

SUSTAINABLE WASH INNOVATION HUB

More Water More Life

An innovative initiative to provide millions of people with affordable and sustainable access to water in the Horn of Africa

A BREAKTHROUGH IN TACKLING WATER SECURITY

Water is scarce in the Horn of Africa, where **25 million people lack affordable, reliable, long-term access to water**. Recurring droughts, which happen every 3-4 years, can have devastating impacts on lives and livelihoods. Yet, beneath this arid landscape lie significant water resources in gaps within rock formations.

Historically, drilling through more than 300 meters of earth in hope of finding these deep aquifers has been expensive, with a success rate of less than 50 per cent.

Now, thanks to **an innovative mapping solution** that combines remote sensing techniques with geophysics, the odds of success have significantly improved by increasing the ability to tap into usable deep aquifers.

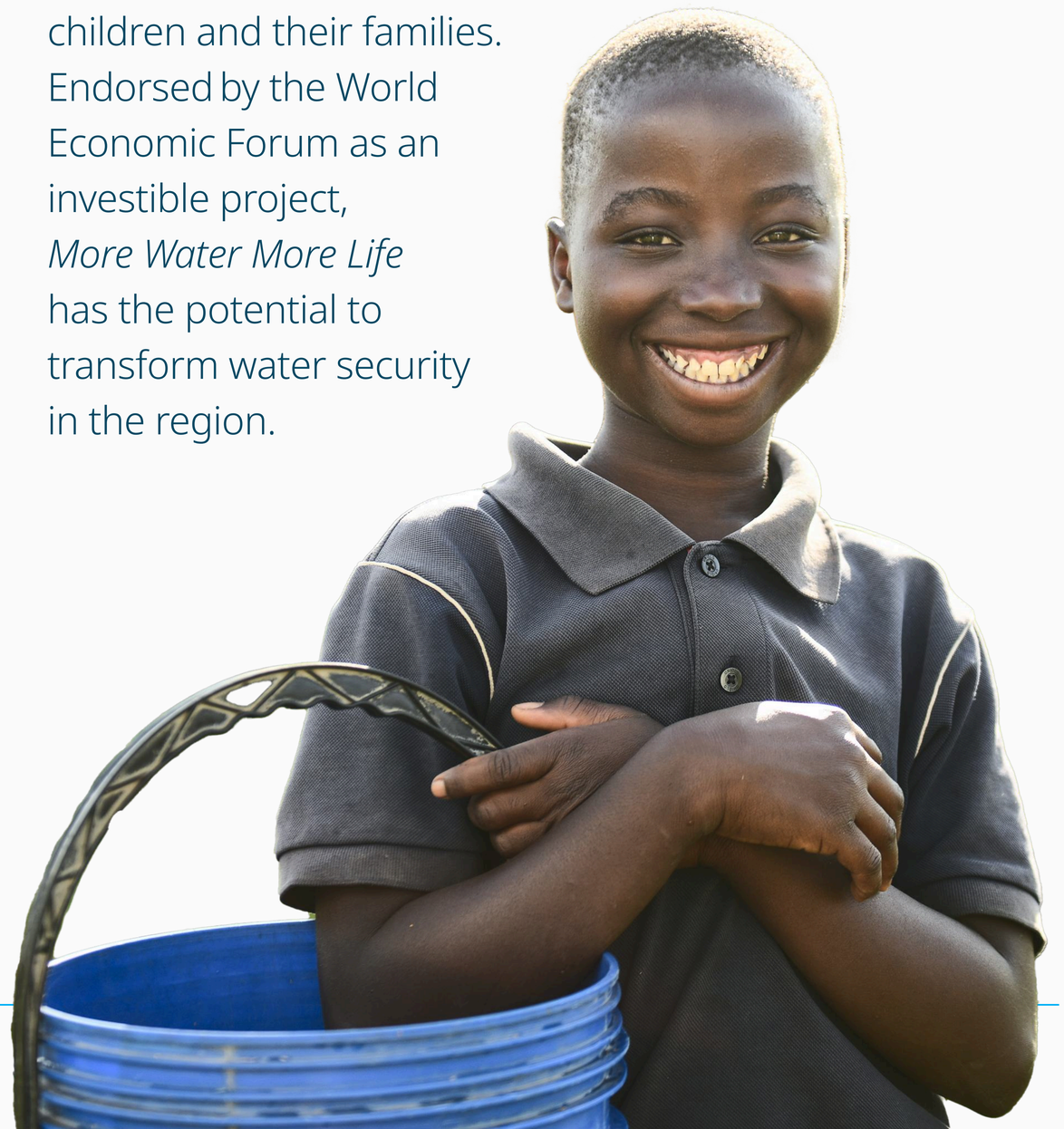
More Water More Life harnesses this breakthrough to **deliver a systemic approach to sustainable water access**, offering a potential game-changer for millions of people facing water insecurity.

SCALING WITH UNICEF AND PARTNERS

UNICEF is leading the rapid scale-up of *More Water More Life* in close collaboration with governments and private sector partners in countries like Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia. This includes:

- **Supporting governments to manage data** to accurately locate significant, deep groundwater reserves.
- **Building the capacity of drillers and water utilities** to drill deeper than ever before - up to 700 metres.
- **Developing sustainable financing models** to support large-scale water infrastructure.

Through the Sustainable WASH (Water, Sanitation, Hygiene) Innovation Hub, UNICEF is set to **mobilize up to $1 billion** to deliver safe water access across the Horn of Africa to children and their families. Endorsed by the World Economic Forum as an investible project, *More Water More Life* has the potential to transform water security in the region.



TRANSFORMING LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS

Long-term water security has the power to:

- **Ease conflicts and tensions** driven by competition for water;
- **Remove the stranglehold** placed on economic development by water scarcity;
- **Support women and girls** by reducing the burden of water collection, enabling them to study and work while minimizing the risk of abuse, attack and ill-health;
- **End the reliance on vendors** delivering expensive water with a high carbon footprint; and
- **Reduce forced displacement and migration** to find water.

The results so far:

29 wells drilled in Ethiopia and Kenya as of autumn 2024, with all successfully reaching deep aquifers. Fifteen of these are already providing safe drinking water to local communities;

Groundwater suitability maps covering nearly 1,000,000 km², home to 10 million people in need; and

Ongoing confirmation of regional water resources and development of **blended financial models** to scale results.

UNICEF'S ROLE IN THE RAPID SCALE-UP

UNICEF's Country Offices are uniquely placed to cultivate local support and understand national contexts, while the Sustainable WASH Innovation Hub coordinates expertise across UNICEF's headquarters, regional and country offices.

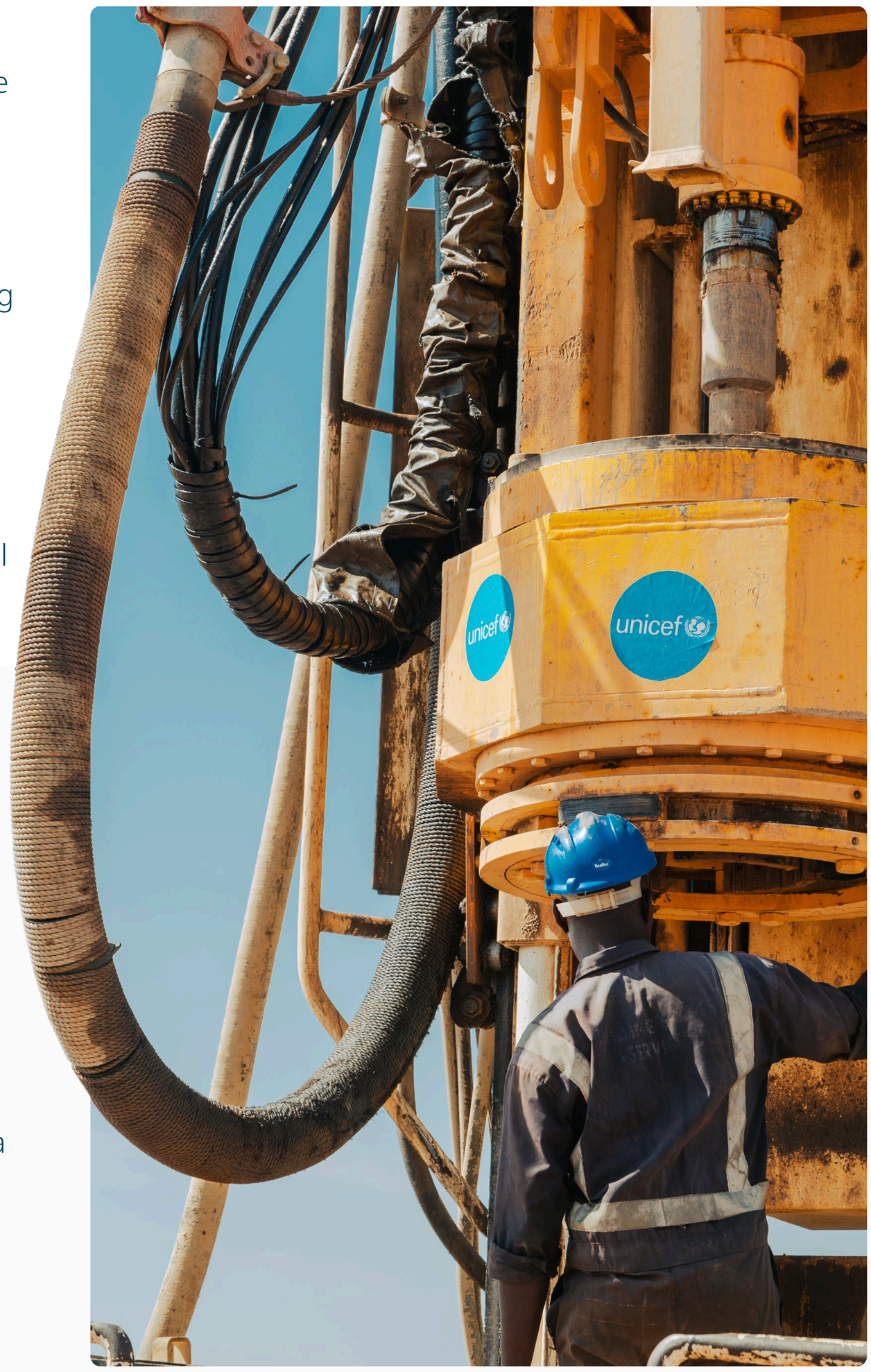
Together, they are addressing challenges such as bridging capacity gaps and clearing pathways to investment financing by developing sustainable financial models.

BUILDING CONFIDENCE THROUGH INNOVATION

Using satellite data analysis validated by local geophysical tests, *More Water More Life* has developed highly detailed maps of deep aquifers in optimal locations to meet local water needs.

This innovative approach has achieved:

- **Significantly higher and proven success rates** identifying suitable sites for deep drilling.
- **Enhanced capacity and confidence** of drillers and utilities to access sustainable water supplies, demonstrated by the successful drilling of deep boreholes.
- **Strengthened government capacity** to manage data and identify optimal locations for future wells.



INNOVATIVE FINANCING FOR IMPACT AND SCALE

UNICEF is designing a first-of-its-kind blended financing model to support the scale-up of *More Water More Life*. This approach combines development-focused financial mechanisms with commercial financing, guarantees, and technical assistance. Designed to unlock capital and with risks in mind, it will be **the first blended finance model to be used for a water project** and could have positive implications for development financing in general. Progress to date includes:

- Endorsement by the World Economic Forum as an investible approach to water security;
- Collaboration with WASH experts, academic institutions, technical and financing stakeholders at local, regional and global level; and
- Strengthened consensus around technical approaches and financing opportunities.

NEXT STEPS IN SCALING FOR IMPACT

The scale-up of *More Water More Life* has the potential to transform lives and livelihoods across the Horn of Africa, and ease water-related regional tensions. Addressing water insecurity is a growing priority for global and regional investors, who recognize that water is not only a basic human right but also a cornerstone in socioeconomic development.

Expanding *More Water More Life* into new countries and regions will require a flexible, government-led approach in each context, with strong support from UNICEF and partners.

To facilitate this, comprehensive deployment materials will be developed to guide new implementation, and a robust network of partners, experts and potential investors will be established to identify optimal operational and financing models. Plans are also underway to incorporate artificial intelligence (AI) approaches to enhance data analysis for water sourcing, further reducing investment risks and supporting rapid scaling.

Over the next three years, mapping efforts will extend to new areas, additional water sources will be developed, and more wells will be drilled. This includes 10 wells already in advanced planning stages, with exploratory efforts set to begin in the Sahel and promising opportunities in Djibouti, Chad, and Sudan.

Next steps

- Conduct technical studies to confirm the sustainability of deep aquifer water resources.
- Map water needs to ensure targeted and effective resource allocation.
- Strengthen WASH sector systems to deliver affordable, sustainable, and safe water supplies.
- Assess households' socio-economic capacity and willingness to pay for water services.
- Transform regional WASH small- and medium-sized enterprises by developing technical and entrepreneurial skills and providing tailored financing options.
- Advocate at the international level to strengthen the WASH enabling environment across the Horn of Africa.

MORE ABOUT UNICEF'S SUSTAINABLE WASH (WATER, SANITATION, HYGIENE) INNOVATION HUB

The Sustainable WASH Innovation Hub serves as a global platform for developing, accelerating, and scaling transformational, climate-resilient solutions to achieve a WASH-secure future. It nurtures a portfolio of targeted, strategic projects addressing key challenges UNICEF is working to solve with and for children and young people. These innovative solutions hold significant potential for impact and scalability, and the Hub accelerates their growth.

By providing tailored support to country offices and partners through a holistic approach focusing on building capacity, fostering connections and collaboration, it positions the identified solutions to attract investment. This approach ensures the swift development and expansion of impactful WASH innovations.