation will be guided by the 2024 WASH Standards to promote greater consistency, efficiency, and equitable service delivery across all schools under its jurisdiction.

RAA acknowledges that many existing WASH infrastructures were built prior to the development of National Standards. However, the fact that WASH programs have been accorded priority in successive five-year plans, appropriate interventions to upgrade the facilities to close the gaps should have been prioritised. The shortage of adequate drinking water taps in most schools remains a concern. Only five schools meet the required standard, highlighting the need for targeted planning and resource allocation to ensure equitable access to safe drinking water across all schools.

iii. Menstrual Hygiene Facilities

With regard to the facility on menstrual hygiene, the RAA noted that all schools are providing free sanitary pads to female students, donated either by parents or teachers and male students during the international menstrual day. Further, it was noted that out of 20 schools, 10 schools have toilets with separate changing rooms, while four schools do not have changing rooms. Six schools have changing rooms but they were not used for the intended purpose.

All schools had pad disposal bins of different sizes, but in some cases, the bins were not fully covered as required. The sacks and plastic bags were also found used in addition to the bin during the inspections. The details are shown in Appendix I.

The inability to meet WASH facility standards in schools is primarily attributed to budget constraints, with many schools unable to construct adequate toilets to match the growing student population, particularly in the capital city. Additionally, inadequate maintenance budget also prevented schools from carrying out necessary repairs of older facilities leaving many toilets in disrepair.

The Ministry, in their responses, stated that they will distribute pad bins to all schools as part of Menstrual Hygiene Day activities on 28 May 2025.

iv. Design of the toilets and urinals

WASH facilities such as toilets and handwashing stations must be designed appropriately to meet the physical needs of children, ensuring that the facilities are comfortable and accessible, promoting regular and proper usage by the intended users.

In regard to the design of WASH facilities, the National Standards for WASH for Schools 2024 has also recognised that WASH facilities like toilets to be aesthetically designed to create a welcoming environment with the following features:

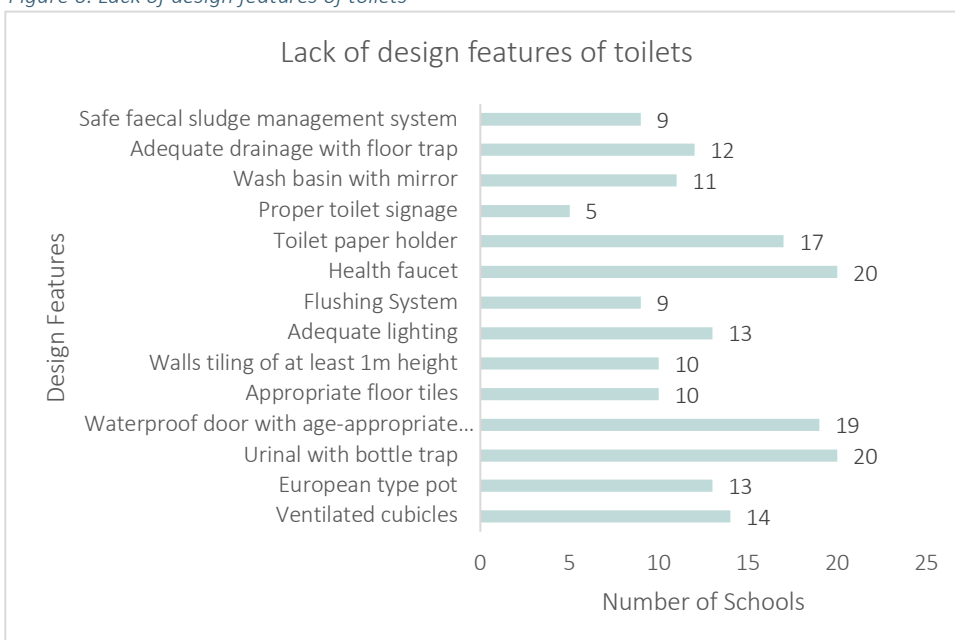
Table 1: Design features of toilets

Structural features	Toilet and urinal features	Hygiene and convenience
Ventilated cubicles	All squatting toilet pans with at least one European-type pot closest to the main entrance	Toilet paper holder
Waterproof doors with age-appropriate latches	Urinal with bottle traps (for male toilets)	Wash basin with mirror
Walls tiling of at least one meter in height	Flushing system	Adequate drainage with floor trap
Appropriate floor tiles	Health Faucet	Safe faecal sludge management system
Adequate lighting		Adequate signage

Source: National standard for WASH for schools 2024

During field visits, the RAA found that most of the design features in these schools do not meet the required standards, as highlighted in Figure 6 and detailed in Appendix II:

Figure 6: Lack of design features of toilets



Source: RAA's Inspection Report

The RAA noted that old toilets in most schools do not have adequate lighting except for the integrated blocks and newly constructed toilets. Although generally, schools do not use lighting due to being day schools, the online survey conducted using Google Forms among the students in grades IV to XII revealed that only 43 students feel unsafe to use school toilets due to insufficient lighting. This highlights the need for improved lighting in the schools to ensure safety and encourage regular use of the facilities.

Out of 20, eleven schools have the flushing system in newly constructed toilets while the old toilets still lack such provisions requiring students to carry jerry cans to manually flush using stored water. Moreover, none of the schools have the health faucet

and urinals are fitted without bottle traps. Instead, these urinals are fitted directly with a simple waste pipe directly to the drainage system as shown in Figure 7.

In terms of toilet paper holders and wash basins with mirrors, only three schools have toilet paper holders, and 11 schools lack washbasins with mirrors. Additionally, in some schools, the toilet pots, urinals, and washbasins are not designed age-appropriate, as they are installed at heights that are not accessible to younger students.

On the overall, out of the 14 design features, more than 50% of schools lack these features, demonstrating deficiencies in the toilet infrastructure design across the schools. Nearly all schools lack toilet facilities that meet all the specified design features outlined in the standards, except for one school, which meets 12 out of 14 design features.

Figure 7: Urinals without bottle trap



Source: RAA

Many of the toilet facilities were constructed prior to the implementation of the 2024 WASH Standards, and as such, they lack features aligned with modern sanitary requirements. While upgrades have occurred in some schools, further improvements are needed to ensure facilities meet the evolving needs of students and the latest standards.

The design of some toilets did not fully incorporate child-friendly features such as age-appropriate fixture heights or signage, indicating a need for technical design guidance and inclusive planning.

The absence of essential design features in toilet facilities may discourage students from using such facilities in schools, leading to issues such as discomfort, poor hygiene practices, and health problems.

Thimphu Thromde, in their responses, acknowledges the audit observations regarding outdated toilet infrastructure and gaps in design features across schools. It was also clarified that the majority of toilet facilities were constructed prior to the introduction of the WASH Standards by the Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD) in 2024. As such, these facilities were not built in accordance with the specifications outlined in the current standards, including child-friendly dimensions, adequate ventilation, signage, and appropriate fixtures.

It was also stated that Thimphu Thromde has taken steps to improve compliance by integrating the new WASH standards into ongoing and future projects and by prioritising need-based maintenance across schools.

It was highlighted that maintenance and minor renovations are conducted annually based on local assessments and within available budget ceilings. However, Thromde emphasised that full-scale upgrades required to align all facilities with the 2024 WASH Standards would necessitate additional and dedicated funding support.

Thimphu Thromde acknowledges the importance of sensitising school management and users on the revised standards and indicated that efforts would be made to build awareness and strengthen stakeholder capacity for planning, monitoring, and maintaining sanitation infrastructure in line with current requirements. It recommended that the audit observations be reviewed in the context of these ongoing challenges and implementation efforts, particularly those related to legacy infrastructure and the phased adoption of the 2024 WASH Standards.

While the RAA acknowledges that toilet facilities were constructed before the WASH Standards, it is important to emphasise that the identified design gaps still merit attention and progressive improvement. The absence of formal standards at the time of construction should not preclude the alignment of existing infrastructure with current requirements and best practices in school sanitation. Further, successive five-year plans had continuously accorded high priority to WASH Programs and the improvement needs could have been aligned with best practices.

Moreover, to ensure the adequacy, safety, and inclusiveness of WASH facilities in schools, there is a clear need for proactive planning and resource allocation, even within existing resource

constraints, especially when the standards now provide a clear benchmark for safe and inclusive WASH facilities.

v. Reliable Water Supply

The assessment of water availability in schools revealed several challenges related to the reliability and adequacy of water supply, which directly affects compliance with the National Standards for WASH.

According to the standards, schools are required to identify a reliable water source that supplies 24/7 uninterrupted water supply. During the field visits to schools, it was observed that all schools under Thimphu Thromde have water storage facilities, and running water in the toilets. However, meetings with school management and the survey responses from the students highlight a gap in meeting these requirements. 14 schools have reported that they have a regular, uninterrupted water supply from the source, while six schools experience shortages and manage through stored water.

According to survey results (Figure 8) from the management regarding the availability of running water in the toilets, six schools reported having running water most of the time, three schools indicated time-based water availability, and 11 schools reported a regular water supply at all times.

However, further analysis revealed discrepancies between reported availability and actual reliability. *For instance*, two schools that reported ‘always’ having running water also noted a lack of it as a common issue, reflecting inconsistencies in the water supply. And 6 out of 11 schools have reported unpleasant odours as a common issue in their toilet. The abstract of which is shown in Figure 9 and detailed in Appendix IV

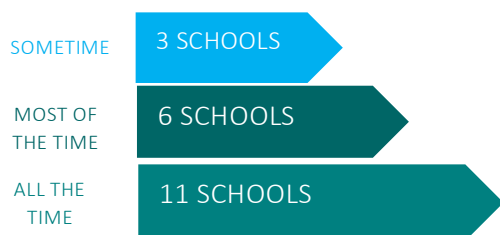
Table 2: Abstract of schools facing a shortage of reliable water supply

Sl.No	Name of the School	Availability of running water in the school toilets at all times	Common issues reported in the school toilets
1	Motithang HSS	always	lack of running water, unpleasant odours
2	Rinchen Kuenphen PS	always	clogged toilets. Unpleasant odors
3	Jungshina PS	Always	No soap or handwashing facilities, unpleasant odours and others
4	Dechencholing HSS	always	Clogged toilets, unpleasant odors, insufficient supplies, PIT toilets
5	Kuensel Phodrang PS	always	Lack of running water, unpleasant odours, safety concerns
6	Lungtenzampa MSS	always	unpleasant odours, insufficient supplies

Source: RAA's Survey Result

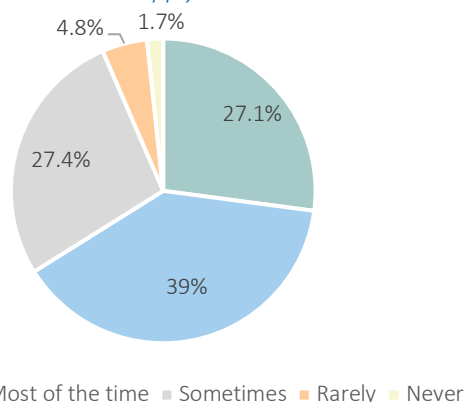
Out of a student population of 14,672, 11,890 responded with a response rate of 81.03%. The students' survey results revealed that 39% of the students reported having running water most of

Figure 8: Management's response on the availability of running water



Source: RAA's Survey Result

Figure 9 : Survey results on the reliable water supply



Source: RAA's Survey Result

the time, while 27.4% had running water only sometimes, 4.8% mentioned rarely, and 1.7% indicated they did not have running water at all times.

Additionally, 18.2 % of the students responded that they hardly or never use the school toilets due to lack of running water and 21.2% due to unpleasant odours.

Although some schools have made efforts to secure consistent water availability, 19 schools are dependent on shared community water sources, which are vulnerable to shortages. Not having a continuous water supply severely limits students' ability to maintain personal hygiene, such as handwashing and sanitation, and results in unsanitary conditions, including unpleasant odours. Disruptions in the water supply hinder routine cleaning, particularly of toilets, leading to increased health risks and ultimately affecting the effective implementation of WASH facilities.

3.1.2 Functionality and accessibility of WASH facilities

Functionality and accessibility of WASH facilities play a vital role in safeguarding students' health, supporting their education, and promoting a conducive learning environment. National Standards for Schools 2024 require WASH facilities to be functional and easily accessible for all students.

Even the National Sanitation and Hygiene Policy 2017 (updated in 2020) also states that '*the sanitation and hygiene facilities provided are safe, durable, reliable, affordable and accessible for all including persons with disabilities.*'

The following were noted during the field visits to schools:

i. Functionality of WASH facilities

While assessing the functionality of WASH facilities in the schools, the RAA noted that some WASH facilities are not functioning such as toilets, urinals, flush, adequate safety windows, doors latches and wash basins in the toilets potentially limiting student access to essential sanitation. The details of the non-functional facilities are shown in Table 3:

Table 3: Number of non-functional facilities with schools

Name of the WASH Facilities	Total facilities provided	Number of non-functional facilities	No. of schools
Toilets	294	14	7
Urinals	37	11	2
Flush	167	79	9
Drinking water Taps	184	14	4
Wash basin	47	15	5
Door latches	555	238	16
Windows	712	All the windows of old toilets were not translucent	20

As seen in Table 3, 14 out of 294 toilets in seven schools are non-functional, and most schools with old toilets lack a flush system. Out of 167 flushing system toilets, 79 flushes in nine schools are defunct. Additionally, 11 out of 37 urinals in two schools are also non-functional. 47 wash basins in five schools do not work. Furthermore, 238 door latches are not functional in 16 schools, and except for the integrated classrooms and a few new toilets, all the windows of the toilets are not translucent and non-functional as depicted in Figure 8. Even many facilities in recently constructed toilets were found to be non-functional.

For instance, a few of the toilet windows of two schools were covered with cloth pieces and nails were used as door latches. The details are shown in Appendix III.

Figure 10: Condition of the windows in old toilets



Source: RAA

The old toilets, where there are no proper wash basins, have common wash basins. However, these basins were seen worn out and completely unusable. For some, they have been repurposed as water storage for manual flushing.

The RAA also noted urinals designed on the floor, which are found to be inappropriate and causing unpleasant odours as shown in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Worn out common wash basin and urinals on the floor



Source: RAA

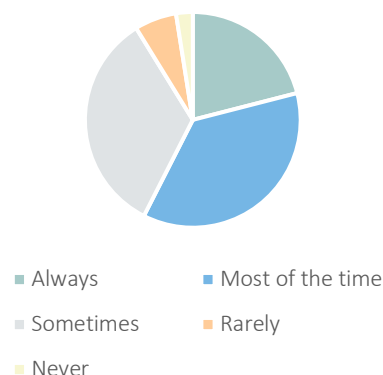
Further, the survey results also revealed issues with the functionality of toilet infrastructure in schools. Only 36.5% of students reported that toilets function properly most of the time and 33.7% stated that the toilets are usable only sometimes. 6.3% of students mentioned that toilets rarely function and 2.5% reported that toilets are never in proper working condition.

Figure 13: Non-functional flushes and damaged sinks



Source: RAA

Figure 12: Survey results on functionality of toilets



Source: RAA's Survey Result

These figures highlight the non-functionality of school sanitation facilities, with several students facing limited access to functional toilets.

Additionally, 759 students across all 20 schools expressed feeling unsafe using the toilets due to broken or transparent windows and non-functional door locks.

ii. Accessibility of WASH Facilities

Accessible WASH facilities are crucial in ensuring that all students, regardless of physical ability, gender, or age, can safely and comfortably use WASH facilities. Schools are required to meet specific criteria for the placement of these facilities, as outlined by the National Standards for WASH in Schools. These standards emphasise that toilets must be conveniently located, either attached to or near classrooms, to ensure ease of access for all students including students with disabilities

The RAA, during the field visits to schools, noted that drinking and handwashing stations were accessible to students but some of the toilets, urinals, and washbasins were inaccessible in terms of distance and positions. *For instance*, toilets in 12 schools were located more than 100 meters away from the main academic blocks as indicated in Table 4.

The long distance of toilets from classrooms poses challenges for students in accessing the facilities when needed. Furthermore, the lack of proper footpaths leading to the toilets, particularly for two schools, would make it even more challenging for students to access the facilities.

For schools with integrated blocks, the toilets are constructed inside the building, ensuring accessibility and convenience.

The RAA noted that in some cases the tap controls used to flush the urinals were positioned too high for the students, making them inaccessible as shown in Figure 10. In some schools, the urinals and washbasins are not found to be age appropriate as these facilities are installed at a higher position, and not reachable by younger students.

In the case of the menstrual hygiene facilities in schools, the schools have identified the changing rooms, but the facilities were mostly found small and did not appear to meet the requirements for a proper menstrual hygiene management space. The space was not found easily accessible or welcoming for students to use for changing in a hygienic environment. The rooms neither had necessary menstrual hygiene products such as pads nor it was properly maintained.

The survey results (figure 14) showed that the distant location of toilets from classrooms led 1,908 students to avoid using them, while 2,941 students expressed a desire for improved accessibility.

Additionally, in the school management survey, 9 out of 20 schools indicated the need for better accessibility to WASH facilities.

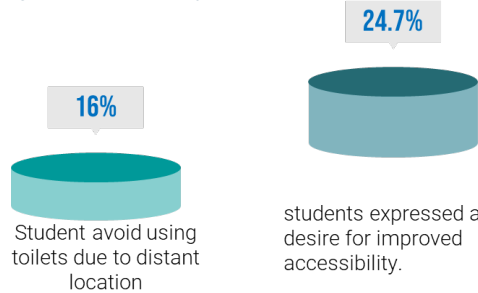
Students, especially younger children, are less likely to use toilets that are far from their classrooms, resulting in discomfort during the school day, which negatively impacts their health. The situation is particularly concerning for girls, especially during menstruation, as they are disproportionately affected by distant toilet facilities. There are schools, which are identified as inclusive schools and these schools also cater to students with disabilities. In 2024, the MoESD, along with Thimphu Thromde, designated five additional schools as inclusive, starting at the Pre-Primary level. These

Table 4: Number of schools with the distance of the toilets in meters

No. of schools	Meters range
5	Less than 50
3	50-100m
7	101-150m
3	151-200m
2	200m and above

Source: RAA site inspection report (as provided by the school)

Figure 14: Student’s feedback



Source: RAA’s Survey Result

schools are Sherabgatshel PS, Dechencholing HSS, Taba LSS, Changzamtog MSS, and Loselling MSS are part of efforts to increase inclusivity in education.

Thimphu Thromde has begun upgrading WASH infrastructure in the newly designated inclusive schools (e.g., Changangkha MSS and Sherabgatshel PS) by constructing ramps and piloting inclusive toilet models, although some designs still require modifications to meet accessibility standards.

The RAA noted that the WASH facilities in these schools are not fully equipped to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities. While Sherabgatshel and Changzamtog MSS have ramps leading to their toilets, these ramps were found to be steep, and the toilet doors were not wide enough to allow wheelchairs as shown in Figure 15.

In the case of Changangkha MSS, there are 4 inclusive toilets which are insufficient, and the other facilities are not designed inclusive friendly as the instances shown in Figure 16. In the case of Loselling MSS, there are no inclusive toilets available despite having SEN students in the school.

Figure 15: Steep ramp leading to toilet



Source: RAA

Figure 16: Accessibility to WASH station



Source: Changangkha MSS

Moreover, the pathways to these facilities are not designed to be accessible for students with mobility challenges, hindering their ability to use these facilities independently. This gap in inclusivity affects vulnerable groups, including students with disabilities, and may lead to increased absenteeism and anxiety. Poorly equipped or distant facilities may further discourage usage, reducing classroom engagement and impacting both academic performance and emotional well-being.

Inadequate accessible and inclusive WASH facilities may create barriers to equitable education, failing to support the needs of all students, particularly for vulnerable groups such as girls, younger students and students with disabilities.

Thimphu Thromde, in their responses, acknowledges the audit observation regarding the functionality and accessibility of toilet facilities in schools and agrees that ongoing maintenance and improvement of these facilities is critical to ensuring safe, inclusive, and hygienic learning environments. Thromde stated that it has been carrying out annual, need-based maintenance of WASH facilities within available budget constraints. While efforts have been made to address functionality issues, Thromde stated that more comprehensive

upgrades are necessary to meet the evolving needs of students and align with the WASH Standards introduced by the Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD) in 2024.

Regarding menstrual hygiene management (MHM), Thimphu Thromde acknowledges the audit observation on the adequacy of MHM facilities in schools. They stated that accessible, safe, and student-friendly spaces for menstrual hygiene are essential for supporting the health, dignity, and school attendance of adolescent girls. The Thromde noted that most schools have made efforts to identify and repurpose available spaces for MHM rooms, despite infrastructure and resource limitations. While these rooms may not fully meet ideal standards in terms of size, accessibility, and comfort, their establishment reflects a strategic step toward institutionalising MHM support. Thimphu Thromde affirmed its commitment to progressively enhancing these facilities in alignment with national standards and guidelines, including improving design, equipping, and maintenance, and ensuring the availability of essential menstrual hygiene products.

Thimphu Thromde also acknowledges the audit finding highlighting gaps in WASH accessibility for students with disabilities in newly designated inclusive schools such as Sherabgatshel PS, Dechencholing HSS, Taba LSS, Changzamtog MSS, and Loselling MSS. The Thromde appreciates the Royal Audit Authority's attention to the needs of learners with disabilities and clarified that these schools were designated as inclusive only in 2024. Infrastructure improvements are currently underway in collaboration with MoESD. While initial efforts such as ramp construction have begun, the Thromde recognises the need to further improve features such as ramp gradients, wheelchair-accessible toilet doors, and universally designed fixtures to meet inclusive education and WASH standards. They express their continued commitment to working with MoESD and relevant stakeholders to ensure that inclusive schools are fully equipped to provide a safe, accessible, and dignified learning environment for all students.

Further, the Ministry, in their responses, reported the initiation of immediate actions, including the construction of new toilets at Yangchenphu HSS. This comprises 20 inclusive toilets and 40 standard toilets, supported by the World Bank. The design of these facilities is based on previously implemented inclusive toilet models developed with UNICEF support.

While the RAA appreciates the Ministry's and Thimphu Thromde's efforts in maintaining WASH facilities, key issues with functionality and accessibility still exist in several schools. Annual maintenance alone may not be enough to meet the 2024 WASH Standards, there is a need for a more strategic and phased approach to upgrade facilities, with special attention to accessibility for all students, including those with disabilities.

iii. Access to Sanitation Supplies

Access to hygiene and sanitation supplies in schools is integral to the sustainability, functionality, and success of WASH facilities. Sanitation supplies are essential for keeping WASH facilities like toilets, sinks, and handwashing stations clean and usable. According to the National Standards for Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH), schools should have adequate tap stands with soap in the

toilets and the school should establish an effective management plan for WASH that ensures the availability of sanitation supplies such as soap, tissue paper, buckets, brushes, disinfectant, bins, rubber boots, and gloves.

During the field visits, it was noted that basic hygiene and sanitation supplies were mostly procured through parents' contributions and other donations. Despite these efforts, most schools still lacked adequate supplies, with 16 schools citing insufficient budgets for maintaining WASH facilities and 9 schools relying on external contributions for essential items such as soap, sanitary pads, and toilet paper to maintain hygiene. Additionally, 14 schools expressed a need to have more supplies in their WASH facilities. A lack of these essential items discourages proper hygiene practices, with 21.8% of students (from the survey) stating they rarely or never used school toilets in the absence of soap or other items.

Without proper hygiene supplies, students are less likely to practice proper hygiene, posing an increased risk of illness, potentially leading to frequent absences and hindering their academic progress.

iv. Quality of Water

Regarding water quality, the national standard mandates that all water sources used by schools must undergo testing, with the nearest Primary Healthcare Center (PHC) or hospital responsible for conducting these tests. Further, to ensure safety, the water, whether from the source or in reservoirs, should be disinfected with chlorine, and additional methods such as boiling or filtration may be employed for purification.

Table 5: Frequency of the test	
Frequency of test	Number of schools
Once a year	3
Twice a year	8
Quarterly	1
Monthly	6
As and when required	1
Never	1

Source: RAA’s Survey result

The RAA noted that water quality testing in schools is conducted in collaboration with the Royal Centre for Disease Control (RCDC). Water samples are either collected from the taps or water tanks and test results are then shared with the school management. There were no follow-up actions if the water was found to be contaminated.

Upon the review of the monthly water quality test reports submitted by the schools and the data from the RCDC, the RAA found that during August and September

2024, water in six schools was contaminated with the presence of E. coli levels (cfu/100mL) exceeding zero. It was noted that there is only one school with safe water for both months. Two schools had contaminated water in September 2024. Additionally, two schools did not conduct water quality tests in August, and their water was found to be unsafe in September, with one school showing the highest contamination level at 1000 units. The test results are detailed in Appendix iv.

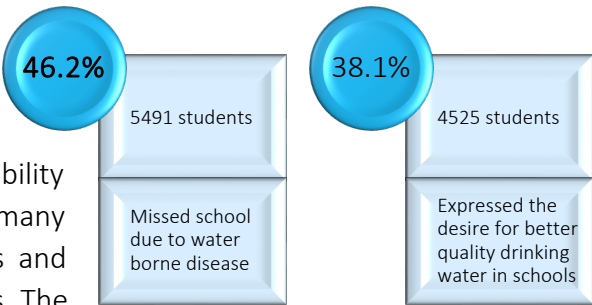
It also shows that some of the schools have not conducted water testing throughout the year. In the survey, all the schools reported to have varying testing frequencies, which were inconsistent, as shown in Table 5.

The RAA noted that some schools have taken the initiative of providing boiled and filtered water to the students.

The survey results also showed that 46.2 % of the students missed school due to waterborne diseases and 38.1% of the students expressed a desire for better-quality drinking water in their schools.

Figure 17: RAA’s Survey results on the quality of water

Further, the RAA noted that there is a lack of clear communication between the school management and agencies concerned about water sources to be tested, testing schedules, and test results. Insufficient funding limits the ability of schools to maintain safe drinking water as many schools depend on donations for basic needs and temporary fixes instead of sustainable solutions. The lack of oversight and maintenance further compounds the problem, which may pose health risks to students.



Thimphu Thromde acknowledges the audit observation regarding the quality of water provided in schools. They stated that ensuring safe and clean drinking water remains a priority, and noted that schools currently utilise water filters as a mitigation measure. The Thromde also recognises that sustainable water quality management requires technical assessment and coordinated efforts.

While RAA appreciates Thimphu Thromde’s recognition of the water quality concerns and the use of filtration systems as an interim measure, it is important to emphasise that filters alone may not adequately address recurring contamination issues, as noted in multiple schools. Sustainable water quality management requires not only technical interventions but also regular testing, prompt follow-up actions, and effective coordination between schools, RCDC, and relevant divisions of Thimphu Thromde.

3.2 Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for WASH program in Schools

A robust monitoring and evaluation framework is a crucial tool for assessing the effectiveness and impact of any program. Recognising its importance, it is essential for the WASH program to develop a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework to measure the success of the WASH programs in schools.

During the review of WASH programs, the RAA noted that the Education Monitoring Division, under the Ministry of Education and Skills Development, is responsible for overseeing and ensuring that education strategies, programs, and initiatives align with national education policy through

regular monitoring and evaluation. Nonetheless, it was noted that the division is yet to undertake the monitoring and evaluation of the WASH program in schools. Moreover, there is no monitoring and evaluation framework developed and instituted to monitor and assess the effectiveness of the WASH programs in schools.

Without the M&E framework, it may be difficult to track the progress of the WASH programs in schools in terms of availability, adequacy, accessibility, and alignment with the national standards. It may impede decision-making and interventions necessary to ensure having access to good hygiene practices, better sanitation and safe drinking water in schools. Ultimately, this may potentially undermine the overall learning environment, impeding the achievement of educational outcomes.

The Ministry of Education and Skills Development, in their responses, highlighted several long-term strategic measures to address gaps in the provision of WASH facilities and these include:

- **Aligning the WASH in Schools programme with the National Education Policy, which emphasises the need for safe, inclusive, and supportive infrastructure;**
- **Planning a national assessment of WASH facilities in both schools and monastic institutions, based on new standards and with a focus on urban–rural and gender disparities; and**
- **Advancing ongoing advocacy through a whole-of-society approach, engaging school health clubs, media, development partners, civil society Organisations, and local stakeholders.**

The RAA appreciates the strategic measures outlined by the Ministry and recognises that if these strategies are effectively implemented, they will significantly contribute towards a coherent, inclusive, and results-driven WASH program in schools. Nevertheless, the success of these initiatives will require timely interventions, effective institutional coordination, and integration of robust monitoring mechanisms to ensure accountability and measurable progress.

3.3 Management of WASH facilities

The role of school management in maintaining WASH facilities is crucial to ensuring a clean, safe, and hygienic environment for students. School management is responsible for overseeing the daily upkeep, maintenance, and functionality of these facilities to meet basic health and hygiene standards. This includes regular cleaning, ensuring the availability of water and sanitation supplies, and conducting repairs.

In many educational settings, specific policies and guidelines support the management of WASH facilities. These policies often outline standards for cleanliness, minimum hygiene requirements, and the frequency of maintenance activities. Some guidelines may specify recommended resources, such as the appropriate number of cleaners per student ratio or standard protocols for addressing maintenance issues. Adhering to these guidelines helps school management sustain an effective WASH system that reduces health risks and encourages positive hygiene behaviours within the school community.

Similarly, the National Standards for WASH require hygiene practices to be an integral part of school operations to ensure that water and sanitation facilities are used properly and maintained effectively. This criterion highlights the need for a systematic approach to the proper upkeep of facilities, which should be prioritised in schools to maintain a healthy learning environment.

In regard to the management of WASH facilities in schools, the RAA noted the following:

3.3.1 Operation and maintenance of WASH facilities

i. Cleaning and maintenance of WASH facilities

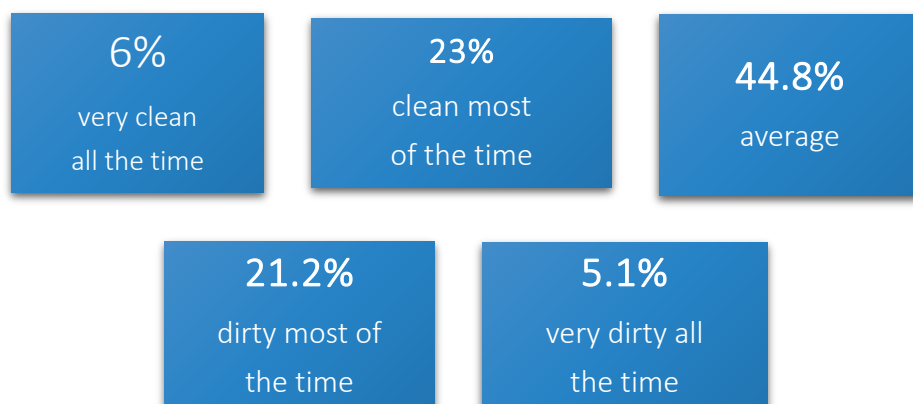
The National Standards for WASH assign a shared responsibility to students and staff in managing WASH facilities, requiring each school to establish a comprehensive management plan for WASH to ensure effective, accountable, and sustainable use.

Further, the standard also requires that the Health Club, led by a trained Health Coordinator, oversees all WASH-related activities within schools. This includes maintaining records for toilets, water supply, hand hygiene, menstrual hygiene, and waste disposal facilities, as well as ensuring cleanliness and maintenance to support accurate EMIS data. Additionally, the Health Club is required to organise daily cleaning schedules. The standards also specify the need for a trained WASH caretaker, equipped with necessary tools and spare parts, to manage ongoing facility maintenance.

It is important to prioritise preventive maintenance with routine inspections to maintain functionality and meet quality standards. However, schools are yet to put in place a management plan specifically for WASH facilities. Currently, the schools develop an annual health action plan, which is limited to the administration of health-related activities for the students. Although 20 schools reported daily toilet cleaning in the survey responses, there is a lack of a formal plan for daily cleaning and maintenance of WASH facilities. Out of 20 schools, only seven schools have maintained cleaning routines for students, but there are no routines for cleaners employed in some schools. The absence of a cleaning schedule contributes to inconsistent hygiene maintenance of WASH facilities particularly toilets, leading to various sanitation issues.

Additionally, without dedicated health personnel solely focused on WASH responsibilities, schools struggle to maintain high sanitation standards. According to the survey, only 6% of the students rated the toilets as very clean all the time, while 23% of the students rated them as clean most of the time, 44.8 % of the students rated the toilets as average and 21.2% of the students reported toilets as dirty most of the time while 5.1% of the students rated them as very dirty all the time showing dissatisfaction with the cleanliness of the facilities.

Figure 18: Rating for Cleanliness



Source: RAA's Survey results

Overall, the survey results revealed that a majority of the students rated toilet cleanliness as average or below, with a considerable portion expressing dissatisfaction. This indicates potential gaps in the maintenance and cleanliness of toilet facilities in schools.

The RAA, during the field visits, noted instances of deterioration of facilities such as degraded facilities including damaged toilet structures, deteriorated toilet panes and pots possibly due to inadequate preventive measures. In some schools having old facilities, some of the toilets were found in a state of serious disrepair, showing clear signs of structural damages as depicted in the pictures. The schools also agree that the condition of WASH facilities impacts student attendance, with 11.6% of students stating they avoid using the toilets due to safety concerns. The survey responses reveal a high number of non-

Figure 19: Degraded toilets



Source: RAA

Figure 20: Structural damage and decay



Source: RAA

functional facilities, with insufficient sanitation and hygiene supplies in WASH facilities, discouraging students from using them due to inadequate upkeep. 5,155 students (43.19%) have expressed the need for better maintenance.

During the field visits to schools, it was noted that many facility structures were outdated and failed to meet the required standards. Urinals, designed in a traditional style, were left unmaintained and underutilised, with no preventive maintenance carried out across schools. Limited routine maintenance and delays in repairing defunct facilities have contributed to further deterioration, requiring the need for a structured and adequately funded maintenance system

The RAA noted that some schools still use pit toilets, while others have older toilets that are not connected to the main sewerage system. This inadequate infrastructure hinders proper maintenance, resulting in unpleasant odours that deter students from using the facilities. Such conditions not only compromise hygiene and sanitation standards but also negatively impact students' health, comfort, and overall learning environment.

While challenges remain, Thimphu Thromde has implemented regular annual maintenance programs and coordinated targeted repairs in schools with aging infrastructure (e.g., Zilnon

Figure 21: Drainage System



Source: RAA

Namgyel LSS, Motithang HSS). These efforts, however, need to be scaled up and better aligned with the preventive maintenance requirements of the 2024 WASH Standards.

The absence of proper drainage systems in the toilet facilities contributed to frequent clogging resulting in deteriorating the conditions of these facilities. In addition, there was a hygiene issue noted in Babesa Primary School where sewerage from nearby buildings flows openly across the school grounds, creating an unpleasant odour and posing health risks to students, potentially exposing them to diseases.

Budget constraints were cited as a major factor, with schools struggling to allocate sufficient funds for the regular maintenance and timely repair of broken or deteriorating infrastructure. Normally, the schools are provided with an annual budget of Nu. 50,000 for overall maintenance including maintenance of WASH facilities.

The absence of proper management plans has led to limited focus on cleaning, maintenance, and preventive measures for WASH facilities resulting in deteriorating conditions of WASH facilities in terms of functionality, environment, and physical structure. The deteriorated conditions of WASH facilities will not only discourage students from using such facilities but also pose long-term health risks to students.

Thimphu Thromde, in their responses, acknowledges the importance of effective operation and maintenance of WASH facilities as essential for ensuring hygiene, functionality, and sustainability. The Thromde noted that ongoing improvements and need-based maintenance of toilets are being undertaken across schools within the limits of available budget provisions. It reaffirmed its commitment to progressively upgrading WASH infrastructure in alignment with national standards and school-specific requirements.

The Ministry, in their responses, reported that they have planned training for school support staff in Thimphu Dzongkhag and Thimphu Thromde in May 2025 to strengthen preventive maintenance practices; this includes provision of maintenance toolkits.

ii. Supervision and monitoring of WASH facilities

Monitoring and supervision of WASH facilities in schools play a critical role in ensuring that these essential services function efficiently and contribute to the overall well-being of students. Supervision and monitoring help track the functionality, maintenance, and hygiene standards of these facilities, ensuring that they provide safe drinking water, proper sanitation, and improve handwashing practices. Regular monitoring and supervision will help to identify issues that require immediate attention, such as broken infrastructure or inadequate supplies.

According to the National standard, the Health Coordinator is responsible for overseeing the daily maintenance of hygiene and sanitation standards. They ensure that clean water is available, that toilets and handwashing stations are functioning properly, and that students have access to soap and sanitary materials. It is clear that Health Coordinators are responsible for supervising and monitoring WASH facilities; however, there is no clear or structured approach outlining how these activities should be conducted.

While schools report that monitoring and supervision of WASH facilities occur regularly, there is no formal schedule or timeline to guide these activities except for 4 schools with some form of assessment, or monitoring mechanism for WASH facilities in place.

Table 6: Monitoring Activities

Name of the schools		Activities		Criteria	Monitored by
Motithang HS		Best STAR Class-Giving withdrawals and deposits to the classes. Organising routine cleaning of WASH stations, drains		Monitoring worksheet and assessment checklist, Assessment report	House captains, Health captains, Health coordinators
		Suggestion box			

Taba LSS	Class Competition for the Cleanest Toilet of the Year 2024	Assessment checklist	Teachers and supporting staff, Health club committee
Changangkha LSS	My Emotional Bank encourages students to take initiative in maintaining WASH facilities. Students earn points for volunteering in WASH-related activities.	Criteria to assess Health and hygiene at school- 2024	The class supervisor rated the points.
Babesa PS	Cleanliness of toilets Maintaining WASH stations	Checklist for the record of assurance	Health coordinators, ESP, non-academic head and principal

Source: Respective Schools

While some schools have mechanisms like assessment checklists or point systems, others lack similar frameworks, indicating inconsistent school monitoring practices. The involvement of staff, captains, or committees is valuable, but there is no evidence of a comprehensive supervision framework integrating all the individuals concerned, ensuring regular reviews, or enforcing accountability.

The RAA noted that there is a lack of a structured approach, resulting in inconsistent practices of monitoring and supervision of WASH facilities. This has led to many toilets being in a state of disrepair, several of which are non-functional due to broken or blocked drainage systems. In some cases, toilets were dirty with inadequate sanitation and unpleasant odors.

Furthermore, there is a lack of feedback mechanism for students, staff, or other stakeholders to report problems with WASH facilities. The absence of such a mechanism also exacerbates the deterioration of the facilities and hampers timely interventions by the school management.

iii. Adequacy of workforce managing WASH facilities

Adequate workforce is essential to ensure that WASH facilities are consistently clean, functional, and accessible to all students. When adequate personnel are available to perform regular cleaning, minor repairs, and timely maintenance, the facilities remain hygienic and inviting, promoting students' health and regular use. Additionally, with enough staff, schools can implement a structured cleaning and maintenance schedule, reducing wear and tear, preventing the buildup of maintenance backlogs, and ensuring facilities remain in good condition.

According to the National standard, there should be a trained Health Coordinator to lead all WASH-related activities. There is also a requirement of trained WASH caretakers for the operation and maintenance of WASH facilities.

However, on review of the adequacy of staff allocated for WASH activities, it was observed that all 20 schools have health coordinators, but their roles do not extend to fully maintaining and monitoring the WASH facilities. Instead, they are mostly responsible for implementing health-related activities outlined in their annual action plans. Additionally, the coordinators are not solely dedicated to managing health services and WASH facilities but they are also involved in teaching duties, which forces them to split their attention between two demanding roles.

With regard to the allocation of cleaners, the schools consider the staffing pattern, approved by the Royal Civil Service Commission as shown in Table 7:

Table 7: Allocation of cleaners

Class	No. of cleaners required	Remarks
PP-VI	1	HRD MoE 2016
VII-VIII/IX/X	1	Multitask for both dry & wet cleaning
VII-VIII/IX/X/XII	2	

Source: MoESD

The number of cleaners recruited by the government against the number of students in 20 schools were as shown in Table 8:

Table 8: Number of cleaners recruited by the government against the number of students in 20 schools

Name of the schools	No. of students	No. of cleaners allocated (A) Thimphu Thromde	No. of Cleaners as per Staffing pattern (B)	Difference (B-A)	Student cleaner ratio	No. of Cleaners recruited through Parents' contribution
Babesa HSS	518	1	2	1	1:518	0
Babesa PS	851	2	1	-1	1:428	1
Chang Rigphel PS	988	1	1	0	1:988	0
Loseling MSS	1482	2	2	0	1:741	0
Lungtenphu MSS	1301	2	1	-1	1:650	1
Motithang HSS	1207	1	2	1	1:1207	1
Jigme Namgyel LSS	1069	2	2	0	1:534	0
Rinchen Kuenphen PS	1233	1	1	0	1:1233	0
Zilnon Namgyeling LSS	987	1	2	1	1:987	0
Jungshina PS	688	1	1	0	1:688	0
Zilukha MSS	1193	2	2	0	1:596	1
Taba LSS	584	2	2	0	1:292	0
Dechencholing HSS	1383	2	2	0	1:691	1
Sherabgatshel PS	584	1	1	0		0
Changzamtog MSS	1479	1	2	1		0
Kuensel Phodrang PS	508	1	1	0	1:508	1
Changangkha MSS	987	1	2	1		0
Jigme Losel PS	1067	1	1	0	1:1067	0
Lungtenzampa MSS	1306	1	2	1	1:1306	0
Yangchenphug HSS	1540	1	2	1	1:1540	1

Source: Respective Schools

Many schools reported that the number of cleaners assigned to maintain WASH facilities is insufficient to meet the demands, affecting overall cleanliness and usability. According to

international best practices observed in UNICEF-supported programs, a minimum of one cleaner is recommended for every 400 to 500 students to ensure basic hygiene and maintenance of sanitation facilities. Besides the allocation of cleaners not as per the staffing pattern in some schools, the RAA also observed that allocation was not based on the strength of the schools. The schools also expressed challenges of shortage of cleaners allocated based on the approved staffing pattern.

Further, it was noted that in seven schools, in order to address shortages, cleaners are recruited through parents' contributions. An inadequate number of cleaners will have challenges in maintaining the cleanliness and hygiene of the facilities.

Thimphu Thromde, in their responses, acknowledges the audit observation concerning the adequacy of the workforce responsible for the management and upkeep of WASH facilities in schools. The Thromde recognises that WASH management involves both infrastructure maintenance and the promotion of hygienic practices, and therefore, emphasises the need for a comprehensive assessment of staffing requirements and deployment to ensure effective and sustainable WASH service delivery.

The RAA appreciates the Thimphu Thromde for recognising the need to do a comprehensive assessment of staffing requirements to ensure effective WASH service delivery. However, the RAA reiterates the challenges faced by schools due to the existing staffing pattern for the allocation of cleaners.

3.3.2 Prioritisation and allocation of budget for WASH facilities

Adequate budget allocation is essential for the ongoing upkeep of WASH facilities. Investing in the construction of these infrastructures and meeting established standards is only effective if the facilities are consistently maintained to stay functional and serve their purpose over time. Without sufficient funding for regular operations and maintenance, these investments risk falling into disrepair, undermining the purpose of providing safe, accessible hygiene facilities.

According to national standards, school management should budget for the operation and maintenance of WASH facilities, with preventive maintenance conducted regularly to ensure the facilities provide high-quality WASH services. Schools are also expected to submit proposals to the Thromde for major structural maintenance based on a need assessment and minor maintenance should be done from the maintenance budget provided to the schools.

Upon reviewing the budget proposal and approval for the operation and maintenance of WASH facilities for FY 2024-25, it was noted that there is no dedicated budget line for maintaining and operating WASH facilities. Instead, the budget for the same is met from the Maintenance of Property – Building budget line (15.01). The budget was initially apportioned with Nu.0.005 million per school totalling to Nu. 0.10 million of all schools, now revised budget of Nu.1.293 M across 20 schools with additional support. Despite the revision, the total allocation remains far below the proposed requirement of Nu. 5.740 million, as presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Controllable budget for school administration services (Nu. in Million):

OBC	Item	Proposed	Initial apportionment	Revised Budget
12.01	Utilities - Telephones, Telex, Fax, E-mail, Internet	2.630	0.295	0.314
12.03	Utilities - Electricity, Water, Sewerage	4.733	2.768	3.392
13.01	Rental of Properties - Buildings	0.100	0.132	0.21
14.01	S & M - Office Supplies, Printing, Publications	3.986	0.600	1.865
14.02	S & M - Medicines & Laboratory Consumables	3.111	0.110	0.784
15.01	Maintenance of Property - Buildings	5.740	0.100	1.293
15.05	Maintenance of Property - Equipment	2.567	0.100	1.359
15.07	Maintenance of Property - Computers	2.293	0.100	0.35
15.02	Maintenance of Property - Vehicles	1.605	1.000	0.845
Total		26.765	5.205	9.412

Source: ePEMS

On the capital budget allocation of 20 schools, 16 proposed funding for constructing integrated classrooms with embedded WASH facilities. However, only eight of these proposals received approval whereas four schools neither proposed new integrated blocks nor addressed WASH maintenance needs. During the year, only one toilet in the academic block at Changzamtog MSS was approved for major maintenance, leaving other schools without adequate funds to construct or maintain necessary toilet facilities as required by standards. As a result, schools with inadequate or non-functional WASH facilities are left without the resources to address these gaps.

Survey responses also revealed that 16 schools do not have adequate budgets for WASH maintenance. Twelve schools rely on parents' donations due to the absence of a separate WASH budget line, while two schools use other budget heads, such as 12.03 (Utilities). According to the management's survey, fifteen schools proposed maintenance funding for WASH facilities, while five did not, citing the absence of a dedicated budget line.

The current budget allocations reveal a substantial funding gap for WASH maintenance in schools. Without an adequate budget, schools struggle to maintain facilities, which results in the deterioration of facility conditions. This gap is evident even in schools with integrated facilities, as toilets, wash basins, and flushes have become defunct.

Without a sufficient budget for maintenance, the intended benefits of supporting WASH facilities cannot be fully realised. The lack of funding also leads to the rapid deterioration of facilities, diminishing the value of initial construction investments and failing to provide safe, accessible hygiene facilities for students. As a result, schools struggle to uphold basic WASH standards, and the broader goal of promoting student health and well-being remains unmet.

The Ministry, in their responses, highlighted that the key implementation challenge is limited budgetary allocations for WASH facilities in schools, which has impacted the timely

renovation, upgrading, and expansion of services. Additionally, many existing WASH facilities were noted to be outdated and insufficient to meet the needs of growing student populations, particularly in Thimphu.

3.4 Promotion and Awareness of WASH Services

Promotion and awareness activities are essential for instilling long-lasting hygiene habits among students, extending beyond physical facilities to include education on water, hygiene, and sanitation. Many schools have made substantial efforts to incorporate these activities, including observing global days on WASH, personal hygiene education, menstrual hygiene management, and handwashing practices.

According to the National Standards on WASH, integrating hygiene promotion into the school curriculum is critical for effective facility use and maintenance, and several schools have demonstrated commendable progress toward this goal.

The Thromde Education Division has supported awareness and capacity-building activities such as menstrual hygiene advocacy, summer scout camps with hygiene modules, and wellbeing workshops for school health coordinators. These initiatives reflect a proactive role in promoting hygiene behaviours among school communities.

The following were noted with regard to the current approach towards promotion and awareness of WASH:

i. School-Led WASH Initiatives

- ✓ All schools have designated health in-charge, appointed amongst the teachers and schools maintain basic health supplies including medicines and first-aid boxes.
- ✓ Seven schools maintain dedicated health clubs, which focus specifically on promoting health and hygiene practices among students.
- ✓ Nine schools have incorporated Health and Physical Education (HPE) into their school curriculum. The curriculum includes the topics on water, hygiene and sanitation but the schools mostly focus on the games and sports in HPE classes.
- ✓ 11 schools indicated that they provide some information on WASH but lack a comprehensive, structured approach to WASH education.
- ✓ It was observed that all 20 schools leveraged global awareness days such as World Water Day, World Health Day, World Menstrual Hygiene Day, and Global Handwashing Day to engage students on health topics and align with international movements which help to raise awareness. However, schools generally lack continuity, with limited ongoing initiatives targeting water safety, sanitation, and hygiene practices beyond these one-time events. A few schools have engaged more by addressing topics like waterborne diseases, the benefits of drinking clean water, and practical actions like boiling and filtering water, cleaning water tanks, and maintaining taps.

- ✓ Some schools promoted toilet etiquette and sanitation. Five schools provided some user education on the safe use of toilets and assessment of the cleanliness of the toilets.
- ✓ Menstrual hygiene management is frequently emphasised through health talks and practical sessions, particularly for female students, to enhance their understanding of menstrual health and hygiene practices.
- ✓ During the field visits, it was observed that schools generally display adequate educational signage promoting water conservation and safety, with reminders like "Close the Tap After Use", and handwashing practices as shown in Figure 22:

Figure 22: Signage on the WASH facilities



Source: RAA

15 schools provided gender-specific signs for male and female toilets, while there is no signage or indication for the menstrual hygiene facilities in schools.

- ✓ Survey results also indicated that 60.1% of students received hygiene education, with 35.4% receiving limited education and 4.5% receiving none.

Although there is general education on health and hygiene in schools, the current approach lacks a comprehensive approach that includes WASH promotion and awareness across these schools showing inconsistency in approaches. The lack of training for health coordinators and others involved in WASH in schools limited the efforts towards comprehensive awareness of WASH.

Sporadic approaches in WASH advocacy may result in limited education on WASH amongst the students that may persist into adulthood.

Thimphu Thromde, in their responses, acknowledges the audit finding related to the limited promotion and awareness of WASH services in schools.

ii. Training on WASH promotion and awareness

Schools rely significantly on health coordinators and student leaders to advance WASH initiatives. The training provided to health coordinators and staff responsible for managing WASH programs directly influences the quality and sustainability of these initiatives.

In order to review the training imparted to the relevant coordinators of WASH, the RAA requested the details of training imparted to the schools but none of the schools have provided a

documented list of specific training programs conducted for health coordinators or students related to WASH. However, upon inquiry, it was stated that the health coordinators for five schools do not have adequate training in WASH-related responsibilities. This is a critical shortfall, as the lack of training prevents these coordinators from acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills to manage the facilities effectively. This absence of documents for review suggests that formal training sessions are either not a regular part of school WASH initiatives or are conducted informally without a structured curriculum. Consequently, health coordinators and student leaders cannot address topics such as safe water practices, effective sanitation management, and hygiene promotion.

It was observed that one of the challenges in promoting WASH awareness within schools is the limited training offered to health coordinators, students, and others involved in leading awareness efforts. While schools depend heavily on health coordinators and a select group of students for the implementation of WASH initiatives, there is a lack of comprehensive training programs aimed at equipping them with the essential knowledge and skills to effectively advocate for these initiatives. This gap may impede the depth and effectiveness of WASH awareness campaigns, ultimately limiting students' understanding and engagement with critical health topics.

Without specialised training, the effectiveness of health coordinators and students in promoting WASH awareness may be constrained. This limitation may lead to inconsistencies in messaging, incomplete understanding of WASH principles, and missed opportunities for proactive engagement with the broader student body.

Thimphu Thromde acknowledges the audit finding regarding training on WASH promotion and awareness.

The Ministry, in their responses, reported they have planned capacity building for school health coordinators in Thimphu Dzongkhag during the summer break of 2025.

CHAPTER 4: RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the audit findings, the RAA developed the following recommendations to indicate opportunities to address the gaps identified during the review. Relevant agencies may review the relevancy and appropriateness of these recommendations for implementation. As such, the recommendations are not intended to restrict the ability of the policy and decision-makers in their decision-making or to select better alternatives to address the issues reflected in this report.

4.1 The Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD), in consultation with Thimphu Thromde and school management, should develop a prioritised plan to ensure the adequacy of WASH facilities as per the National Standards

The RAA noted that there are gaps in meeting the National Standards for WASH in schools in terms of adequacy, which may negatively affect students' health and learning environments.

Thus, the Ministry, in consultation with Thimphu Thromde and school management, should develop a prioritised plan for expanding and upgrading WASH facilities in each school facing a shortage of WASH facilities, particularly toilet and drinking water facilities.

4.2 The MoESD should upgrade WASH facilities to ensure inclusiveness

The RAA noted inappropriate and inconsistent designs of facilities provided in various schools, which impeded the accessibility for students with disabilities and younger children.

Therefore, the Ministry should ensure that all WASH facilities are upgraded or adapted to meet the diverse needs of all students, thereby enabling equitable and inclusive access to these essential services.

4.3 The MoESD, in consultation with the Royal Civil Service Commission, should specify requirements of cleaners (WASH facilities) based on the student population

The RAA noted that current staffing practices allocate cleaners according to school level, as per the Ministry's HR policy, rather than considering the actual student population. Without specific guidelines mandating a minimum cleaner-to-student ratio, many schools are facing disparities in allocating cleaners.

The Ministry, in collaboration with the Royal Civil Service Commission, should develop a standard to ensure an adequate number of cleaners in schools. This standard should be based on an appropriate cleaner-to-student ratio, allowing for effective maintenance of hygiene and sanitation in school premises. Proper staffing levels will contribute to the consistent upkeep of WASH facilities, ensuring a clean and safe environment for students.

4.4 MoESD, in consultation with Thimphu Thromde and the Ministry of Finance, should prioritise and secure an adequate, sustained budget allocation for the maintenance, upgrading, and improvement of WASH facilities in schools.

The RAA noted that a primary cause of the issues surrounding WASH facilities is the insufficient budget allocated to their upkeep, restricting the school management's capacity to perform necessary upgrades, repairs, and routine maintenance. This financial shortfall not only leads to the deterioration of WASH infrastructure but also compromises student health, safety, and overall well-being.

Poor WASH conditions may contribute to student dissatisfaction and negatively affect attendance and learning outcomes. Thus, Thimphu Thromde, in consultation with the Ministry of Finance, should prioritise providing an adequate budget for the maintenance, upgrading, and upkeep of WASH facilities to ensure a safe and supportive environment that enables students.

4.5 Thimphu Thromde should institute mechanisms for water quality tests and remediation

The RAA noted that testing the quality of drinking water in schools is not consistent and not carried out in a coordinated approach. Due to this, there is a risk of students potentially getting exposed to contaminated water, which may result in the outbreak of waterborne diseases impacting their health and well-being.

Thus, the Thimphu Thromde is recommended to institute proper mechanisms for coordination with the Royal Centre for Disease Control in terms of the requirement of frequency of testing to be conducted, communication of test results with school management and measures to be initiated in case of contamination. Further, the Thimphu Thromde should also develop guidelines and protocols for responding to water quality issues, ensuring all schools understand their responsibilities and the necessary actions

4.6 Thimphu Thromde should ensure a continuous water supply in schools and alternative storage facilities

Inconsistent water supply limits schools and students' ability to maintain personal hygiene, especially for essential practices like handwashing and sanitation. Without reliable water, routine cleaning, particularly of toilets, becomes disrupted, leading to unsanitary conditions, unpleasant odours and increased health risks.

To address these challenges, Thimphu Thromde, in consultation with schools, should ensure continuous water supply in schools, especially during the daytime.

4.7 The school management should develop a comprehensive management plan for the operations and maintenance of WASH in schools

The RAA noted that the WASH Facilities are not being properly maintained to the required standards and there is no preventive maintenance being done on time, leading to deteriorating conditions of the facilities. Several factors contribute to this issue, including the absence of a structured cleaning and maintenance schedule, inadequate resources, and poor monitoring.

A lack of management plans may lead to limited focus on cleaning, maintenance, and preventive measures for WASH facilities. As such, schools should develop an O&M management plan to ensure that WASH facilities are functional, hygienic, and safe for all users. The plan should establish a clear structure with a maintenance plan, incorporating monitoring and feedback systems for creating a sustainable model for managing their WASH facilities, contributing to the overall health and well-being of the students.

4.8 The MoESD should develop an integrated awareness program on WASH for students, coordinators, and staff

The activities on promotion and awareness of WASH in schools are mostly limited to observing the global days, giving hygiene and sanitation talks rather than fostering ongoing, school-led initiatives. This was mainly due to a lack of comprehensive awareness of WASH in schools among the health coordinators and staff managing the WASH.

Thus, the Ministry should develop and implement structured training programs that provide health coordinators and student leaders with the tools or knowledge they need to promote safe water practices, sanitation management, and hygiene practices including menstruation hygiene.

4.9 The MoESD should ensure a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to track the progress of WASH programs in schools nationwide

The RAA noted that there exists a database of WASH facilities in the EMIS. The Ministry is yet to institute a system of monitoring and evaluation to assess the adequacy, accessibility, and functionality of WASH facilities as per the National Standards and to inform the decision-makers for proper planning and budgeting.

Thus, the Ministry should institute a robust monitoring and evaluation framework in order to track the progress of WASH programs in schools.

4.10 The MoESD should conduct a comprehensive assessment of WASH facilities in all government schools nationwide

Many facilities do not meet the requirements outlined in the national WASH standards, compromising the basic hygiene and sanitation needs of students. This situation highlights the urgent need for a nationwide evaluation to understand the overall status of WASH facilities across all government schools.

Therefore, the Ministry should take the lead in initiating a similar, more comprehensive assessment to provide a clear picture of the existing disparities and guide targeted interventions and resource allocation for improving WASH facilities.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The Royal Audit Authority conducted this performance audit to assess the adequacy of WASH facilities and services across all 20 government schools under Thimphu Thromde. The audit revealed gaps that potentially may undermine the functionality, accessibility, and management of these facilities, with far-reaching implications for student health, well-being, and educational outcomes.

Specific issues highlighted include inadequate and non-functional WASH facilities, unreliable water supply, irregular water quality testing, lack of inclusive WASH facilities, and absence of structured training programs for staff managing WASH services. Furthermore, the lack of a comprehensive management plan including cleaning schedules, preventive maintenance plans, and monitoring systems has hampered the effective upkeep of these facilities. The persistent challenge of insufficient budget allocation for WASH further limits the ability to prioritise improvements and sustain existing facilities. The inadequacies of WASH facilities in most schools were generally due to old infrastructure that were built prior to the development of National Standards for WASH, which highlights the need for upgradation and retrofitting to meet the current needs of the students. One of the cross-cutting issues is the adequate allocation of cleaners for the day-to-day upkeep of the facilities.

To address challenges, the RAA provided several recommendations including developing a plan for the expansion and upgrade of WASH facilities, strategising the requirement of staff to maintain WASH services, prioritising adequate budget for WASH facilities, coordinating regular water quality tests, developing a management plan including cleaning routine, monitoring and maintenance plan, and developing an integrated awareness on WASH for coordinators, students, and other relevant staff that reflect student numbers.

These recommendations are intended to facilitate schools in creating cleaner, safer, and more supportive learning environments, fostering student health and hygiene practices that contribute to their lifelong well-being and educational success.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Management Action Plan Template

Recom . No.	Recommendation in brief	Action Plans: action taken or to be taken <i>(a recommendation may have one or several action plans. The actions mentioned as taken should be supported by evidence)</i>	Estimated implementation or start date <i>(the implementation date for each action plan may be different)</i>	Estimated completion or end date <i>(the completion date for each action plan may be different)</i>
4.1	The Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD), in consultation with Thimphu Thromde and school management, should develop a prioritised plan to ensure adequacy of WASH facilities as per the National Standards			
4.2	The MoESD should upgrade WASH facilities to ensure inclusiveness			
4.3	The MoESD, in consultation with Royal Civil Service Commission, should specify requirements of cleaners (WASH facilities) based on the students' population			
4.4	MoESD, in consultation with Thimphu Thromde and the Ministry of Finance, should prioritise and secure an adequate, sustained budget allocation for the maintenance, upgrading, and improvement of WASH facilities in schools.			
4.5	Thimphu Thromde should institute mechanisms for water quality tests and remediation			
4.6	Thimphu Thromde should ensure a continuous water supply in schools and alternative storage facilities			
4.7	The school management should develop a comprehensive management plan for the operations and maintenance of WASH in schools			
4.8	The MoESD should develop an integrated awareness program on WASH for students, coordinators, and staff			

4.9	The MoESD should ensure a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to track the progress of WASH programs in schools nationwide			
4.10	The MoESD should conduct a comprehensive assessment of WASH facilities in all government schools nationwide			

Appendix I showing the adequacy of WASH facilities

Name of the School	No. of the Students			Toilets									Water (Taps)						Menstrual hygiene	
	Male	Female	Total	Male			Female			Urinals			Drinking			Hand washing			Changing room	Disposal bin
				Total	Required as per standard	Shortage/excess	Total	Required as per standard	Shortage/excess	Total	Required as per Standard	Shortage / excess	Total	Required as per standard	Shortage / excess	Total	Required as per standard	Shortage / excess		
Babesa HSS	237	260	497	7	8	1	14	13	-1	0	8	8	15	10	-5	41	10	-31	Yes	Yes
Babesa PS	429	422	851	14	14	0	14	21	7	0	14	14	11	17	6	26	17	-9	Yes	Yes
Chang Rigphel PS	494	486	980	7	16	9	7	24	17	0	16	16	4	20	16	62	20	-42	Not used	Yes (sacks)
Loselling MSS	721	752	1473	19	24	5	26	38	12	0	24	24	85	29	-56	85	29	-56	Not used	Yes
Lungtenphu MSS	632	669	1301	14	21	7	28	33	5	0	21	21	8	26	18	30	26	-4	Not used	Yes (sacks)
Motithang HSS	564	638	1202	25	19	-6	49	32	-17	27	19	-8	76	24	-52	75	24	-51	Yes	Yes
Jigme Namgyel LSS	507	562	1069	23	17	-6	28	28	0	0	17	17	39	21	-18	39	21	-18	Yes	Yes
Rinchen Kuenphen PS	610	623	1233	21	20	-1	21	31	10	0	20	20	21	25	4	50	25	-25	Not used	Yes
Zilnon Namgyeling LSS	501	486	987	19	17	-2	13	24	11	9	17	8	6	20	14	45	20	-25	Yes	Yes
Jungshina PS	367	321	688	7	12	5	7	16	9	0	12	12	6	14	8	47	14	-33	Yes	Yes
Zilukha MSS	588	612	1200	14	20	6	13	31	18	10	20	10	5	24	19	40	24	-16	Yes	Yes
Taba LSS	285	294	579	9	10	1	18	15	-3	12	10	-3	4	12	8	45	12	-33	No	Yes
Dechencholing HSS	668	718	1386	23	22	-1	32	36	4	8	22	14	18	28	10	28	28	0	Yes	Yes
Sherabgatshel PS	299	291	590	9	10	1	15	15	0	11	10	-1	10	12	2	0	12	12	NR	NR
Changzamtog MSS	744	749	1493	31	25	-6	24	37	13	6	25	19	10	30	20	22	30	8	No	Yes
Kuensel Phodrang PS	255	235	490	7	9	2	7	12	5	2	9	7	6	10	4	46	10	-36	Not used	Yes
Changangkha MSS	518	470	988	23	17	-6	23	24	1	0	17	17	34	20	-14	141	20	-121	Yes	Yes
Jigme Losel PS	533	532	1065	4	18	14	3	27	24	0	18	18	9	21	12	42	21	-21	Not used	Yes
Lungtenzampa MSS	628	677	1305	18	21	3	27	34	7	0	21	21	9	26	17	40	26	-14	No	Yes(sack)
Yangchenphug HSS	698	842	1540	14	23	9	36	42	6	0	23	23	13	31	18	85	31	-54	Yes	Yes ((Red dot bag)

*Negative (-) indicate excess

Appendix II showing the compliance of design features of a toilet

Name of School	Ventilated cubicles	European type pot	Urinal with bottle trap	Waterproof door with age-appropriate latches	Appropriate floor tiles	Walls tiling of at least 1m height	Adequate lighting	Flushing System	Health faucet	Toilet paper holder	Proper toilet signage	Wash basin with mirror	Adequate drainage with floor trap	Safe faecal sludge management system
Babesa HSS	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Babesa PS	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Chang Rigphel PS	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Loselling MSS	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Lungtenphu MSS	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Motithang HSS	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Jigme Namgyel LSS	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Rinchen Kuenphen PS	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Zilnon Namgyeling LSS	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Jungshina PS	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Zilukha MSS	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Taba LSS	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Dechencholing HSS	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Sherabgatshel PS	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Changzamtog MSS	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kuensel Phodrang PS	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Changangkha MSS	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Jigme Losel PS	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Lungtenzampa MSS	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Yangchenphug HSS	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No

Appendix III showing the number of non-functional WASH facilities

Name of the schools	Total Toilets	Defunct Toilets	Total Urinals	Defunct Urinals	Total flush	Defunct Flush	Total Drinking Taps	Defunct Taps	Total Wash basin	Defunct Wash basin	Total doors	Doors without latches
Babesa HSS	21	0	0	0	7	7	15	10	0	0	21	8
Babesa PS	28	0	0	0	14	14	11	0	0	0	28	28
Chang Rigphel PS	14	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	6	6	14	14
Loselling MSS	45	0	0	0	0	0	87	2	7	1	45	3
Lungtenphu MSS	42	2	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	42	42
Motithang HSS	74	0	27	1	33	0	76	1	27	0	74	0
Jigme Namgyel LSS	51	0	0	0	0	0	39	0	0	0	51	39
Rinchen Kuenphen PS	42	2	0	0	15	0	21	0	6	1	42	26
Zilnon Namgyeling LSS	32	0	9	0	16	16	6	0	20	4	32	5
Jungshina PS	14	0	0	0	0	0	6	1	0	0	14	6
Zilukha MSS	27	0	10	10	27	8	5	0	0	0	27	10
Taba LSS	27	0	12	0	0	0	4	0	34	0	27	3
Dechencholing HSS	55	0	8	0	35	12	18	0	14	0	55	12
Sherabgatshel PS	24	0	11	0	24	5	10	0	18	0	24	0
Changzamtog MSS	55	2	6	0	16	1	10	0	32	0	55	28
Kuensel Phodrang PS	14	1	2	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	14	0
Changangkha MSS	46	2	0	0	18	14	34	0	0	0	46	0
Jigme Losel PS	7	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	7	3
Lungtenzampa MSS	45	4	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	45	4
Yangchenphug HSS	50	1	0	0	10	2	13	0	8	3	50	7

Appendix IV showing the details of Water Inventory Management in Schools

Name of the School	Water supply from the source (24/7)	Availability of water in toilet	Source of Water (Shared / independent source)	Safe Drinking water for the month of sept 2024	Water Dispenser		Sky Hydrants		UV Filters	
					Number	Year (Purchased)	Number	Installation Year	Number	Installation Year
Babesa HSS	No	Most of the time	Shared	Safe	2	2018			1	2023
Babesa PS	Yes	Most of the time	Independent	Not safe	10	2020	1	2021	3	2021
Chang Rigphel PS	Yes	Most of the time	Shared	Not safe	2	2021	0	0	0	0
Loselling MSS	Yes	Always	Shared	Safe	3	2021	0	0	1	2021
Lungtenphu MSS	Yes	Always	Shared	Not tested	1	2020	0	0	2	2023
Motithang HSS	No	Always	Shared	Safe	2	2024	1	2023	1	2019
Jigme Namgyel LSS	No	Sometimes	Shared	Safe	0	0	0	0	3	2017
Rinchen Kuenphen PS	Yes	Always	Shared	Not safe	0	0	0	0	1	2022
Zilnon Namgyeling LSS	No	Most of the time	Shared	Not safe	No	No	No	No	2 (1 Not functional)	2019
Jungshina PS	Yes	Always	Shared	Not tested	1	2022	1	2018	0	0
Zilukha MSS	Yes	Most of the time	Shared	Safe	0	NA	0	0	1	2020
Taba LSS	Yes	Always	Shared	Not tested	No	No	No	No	No	No
Dechencholing HSS	Yes	Always	Shared	Not safe	2	2021	1	2021		
Sherabgatshel PS	Yes	Always	Shared	Not tested	0	0	0	0	0	0
Changzamtog MSS	No	Sometimes	Shared	Not safe	7	2020	0	0	0	0
Kuensel Phodrang PS	Yes	Always	Shared	Safe	0	0	0	0	1	2017
Changangkha MSS	No	Always	Shared	Not safe	0		1	2021	1	2021
Jigme Losel PS	Yes	Sometimes	Shared	Not safe	0	0	0	0	1	2018
Lungtenzampa MSS	Yes	Always	Shared	Safe	2	2020	0	0	3	2018
Yangchenphug HSS	Yes	Most of time	Shared	Not safe	2	2020	0	0	2	2019

Source: Thimphu Thromde, RCDC, School Management

Appendix VI showing the list of activities on promotion and awareness of WASH

Name of the Schools	Management survey response on awareness and promotion of WASH	Water	Sanitation	Hygiene	Functioning Health Club
Babesa HSS	Yes, some information	No	Awareness talk on toilet etiquette and available WASH facilities in the school In the morning assembly, health coordinators provide a talk on the importance of proper use of the toilets and proper disposal of sanitary napkins - all"	1. World Health Day 2. World Menstrual Hygiene Day 3. Global Hand Washing Day 4. Awareness talk on general health and hygiene - all students	No
Babesa PS	Yes, educational programs included in the school curriculum	Washing of WASH stations	Allocation of toilets., Cleaning of Toilets	1. Menstrual Hygiene Management 2. Personal hygiene by checking the cleanliness of students once a month and coordinating health checkups. 3. Global Hand Washing Day by giving an awareness talk on the importance of handwashing and demonstrating the steps of hand washing."	No
Chang Rigphel PS	Yes, some information	World Water day	Nil	1. World Health Day 2. menstrual Hygiene Day 3. Global Hand Washing Day 4. daily practice on hand washing steps and reminders in assembly - all 5. Health talk was conducted during the first term on menstrual hygiene, personal hygiene, teenage pregnancy - girls"	Yes
Loselling MSS	Yes, some information	No	Awareness on Waste Management by 4R members	1. Advocacy on Personal Hygiene, Adolescent Health, Dental 2. Observing Global Handwashing Days 3. Menstrual Hygiene Day"	Yes
Lungtenphu MSS	Yes, some information	World water day	NIL	1. Menstrual Hygiene Day 2. Global hand washing day 3. Health talk was conducted on menstrual hygiene and demonstration of pad usage, personal hygiene, teenage pregnancy 4. demo on oral hygiene by the health officials	No
Motithang HSS	Yes, some information	Clean water tanks/taps on world water day	Toilet cleaning assessment – SUPW Value orientation - talks on health and waste management. Sanitation program on AFHS	1. Handwashing every day at the entrance 2. Advocacy on unhygienic hands on Global Hand washing Day 3. Advocate stds on maintaining personal health - regularly 4. Advocacy program for both boys and girls on MHM on World menstruation day 5. Talk why it is important, Diff. ways of washing hand on Hand washing	Yes
Jigme Namgyel LSS	Yes, some information	World water day	Mass toilet cleaning - Monthly 2. Toilet User Education 3. Toilet cleaning routine - monthly from class 4 to 8 4. Mass cleaning campaign - 5th June"	1. Observe world hand washing day by giving Awareness on handwashing steps - all students 2. Provide Boys and Girls Talk - age 12 and above 3. Talk on menstrual hygiene to girls on 28th May - girls age 12 and above	Yes

				4. Awareness session on hand washing 5. Awareness session on personal hygiene	
Rinchen Kuenphen PS	Yes, educational program included in school curriculum	Sensitize on drinking boiled or filtered water - daily basis (through health board, corner health message and talk 2. Cleanliness around the drinking water tap	1.Sensitize on usage of toilets - Daily basis by class teachers 2. Waste Management - Daily "	1. Make children aware of the hand washing steps and the importance of hand washing - Beginning of an academic year and as and now required 2. Sensitize on personal hygiene - Daily 3. sensitize on menstrual hygiene to the girls of class 4 - 6 - beginning of year 4. Menstrual Hygiene Day 5. Global Hand washing Day	No
Zilnon Namgyeling LSS	Yes, educational program included in school curriculum	World Water Day	No	1. Monitoring students' personal hygiene - weekly 2. Hand Washing- daily 3. Menstrual Hygiene Day 4. Global hand washing day	No
Jungshina PS	Yes, educational program included in school curriculum (HPE)	No	Nil	1. Allocate hand washing station/distribute soaps - beginning and end of year 2. Personal Hygiene Check-up - once a week"	No
Zilukha MSS	Yes, educational program included in school curriculum	World Water Day		1. Basic personal hygiene, puberty and nutrition	Yes
Taba LSS	Yes, some information	Whole school approach: World Water day, Water borne diseases, healing without medicines	Safe use of toilet. 2/10/2024, cleanest toilet of the year	1. Talk on care & hygiene during Menstruation. 2. Introduction of Seven Key Hygiene 3. Food & hygiene. 4. World Hand Washing Day	Yes
Dechencholing HSS	Yes, some information and educational program included in school curriculum	no	1. single used plastic free day - every Friday 2. waste managing - SUPW"	1. Oral Hygiene Talk 2. Menstrual Hygiene Day	No
Sherabgatshel PS	Yes, educational program included in school curriculum	World Water Day-How to use clean drinking water	Monitor Student's & classroom Cleanliness	1.Promote hand washing culture 2. Menstrual hygiene Day 3. World Oral Day 4. Global Hand Washing Day	No
Changzamtog MSS	Yes, some information	no	World Toilet day - 19 th-11th Nov	1. Health awareness (seven key hygiene and wash in school & health book) 2. global Hand Washing week	No
Kuensel Phodrang PS	Yes, some information	Initiated additional wash basin and water taps.		1. Health talk by health personnel 2. School based Awareness 3. Invite guest speakers	No
Changangkha MSS	Yes, educational program included in school curriculum	Training on the cleaning and maintenance of sky Hydrant Ultrafiltration Unit to school Health Committee and Support Staff.	1. SUPW competition 2. Class cleanliness competition"	Observe Menstrual Hygiene Day	No
Jigme Losel PS	Yes, some information	No	Best WASH practices.	1. Awareness on the importance of handwashing with soap 2. Awareness on Health supplements (benefits and usage) to both students and parents.	No

				3. Awareness on Menstrual Hygiene Management by Health Officials 4. Observe Menstrual Hygiene Day 5. Celebration of Oral Health Day"	
Lungtenzampa MSS	Yes, some information	Replacing of Mawongpa filters for safe drinking water.	Fixing of water taps in all the toilets compartment, made clearing points of stagnant water in between the toilet's pots and doors, replacing toilet pots with SATO pan, Maintenance of toilet doors, white washing	1. Global hand-washing awareness 2. Guest speaker to talk on wellbeing 3. Observe Menstrual Hygiene Day"	No
Yangchenphug HSS	Yes, educational program included in school curriculum	Celebrated World Water Day	Sensitization programs on cleanliness were given to the students by the health committee.	1. School health captain delivered speech on the importance of washing hands 2. Observe Menstrual Hygiene Day 3. Celebrated Global Hand Washing Day"	Yes



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