Global evaluation of UNICEF water, sanitation and hygiene programming in protracted crises, 2014–2019

Fabio Sabatini
Chief, Evaluation Office

UNICEF Executive Board
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Background

Children in extremely fragile contexts are 8 times worse off in WASH indicators than their counterparts in non-crisis contexts. The average crisis now lasts more than 9 years.

Purpose

How has UNICEF responded to increasing WASH needs in some of the most challenging contexts?

The evaluation aimed to:
- Demonstrate accountability to the UNICEF mandate; learning for UNICEF and the WASH sector.
- Elicit learning to drive forward commitments from the 2020 revision of the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action and the 2019 procedure on linking humanitarian and development programmes.
- Provide evidence for the UNICEF Strategic Plan.
Evaluation Design and Methods

Approach:
• Mixed methods
• 13 evaluation questions, in 5 overarching questions
• Development of a quality scorecard
• Inputs from the Evaluation Reference Group

Methods:
• Comprehensive document review (over 600 documents)
• 4 case studies: Cameroon, Lebanon, Somaliland, South Sudan
• 2 thematic case studies (desk-based): WASH action in response to a public health crisis (evidence from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Yemen) and support to WASH in urban crisis settings (evidence from the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen)
• Transect walks.
• Online survey of UNICEF staff and partners, including NGOs and CBOs.
• Global key informant interviews with UNICEF staff and NGO partners.
Evaluation Questions

1 Delivering high-quality WASH programming
To what extent has UNICEF achieved quality, including equity and inclusion, in WASH in protracted crises?

2 Leadership and coordination
How well has UNICEF exercised its leadership and coordination roles for WASH in protracted crises?

3 Data-informed programming
How well has UNICEF monitored and reported the results of its WASH programming in protracted crises?

4 Capacity to deliver
To what extent has UNICEF had the capacity to implement a timely and effective WASH response in protracted crises?

5 Linking humanitarian and development programming
To what extent has UNICEF ensured linkages, coherence and mutual reinforcement of its WASH humanitarian action with longer-term development objectives?
Evaluation Findings and Recommendations

1. Definition of Protracted Crises

✗ No institutional definition; no clear trigger for adopting different ways of working, often resulting in siloed humanitarian or development perspectives.

R1 – Develop an organizational definition across UNICEF (not only WASH) to trigger different ways of working.

2. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Coverage

✓ UNICEF met targets for water supply in protracted crises; number of water beneficiaries doubled from 2014-2018; WASH services largely functional, reliable and used over time.

✗ Less success with sanitation and hygiene targets; targets are a fraction of water targets and may not reflect actual needs

R2 – Ensure an equal focus on water and sanitation/hygiene.
3. Articulation of Intended Outcomes

✓ WASH rightly positioned within a public health context.

✗ Changes in lives expected from WASH in protracted crises (WiPC) action not clearly articulated, thus programmes not designed to contribute to wider changes in health, education or other areas.

**R3 – Establish a clear understanding of intended changes of WiPC at programme-design stage and how these will be monitored.**

4. Data-Informed Programming

✓ UNICEF collects and reports extensive data on WASH outputs.

✗ Lack of suitable data on outcomes impeding a true understanding of programme effectiveness.

**R4 – Improve collection and use of data for WiPC and ensure it is designed and adapted over time based on robust data & evidence.**
5. Equity and Quality Commitments

✓ Significant emphasis and strong understanding of norms and standards for service provision and coverage.

✗ Unequal priority given to equity and quality standards and commitments

R5 – Ensure quality and equity given the same weight as coverage.

6. Partnerships

✓ Partnerships are a core strength of WiPC, generally well managed, particularly with government and local authorities.

✗ No evidence that WiPC partnership decisions are driven by a long-term view, or by a localization strategy.

R6 – Enhance current partnerships models to go beyond contractual relationships and embody all aspects of the UNICEF commitment to localization.
7. Thought Leadership

✓ Global WASH Cluster is regarded as the best expression of UNICEF leadership for WiPC.

× UNICEF is widely considered to have lost ground in terms of thought leadership on WiPC.

**R7 – Build on current efforts and lay out a 10-year strategy to reclaim UNICEF thought leadership role for WiPC.**

8. Cluster Coordination

✓ Operational sector or cluster coordination is strong; UNICEF and the Global WASH Cluster proactively address shortcomings.

× Need for clusters to provide stronger leadership on longer-term approaches, and UNICEF “provider of last resort” role entails risks.

**R8 – Strengthen UNICEF accountability of the role of the cluster lead agency for WASH.**
9. WASH in Urban Contexts

✓ Urban WASH framework builds on core strengths: government relationships, convening power

✗ Lack of appropriate expertise/processes for large-scale urban WASH infrastructure projects.

R9 – Focus WASH work in urban settings: systems strengthening, building on core strengths.

10. Linking Humanitarian and Development

✓ UNICEF transformational agenda in linking humanitarian and development (LHD) programming requires a step-change in its WiPC.

✗ Significant gap between what is happening on the ground and what is required by the new LHD procedure.

R10 – Ensure COs are fully aware of how to meet LHD commitments; require an annual reflection on WASH when a crisis is likely to become protracted.
11. Capacity for new ways of working

✓ Highly capable WASH staff in these contexts; surge rosters best filled of any sector

✗ CO’s WASH sections in protracted crises typically stretched to capacity just to ensure basic WASH services, and do not have the bandwidth necessary to implement the required changes.

**R11 – Provide adequate support to COs to meet UNICEF ambitious LHD Agenda.**
Thank you.