The access to and use of safe water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) are major preconditions for a healthy life. Hence, the lack of WASH facilities increases the risk of disease outbreaks and nutritional disorders. In Ethiopia, 60 to 80 per cent of communicable diseases are attributed to limited access to safe water, inadequate sanitation and hygiene services. The Federal Government of Ethiopia (GoE) has recognized this challenge and is committed to improve the WASH situation of the Ethiopian people. Apart from reaching national targets that are set out in the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) or the Universal Access Plan (UAP), the GoE is equally working towards achieving global targets, laid out in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Ethiopia is on track to achieve the MDG target related to water: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water which in Ethiopia targets 62 per cent of the population. Latest figures of the UNICEF/WHO Joint Monitoring Program (JMP) state that 52 per cent of the Ethiopian population has gained access to total improved water sources, compared to only 13 per cent in 1990. Tremendous progress has been made, but disparities between urban and rural areas and among the regions of Ethiopia remain high.

Ethiopia is lagging behind on the MDG sanitation target. According to the JMP the target for access to improved sanitation facilities is 58 per cent. However, only 24 per cent of the population has access to improved sanitation. The situation in urban areas is a little bit better, where 27 per cent of the population use an improved and non-shared sanitation facility, as opposed to only 23 per cent of the population in rural areas. Encouragingly, 63 per cent of the population has access to some form of sanitation facility, if figures for ‘improved’, ‘shared’ and ‘unimproved’ are included. Compared to other African countries, Ethiopia has made huge progress in reducing open defecation rates from 92 per cent in 1990 to 37 per cent in 2012. There are no official figures on hand washing, but a formative research undertaken by UNICEF in 2010 shows that less than 20% of Ethiopia’s population wash their hands with soap or substitute at critical times. UAP targets related to hand washing is 77% of population washing hands with soap or ash at critical times; meaning this remains a huge challenge.

The type of water source is an indicator to determine whether water is suitable for drinking. Improved drinking water sources include a piped source within the dwelling, yard or plot; a public tap/stand pipe; borehole, protected well; spring water and rain water. Adequate sanitation facilities at the household level include an improved latrine that separates waste from human contact and is used by the household members only. Shared sanitation facilities are also used by other households, but as the figures show, the most common sanitation facility in Ethiopia is still an unimproved toilet, such as a traditional pit latrine.

The GoE with the support of Development Partners is working to improve and harmonise different data sets. Discrepancies are due to a different understanding of accepted types of schemes and the attribution to the definitions of basic and improved facilities. The JMP is based on household surveys such as the Ethiopian Demographic Health Survey (EDHS) and the Welfare Monitoring Survey (WMS) whereas the National WASH Inventory (NWI) combines an inventory of all schemes with census data from 12 million households. A comparison of different data sets is shown in the graphs below.

1 WHO Country Cooperation Strategy 2008-2011, p5
2 The UAP seeks to reach 98.5 per cent and 100 per cent access to safe water and sanitation respectively by 2015.
3 JMP 2014 (2012 update)
In most rural areas across Ethiopia, water scarcity, poor water quality, lack of sanitation facilities and inappropriate hygiene behaviours threaten the well-being of children in schools. The NWI data shows that only one third of all Ethiopian schools have improved sanitation and water facilities for students and teachers. Similar rates are true for health facilities. Issues that need urgent attention in primary schools are the separation of girls and boys toilets which is one of the requirements for improved sanitation in institutions. Girls are often reluctant to use facilities, even if they are clean, because toilet blocks and hand washing facilities (important for menstrual hygiene) rarely provide the level of privacy and security they require.

According to the NWI and the EDHS, there is regional disparity in access to improved water and sanitation services. WASH services are inadequate in cities and towns where the number of population is growing at a high rate, and the urban poor are often deprived.

Repeated emergencies such as floods and recurrent water shortages due to poor rains contribute to incidences of acute watery diarrhoea (AWD), measles and malaria, which are exacerbated by poor access to health services. WASH resilience programming for pastoralist populations of the drought prone areas of the country are not given the appropriate attention.

**National Strategies**

National targets are set in the WASH Universal Access Plan (UAP), which is a joint plan from the Ministries of Education, Health and Water, Irrigation and Energy. The UAP includes separate chapters for urban and rural water and sanitation access. To enhance multi-sectoral coordination, these ministries signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2006 with the aim to improve joint planning, implementing and monitoring. In September 2013, the One WASH National Programme (OWNP) was launched under the leadership of the Ministry of Water Irrigation and Energy (MoWIE). It is a sector wide approach (SWAp) and includes the ministries of Water, Health, Education and Finance and the principal development partners. The adoption of the OWNP moves the WASH sector away from small-scale project funding towards a broader programme approach. The OWNP is the GoE’s main instrument for achieving the goals set out in the GTP.

The promotion of hygiene and sanitation is delivered through the Health Extension Programme utilizing more than 38,000 Health Extensions Workers with their links to the Health Development Army at community level. They follow the Community led Total Sanitation and Hygiene (CLTSH) method, a behaviour change approach that demonstrates faecal-oral transmission of diseases. To harmonize, strengthen, and scale up the CLTSH approach, implementation guidelines, Open Defecation Free (ODF) Verification and Certification protocol, a training manual, and a monitoring and evaluation framework were developed and endorsed. To support communities move up the sanitation ladder, the MoH has officially endorsed a National Sanitation Marketing (SM) guideline in 2014. The approach aims at increasing both the supply and demand for culturally accepted and improved sanitation products and business models along with a promotional strategy. Currently, UNICEF is playing a lead role in the development of a National Urban Sanitation Strategy to address gaps and challenges in urban sanitation.

**UNICEF’s Support**

UNICEF is supporting the Government of Ethiopia to increase the number of people having access to safe water and sanitation services and increase good hygiene practices, through strengthening the service delivery, enabling environment, and knowledge management of the WASH sector. The UNICEF WASH programme is structured in four programmatic areas: sector coordination, rural WASH, urban WASH, and emergency WASH. UNICEF’s WASH Programme
has an annual budget of about US$ 25 million. UNICEF’s programme funds can be divided into UNICEF core resources (regular resources), funds from partners (other resources), and particular funds from partners for emergencies (other resources emergencies).

**Sector coordination**

The main objective is to strengthen WASH sector coordination for both development and emergency related works at the federal and regional level with a particular focus on policy, advocacy, knowledge management and monitoring and evaluation.

In 2013, UNICEF was one of the development partners that actively supported the GoE in launching and establishing the One WASH National Programme (OWNP). The OWNP is characterized by the set-up of a basket fund (Consolidated WASH Account) that increases government ownership and improves the targeting of interventions. Under the OWNP, UNICEF is supporting the GoE as well as the development community in setting up coordination and dialogue mechanisms to improve on efficiency and avoid duplication of efforts. UNICEF and partners support the strengthening of the Water Sector Working Group (WSWG) secretariat to be able to function as a government and development partner dialogue platform. UNICEF facilitates the linkages of national achievements with international initiatives such as the Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) initiative. Another area of UNICEF support is on strengthening sector monitoring and evaluation through the National WASH Inventory (NWI). The use of smart mobile phones to collect data was piloted in January 2014 in Somali region and will now be used for updating data in all the other regions of Ethiopia.

With the support of UNICEF, the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Federal Ministry of Health (FMoH) developed a set of national design guidelines and standards for WASH facilities in primary schools and health institutions, which were launched in 2013 and are now being cascaded to regions.

UNICEF has been a leader in the initiation and implementation of approaches designed to improve the environmental sanitation and hygiene condition of the country by facilitating a sound working relationship with partners. This includes providing support to the development and implementation of the CLTSH approach and the preparation of a National Hygiene and Sanitation Strategic Action Plan, as well as the National Sanitation Marketing guidelines, Menstrual Hygiene Management manuals, and the development of the Urban Sanitation Strategy.

UNICEF has been working closely with MoH to develop WASH behaviour change communication guidelines with the aim to sustain awareness raising efforts on WASH practices and behaviours. This will complement global events like Global Hand washing Day, World Toilet Day and World Water Day, which are already celebrated in Ethiopia, also supported by UNICEF.

**Rural WASH**

The main objective is to enhance support for children and families leading to sustained use of drinking water, adoption of adequate sanitation and good hygiene practices in rural areas.

UNICEF has a long history of providing WASH services in rural areas. Areas of intervention are community water supply, sanitation and hygiene, WASH in schools and health facilities in all regions of Ethiopia. The programme includes both hard ware components, such as construction of water supply schemes and institutional WASH facilities, and are complemented by software activities, like community and school led total sanitation and hygiene and sanitation marketing, complemented by other behavioural change activities and capacity building.
With an average of 20 per cent in non-functionality of water schemes, poor maintenance of institutional latrine facilities and ODF communities reverting back to open defecation, ensuring the sustainability of services is one of UNICEF’s top priorities. This is done by developing capacities of WASH teams at woredas (district), zonal and regional level to enable government institutions in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities effectively. In order to measure sustainability, UNICEF and partners have developed annual sustainability checks that will help to reduce non-functionality rates of schemes. Another way to enhance sustainability is by improving food security and the nutritional status of school children and surrounding communities through multiple uses of water (MUS) and kitchen gardening.

**Urban WASH**

The main objective is to increase country capacity to deliver WASH facilities in urban areas with a particular focus on pro-poor service delivery and private sector development.

UNICEF’s support to the Government’s engagement in urban areas is rather recent, responding to the rapid urbanization in Ethiopia, UNICEF’s equity focus and the increasing number of urban poor. In the coming five years, UNICEF together with the GoE plan to target 250,000 people especially women and girls and marginalized groups in 8 small towns in four regions of Ethiopia (Tigray, Somali, Oromia, and Amhara). On the one hand, this programme provides the necessary infrastructure, while on the other hand, it creates an enabling environment for town water utilities and supporting them to design pro-poor tariffs. A major focus of the programme is on solid and liquid waste management as well as improving the resilience of surrounding villages. An estimated 100,000 people in 40 satellite villages that are prone to environmental hazards will benefit from climate resilience activities with regard to groundwater mapping and development of catchment areas. Innovative approaches are being implemented through partnerships and cooperation with CSOs and academic institutions.

**Emergency WASH**

Finally, the emergency WASH pillar has the objective to support populations to build resilience and access life and livelihood saving relief and recovery response to WASH emergencies in accordance with the Core Commitments for Children (CCCs).

UNICEF’s emergency WASH work is guided by the CCCs in humanitarian action and internationally recognised minimum standards in disaster response. Together with the Government, NGOs and UN agencies, UNICEF supports people affected by natural disasters such as droughts, floods and other humanitarian situations, like epidemics and conflict, and plays a major role in cluster coordination as this is key to successful and efficient emergency response. Through joint programming initiatives such as the Joint Action Plan (JAP), UNICEF and partners work towards a reduction of providing costly water trucking, towards more sustainable and resilient solutions that make water availability throughout the year.

UNICEF is currently working closely with UNHCR in the provision of WASH services to the South Sudanese refugees in Gambella. UNICEF has seconded an Emergency WASH specialist into UNHCR to play a vital Sector Coordination role; providing effective technical support to all WASH partners. UNICEF has commissioned a consultancy for the design of a water supply scheme that will serve an estimated 150,000 men, women, girls and boys living in 2 adjacent refugee camps in Kule and Teirkidi including those in surrounding host communities in the Gambella Region.

**Strategic Partnerships**

UNICEF WASH works closely with the Ethiopian Government as well as development partners, NGOs and the private sector. Government counterparts are the Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy (MoWIE), the Ministry of Health (MoH), the Ministry of Education (MOE), and the Ministry of Finance Economic Development (MoFED). Under the urban WASH programme pillar, UNICEF now also works closely with the Ministry of Urban Development and Construction (MUDC) and the Water Resources Development Fund (WRDF).