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

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Reference document: E/ICEF/2021/20
Background, purpose and design

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.

The evaluation aimed to demonstrate accountability and learning on how has UNICEF responded to increasing WASH needs in some of the most challenging contexts.

Evaluation questions examined:

• Quality, equity and inclusion
• Leadership and coordination roles
• Results monitoring and reporting
• Capacity to implement timely and effective response
• Linkages of WASH humanitarian action with development objectives

Methods:

• Extensive document review (600+ documents)
• 4 case studies: Cameroon, Lebanon, Somaliland, South Sudan
• 2 thematic case studies: WASH action in public health crises and WASH in urban crisis settings
• Online survey and key informant interviews of UNICEF staff and partners, including NGOs, CBOs
Evaluation Findings

What works well in WiPC

✓ UNICEF met targets for water supply; number of water beneficiaries doubled from 2014-2018
✓ WASH rightly positioned within a public health context.
✓ Extensive data on WASH outputs
✓ Significant emphasis and understanding of norms and standards for service provision and coverage.
✓ Partnerships are a core strength, particularly with government and local authorities
✓ Global WASH Cluster regarded as the best expression of UNICEF leadership for WiPC
✓ Operational sector or cluster coordination is strong.
✓ Urban WASH framework builds on core strengths: government relationships, convening power
✓ Ambitious UNICEF agenda in linking humanitarian and development (LHD) programming
✓ Highly capable WASH staff in these contexts; surge rosters best filled of any sector
What needs improving in WiPC

- No institutional definition of protracted crises or clear trigger for different ways of working; siloed humanitarian and development perspectives
- Wider changes in lives expected from WiPC action not clearly articulated
- Lack of suitable data on outcomes impeding a true understanding of programme effectiveness
- Unequal priority given to equity and quality standards
- WiPC partnership not driven by a long-term view or localization strategy
- UNICEF is widely considered to have lost ground in terms of thought leadership on WiPC
- Need for stronger cluster leadership on longer-term approaches; “provider of last resort” role entails risks
- Lack of appropriate expertise/processes for large-scale urban WASH infrastructure projects
- Significant gap between what is happening on the ground and what is required by the new LHD procedure
- Country office WASH sections in protracted crises stretched to capacity just to ensure basic WASH services; little bandwidth to implement required changes
**Recommendations**

R 1 – Develop an **organizational definition** across UNICEF (not only WASH) to trigger different ways of working

R 2 – Ensure an equal focus on water and **sanitation/hygiene**.

R 3 – Establish a clear understanding of **intended changes** of WiPC

R 4 – Improve collection and use of **data** for WiPC

R 5 – Ensure **quality and equity** given the same weight as coverage.

R 6 – Enhance current **partnerships** models to embody all aspects of the UNICEF commitment to localization

R 7 – Build on current efforts to reclaim UNICEF **thought leadership** for WiPC

R 8 – Strengthen UNICEF accountability as **cluster lead** agency for WASH

R 9 – Focus WASH work in **urban settings** on systems strengthening

R 10 – Ensure COs are fully aware of how to **meet LHD commitments**

R 11 – Provide adequate support to country offices to meet UNICEF ambitious **LHD agenda**
Thank you.