

WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE IN PROTRACTED CRISES: LEARNING THROUGH EVALUATION

Why are water and sanitation important?

Water is life. It is essential to health, poverty reduction, food security, peace and human rights, ecosystems and education. Recognizing this reality, the world is making progress on achieving the availability and sustainable management of safe water and sanitation for all, as per [Sustainable Development Goal 6](#) of the [2030 Agenda](#). Despite progress, 2.2 billion people lack access to safely managed water and 4.2 lack safely managed sanitation. Meeting water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) needs is even more challenging in contexts where there are protracted crises. To this end, UNICEF is called to sustain and increase operation and strategic capacity to deliver and lead the sector.

In 2019, UNICEF Evaluation Office responded to the call by commissioning the Global Evaluation of UNICEF's WASH Programming in Protracted Crises (WiPC), the first UNICEF global thematic evaluation focusing specifically on protracted crisis contexts. This evaluation provides both accountability for UNICEF's performance but also learning and practical solutions for how UNICEF can adapt its WASH programming and ways of working to better meet the unique challenges of providing appropriate and sustainable WASH services in protracted crises. The period under consideration for this evaluation is 2014 - 2019.

How did we evaluate WASH programming in protracted crises?

The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach. Initial data gathering focused on extensive document reviews and quantitative monitoring data. Key informant interviews were undertaken with UNICEF, partner, and donor staff at both country and global level. Data from the perspective of the affected populations were collected via a series of transect walks. UNICEF country offices, which took part in case studies, submitted self-assessments, and a global online survey was circulated to UNICEF and partner staff. Such data were collated in separate products including four field-based country case studies (Cameroon, Lebanon, Somalia, South



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Sudan) and two desk-based thematic case studies. All these sources formed the evidence base for the global evaluation report.

Who is this evaluation for?

This evaluation is for UNICEF decision makers across levels, with focus on WASH specialists working at headquarters and in country offices. We also hope to engage a range of external stakeholders including other United Nations agencies and initiatives, development partners and implementers, governments and the private sector.

What did we learn?

Some of the most important lessons learned include the following points:

- UNICEF is successful in meeting targets for water supply but less for sanitation and hygiene
- UNICEF's ability to be truly accountable to affected populations is limited by the fact that the expected outcomes or changes in lives are not clearly articulated
- Suitable data on outcomes are missing, and that makes it challenging to truly understand programme effectiveness and respond appropriately
- There is a significant emphasis on standards and norms for service provision and coverage, but these take priority over equity and quality commitments
- Partnerships are a core strength and appear to be generally well managed, especially relationships with government and local authorities
- The Global WASH Cluster's leadership is well recognized but, UNICEF is seen to have lost ground in thought leadership
- UNICEF is still developing its strategy and capacity in urban WASH interventions
- UNICEF has set out a transformational agenda on linking humanitarian and development (LHD) but some pillars of the LHD approach – risk-informed programming, integrated needs assessment and analysis, and user engagement – are currently missing
- WASH sections of country offices in protracted crises are typically stretched in ensuring the ongoing provision of basic WASH services, and do not have the necessary bandwidth to implement changes at country level.

What do we recommend?

Given what we have learned, we recommend to:

- Develop an organizational definition of protracted crises
- Ensure an equal focus on water and sanitation/hygiene
- Articulate the changes that are expected as result of WASH programming
- Improve the collection and use of data for WASH programming
- Give quality and equity considerations equal weight with coverage
- Build partnerships which fully embrace localization
- Reclaim thought leadership
- Strengthen coordination
- Build on UNICEF's core strengths in urban WASH
- Ensure that WiPC programmes align with UNICEF's commitments to LHD
- Build country office capacity for new ways of working.

The Global Evaluation of UNICEF's WASH Programming in Protracted Crises is accessible [here](#).

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