

Water, sanitation and hygiene

UNICEF Country Programme 2019–2023



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Situation

Clean water, proper toilets and good hygiene are essential to the survival and development of children. Water and sanitation-related diseases are among the leading causes of sickness and death in children globally. WASH is also a determinant of child stunting and wasting. Good WASH can help protect children, and prevent these problems.

Cambodia is making steady but insufficient progress in meeting national and global water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) targets. Despite improvements Cambodia has the highest rate of open defecation in the region, with eight in ten of the poorest rural Cambodians defecating in fields, open bodies of water, or other open spaces, rather than using a toilet. This continues to be a dangerous practice, as human waste near waterways and houses spreads disease quickly and puts children and their families at risk.

There are stark disparities between urban and rural areas, and richer and poorer households. 40 per cent of rural Cambodians do not have basic handwashing facilities with soap and water to wash their hands, compared with 12 per cent of urban Cambodians; 81 per cent of the poorest rural Cambodians practice open defecation, compared with 11 per cent of the wealthiest rural Cambodians. Despite improvements, many people still do not know about safe WASH risk prevention practices, especially in rural areas.

Investment in rural WASH depends heavily on development partners and household contributions.

In 2010, the United Nations General Assembly recognized water and sanitation as human rights, essential for the full enjoyment of life. An increasingly robust body of evidence highlights the importance of WASH:

- WASH deprivations and vulnerabilities jeopardize progress in other critical areas, such as nutrition, health, education, gender equality and economic growth while exposing children to preventable risks in their homes, schools and in health centres;
- The prevention and control of infectious diseases through improved WASH practices in health care facilities and communities can reduce the burden on public health systems and helps to prevent the overuse of antimicrobial drugs;
- There is growing evidence that inadequate sanitation, water and hand washing facilities are a barrier to children attending school and performing well, especially girls. Children with disabilities find it particularly difficult to go to school if there are no accessible bathrooms, or if they are otherwise inadequate.

It is therefore vital to strengthen WASH systems at national and sub-national level, targeting currently un-served groups who are often poor, geographically marginalized and live in areas vulnerable to environmental risks. Important work remains to be done to ensure that Cambodian children live in a safe and clean environment.



UNICEF is committed to supporting the successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Cambodia. We work with partners to put children at the heart of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to see that the Goals deliver results for every child and for generations to come. In the descriptions of the following programme areas, relevant Sustainable Development Goals have been identified with icons.

Cultivating a stronger environment for WASH to take root

UNICEF contributes to strengthening enabling environments through systems strengthening in five areas:

- Sector policy and strategy;
- Institutional arrangements (coordination, service delivery, accountability and regulation);
- Budget and financing;
- Planning, monitoring and review;
- Capacity development.

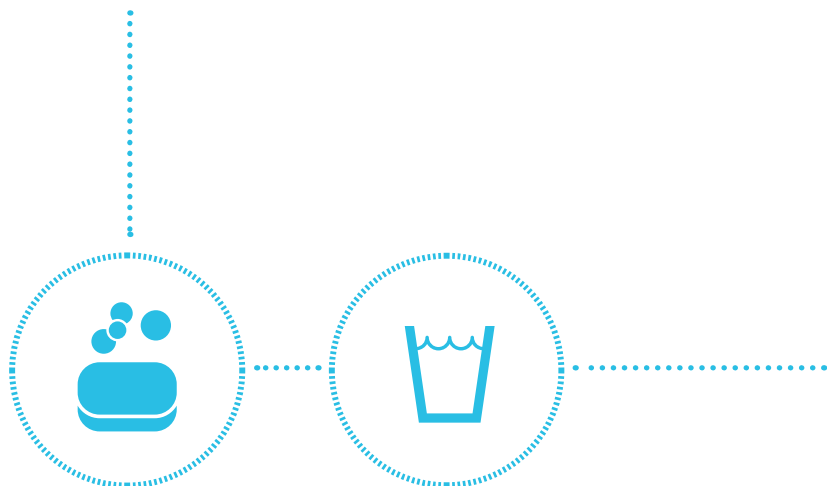
Strengthening systems and regulatory frameworks, combined with data and monitoring systems that can provide information on WASH equity, service quality, climate resilience, sustainability, accessibility and urban and rural areas, create a stronger enabling environment for WASH for children.

To improve the quality of WASH services UNICEF assists the Royal Government of Cambodia in its efforts to develop and implement stronger regulation and quality control in the supply of bottled water, and certification of open- defecation-free areas.

In partnership with the Royal Government of Cambodia, UNICEF also works to increase the allocation of state resources for WASH, including: through supporting the development of national health and education programmes, the modelling of pro-poor sanitation and national water supply financing through smart subsidies targeted to poor households to address inequity issues.

In schools, UNICEF supports the Royal Government of Cambodia to develop Cambodia's Education Management Information System to better capture and monitor the WASH situation in schools. In healthcare facilities, UNICEF also supports health management information systems to ensure quality, capture progress and inform decisions on water and sanitation, to contribute to improved quality of care.

Cambodia is routinely affected by extreme climate events, such as droughts and floods: UNICEF also supports WASH emergency preparedness systems strengthening to mitigate the adverse effects of these events and protect advances made so far in WASH.



Providing clean and climate-resilient water systems

Water quality and quantity are defining dimensions of safe water supply. With only 16 per cent of rural drinking water classified as 'safely managed', compared with 55 per cent of urban drinking water, there is an urgent need to ensure that Cambodian children have access to clean, climate-resilient water supply in homes, schools, and healthcare facilities, particularly in rural and vulnerable areas.

UNICEF supports the Royal Government of Cambodia, private sector, and social enterprises to provide clean drinking water to communities that rely on rivers, wells and ponds, that are at risk of contamination from microbiological and naturally occurring pollutants such as arsenic. UNICEF works to develop a range of water supply technologies, adapted for local contexts, including piped water systems and bottled water enterprises.

The emphasis of this work is on ensuring that drinking water meets national quality standards, and that water supplies can be more resilient to climate related events. In addition to developing new, and improving existing water sources, this work includes checking water quality against harmful micro-organisms and chemicals, promoting household water treatment and safe storage, strengthening the regulations of bottled water systems, and raising awareness of water quality standards.

In schools and healthcare facilities, UNICEF also works to ensure safe water supply to enable an improved learning environment, and higher quality of care. In both schools and healthcare facilities, special efforts are made to strengthen the operation and maintenance systems for water supply facilities to improve sustainability outcomes.

UNICEF supports authorities at the national and sub-national levels to fine-tune WASH emergency preparedness and response plans, so that authorities are better able to manage emergencies. UNICEF promotes trials of WASH solutions that can be safely managed on site, and are climate resilient, such as improved water sources, and flood-resilient latrines and latrines that use minimal water. This informs decisions on which climate-resilient WASH solutions to model and bring to scale.





Accelerating sanitation and hygiene for all

Pockets of deprivation remain in sanitation across Cambodia, particularly affecting the children of poor, geographically or socially marginalized families.

UNICEF supports the Royal Government of Cambodia's vision to end open defecation in Cambodia by 2025 with efforts focused on scaling up the eradication of open defecation to district and province level to maximize impact. UNICEF continues to support the Ministry of Rural Development and sub-national institutions, technical leadership of sanitation and hygiene promotion to achieve results for children. UNICEF also works to support sanitation businesses to strengthen sanitation markets and supply products that meet local needs, and deliver pro-poor sanitation financing through smart subsidies targeted to poor households to address sanitation inequity.

In schools UNICEF continues to work with the Royal Government of Cambodia to equip schools with separate toilets for boys and girls, facilities where adolescent girls can manage their menstruation, and handwashing basins: a healthy and clean school environment coupled with information about proper hygiene encourages students to stay in school and motivates them to develop sound hygiene practices that they can share with their families.

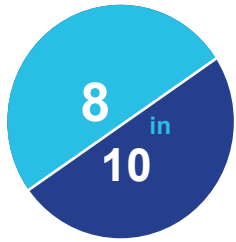
Inaccessible and unhygienic sanitation facilities remain a particularly troubling issue for children with disabilities, and can undermine dignity, health and school attendance. Globally, only 50 per cent of children with disabilities attend school. UNICEF continues to support the Royal Government of Cambodia to improve WASH facilities in schools so that all children—with and without disabilities can use them.

In healthcare facilities, UNICEF works with the Royal Government of Cambodia to model and scale up inclusive sanitation and hygiene improvements, such as toilets that are usable, separated for patients and staff, private for women, equipped for menstrual hygiene management, and accessible for people with limited mobility, and that demonstrate how national guidance on WASH can be implemented.

Generating awareness is a large part of UNICEF's work in supporting a clean, safe environment for children to thrive. Working with the Royal Government of Cambodia and other partners, we aim to transform WASH perceptions, raise WASH related risk awareness, and stimulate sustainable changes in people's behavior. UNICEF's communication efforts motivate children and their communities to practise hygienic habits, avoid open defecation and use safe water and improved sanitation facilities, at home and in their schools and health care facilities.



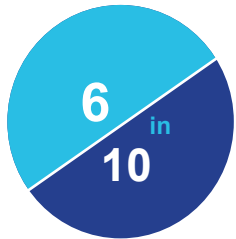
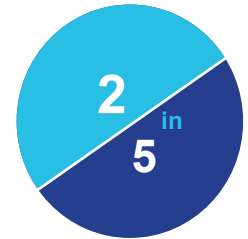
Cambodia at a glance



8 in 10 of the poorest rural Cambodians still practice **open defecation**



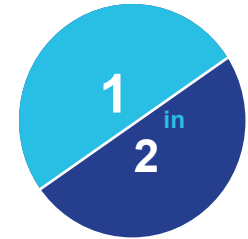
2 in 5 rural Cambodians use a **non-improved** drinking water source during the dry season



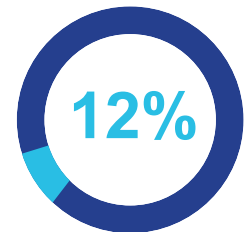
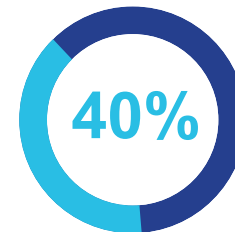
6 in 10 primary schools do not have access to basic **WASH** facilities



1 in 2 rural health facilities **doesn't have sufficient water** all year round



40% of rural Cambodians do not have access to basic **handwashing facilities**, compared to 12% of urban Cambodians





Partners

To fulfil the vision of all Cambodian children living in a safe and clean environment, including in emergencies, UNICEF works with the following Royal Government of Cambodia partners: the Ministry of Rural Development (MRD); the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS); the Ministry of Health (MoH); the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF); the Ministry of Industry and Handicrafts (MIH); the Ministry of Planning (MoP); and the Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MoPWT).

Other key partners include: the Asian Development Bank (ADB); the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT); the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); the Global Sanitation Fund (GSF); the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA); the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA); the UK Department for International Development (DfID); the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women); the World Bank (WB); the World Health Organization (WHO); and the World Food Programme (WFP). We also collaborate with non-governmental organizations such as the Bremen Overseas Research and Development Association (BORDA); GRET; Teuk Saat 1001; Cambodian Water Supply Association; CARE International; East Meets West (EMW); Plan International; WaterAid; and World Vision International; and the private sector, including through latrine businesses and private water operators.



**Estimated budget required for the
WASH programme:**

US\$ 13,000,000



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