

School WASH accessibility audit report and suggestions for improving accessibility for children with disabilities

Brief visits and accessibility audits were conducted to two government primary schools in Addis Ababa on December 15 and 16 2020 by Aino Himanen (COWASH Disability Inclusion Specialist/ Consultant) and Joseph Fekadu (DDI Disability Development Initiative/ Director). The team was accompanied by Eskinder Endreas (SPLASH/ Engineer) and Tseguereda Abraham and Alula Bruck (WaterAid Ethiopia/ Head of Partnerships and Senior Design and Quality Engineer) to their respective schools where they had recently constructed complete WASH facilities.

The WaterAid school has followed the new Ministry of Education (MoE) school WASH design launched in the last MSF at the end of 2019 (but not yet cascaded down to the regions). WaterAid has constructed 2 such model schools in Addis and plans to construct a further 2, as well as cascade it down further to the regions as models of the new standard. SPLASH uses its own design (but it is similar in many ways to the new MoE design) and is planning to cover all the government primary and secondary schools in Addis Ababa with this design.

The purpose of the visit was to assess the practical accessibility of the schools' WASH facilities and to check if there are any needs for further improvements before they are cascaded further. DDI is a small local OPD (Organisation of Persons with Disabilities) specializing in accessibility issues. With funding from the Finnish Organisation of Persons with Physical Disabilities (FPD) they recently conducted a comprehensive accessibility study of all the government primary schools in Addis Ababa. The study included the WASH facilities of the schools and their accessibility was found to be very poor in the vast majority of the schools. As both WaterAid and SPLASH aim to improve the accessibility of the WASH facilities in the schools they are working in, it was decided to investigate whether these new designs are fully accessible or not.

In summary both WaterAid and SPLASH constructions have to be congratulated for the great effort of making the facilities accessible, and it should be recognized that both are already a vast improvement to the previous and usual SWASH constructions found in Ethiopia. However, both designs were not found to be fully accessible. It is recommended that both incorporate these minor changes before the designs are cascaded further. It is also recommended that WaterAid/ COWASH would take this issue further in the Gender Equity and Disability inclusion taskforce at MoWIE to ensure learning in the sector.

The key improvements needed to the WaterAid school (Selam Ber PS)/ MoE design were found to be (photos can be found in the next pages):

- The latrine
 - There is not enough space to move around the accessible room. The toilet seat should be placed in the corner opposite from the door, not in front of it.
 - There should be a handrail on both sides of the toilet seat, to have one on only one side is not enough.
 - The handrail on the wall should be parallel to the floor, not at a diagonal and it should be lower.
- The KG latrine
 - The room for children with disabilities has to be bigger. There is not enough space now, especially if someone needs to assist or lift the child.
 - Some of the handwashing facilities could not be reached due to steps
- The MHM facility:

- The way to the shower room is blocked by the beds in the resting room. The room size should be checked if the standard size mattresses/beds do not fit without blocking the doors.
- The shower room has space, but it is not possible to use the shower due to the step (raised shower basin). There is a handrail and a seat but due to the step it is not possible to reach the seat.
- Similarly as in the latrine, the handrail should be parallel to the floor
- Generally, it would be better to also have a tap at a lower height for easier access to water if a girl wants to only wash part of the body but not take a full shower.
- The drinking water station in the school compound
 - The ramp should be placed in front of the (lower) tap, meant for the child with disabilities. Now there is not enough space to reach the tap due to the ramp location.

The key improvements needed to the SPLASH school/ MoE design were found to be (photos can be found in the next pages):

- Handwashing and drinking stations in the school compound
 - The taps (in 1 station) should come out more to ensure all can reach
- Latrine
 - If the door in the accessible toilet room would open to the outside, the room could be made smaller to save space and costs.
 - The handrail next to the ramp is very high (even for adults), it would be better to adjust it lower to suit better the needs of children.
- MHM room/shower
 - Accessibility here has been forgotten. It would be good to use the MoE/WA design for this (with all comments above noted), but keeping the flat/smooth floor which has been done well in this case. This means adding handrails and the walls, a solid seat and a lower tap.

Photos from the WaterAid/MoE design



On the left, Joseph in the school latrine demonstrating that it is impossible to turn around in the wheelchair or to get on the toilet seat. On the right, the even smaller space of the KG accessible toilet. Below, the doors and beds blocking the way to the shower in the MHM room.





The step on the right side of the shower makes it impossible to reach the shower seat. The handrail on the left may help some, but it is not enough for a wheelchair user to be able move him or herself to the seat.

Photos from the SPLASH design



On the right, the handwashing station (design similar to the drinking water), needs one of the taps extended from the centre. On the left the high handrail of the ramp. Below, Yoseph demonstrating being able to use the toilet seat independently.





The shower/MHM room in the girls latrine needs to be also made accessible. The floor does not have a step like the WaterAid construction, but lacks a seat, handrails and a lower tap.