

**EVALUATION  
SYNTHESIS**

# **UNICEF WASH ACTION IN HUMANITARIAN SITUATIONS:**

## **SYNTHESIS OF EVALUATIONS 2010–2016**

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for every child

**EVALUATION OFFICE  
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## **UNICEF WASH Action in Humanitarian Situations: Synthesis of Evaluations 2010–2016**

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### **Purpose**

This document is a review and synthesis of evaluations of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) action in humanitarian situations between 2010 and 2016.

By conducting and publishing evaluation syntheses, the UNICEF Evaluation Office contributes to fulfilling a corporate commitment to learning and accountability. The reports also aim to stimulate a free exchange of ideas among those interested in the topic.

### **Author and acknowledgments**

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## Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to affected populations
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance
ALRMP	Arid Lands Resource Management Project
ARCC	Alternative Response for Communities in Crisis
C4D	Communication for Development (includes behaviour change communication)
CAR	Central African Republic
CCC	Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action
CLTS	Community-Led Total Sanitation
DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
DINEPA	Diréction Nationale de l'Eau potable et de l'Assainissement (Haiti)
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DSG	District Steering Group (Kenya)
EAP	East Asia and Pacific
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Office
EMOPS	Office of Emergency Programmes (UNICEF)
EPF	Emergency Programme Fund (UNICEF)
ESA	Eastern and Southern Africa
GEROS	Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (UNICEF)
GIS	Geographical Information System
HPM	Humanitarian Performance Monitoring (UNICEF)
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICE	Itemized cost estimate
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MIRA	Multi-cluster initial rapid assessment
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
O&M	Operations and maintenance
PCA	Programme Cooperation Agreement
RRM	Rapid response mechanism
RRMP	Rapid Response to the Movement of People
SPHERE	Charter and minimum standards in humanitarian response
SSOP	Simplified Standard Operation Procedure
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNMEER	United Nations Mission for the Ebola Emergency Response
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WCA	Western and Central Africa
WESCOORD	Water and Environmental Sanitation Coordination

## Executive summary

### Objectives and methodology

The scale of UNICEF's water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) interventions in humanitarian emergencies has increased substantially since 2010, both geographically and financially. To support accountability for performance and ensure systematic learning from the available evidence on this growing area of engagement, the UNICEF Evaluation Office and the WASH Section in New York Headquarters jointly commissioned this synthesis of WASH-related humanitarian evaluations.

The synthesis asks three main questions: How has UNICEF's humanitarian action in WASH performed over the period 2010-2016, and to what extent has it improved over time? What factors have supported or constrained improvement? And, what can be learnt, and what improvements can be made for the future?

The synthesis collates findings from 26 evaluations of UNICEF's humanitarian action in WASH. To ensure the quality of the evidence base, only those evaluation reports that were rated at least 'satisfactory' in UNICEF's peer review mechanisms for evaluations were included. The resulting selection covers all major emergencies to which UNICEF responded between 2010 and 2016. To complement this evidence base, the synthesis draws, separately, on another set of 26 reports, mainly of a non-evaluative nature, which provide valuable insights and lessons from multiple contexts, and help put the evaluation findings in a broader perspective.

Conclusions and recommendations are developed at the end of the report and summarized below.

### Key conclusions

1. The evaluation evidence on WASH in emergencies is insufficient. UNICEF has not evaluated its WASH in emergency work sufficiently to be able to learn and adjust programmatic approaches.
2. UNICEF WASH teams are valued partners, which has helped UNICEF be a major and credible partner in humanitarian WASH, play its coordination role, and support national capacities and ownership.
3. The emergency WASH responses supported by UNICEF in the field performed well overall given the challenging contexts within which they operated and the funding and staffing constraints. There was variability across operations, however, and some areas for improvement across the board. Areas where a positive trend has been identified in evaluation reports include the application of the rapid response mechanism (RRM) approach and accountability to affected populations (AAP). Areas where no clear improvement over time has been identified include emergency preparedness, needs assessments, resilience-oriented response, and data/monitoring of cost effectiveness. This points to a need for a more consistent process for learning, disseminating and applying knowledge and good practices generated through experience.
4. WASH emergency preparedness has not been systematic and, when done, has not always been appropriate or useful, focusing more on supply pre-positioning than on putting the right capacities and systems in place.

5. UNICEF has not maximized the potential for a sectorally integrated emergency response. The internal structure of UNICEF and of government counterparts by sector as well as the organization of the aid system and of the Core Commitments for Children themselves are obstacles, as they do not create the right incentives. Complex/protracted emergencies in remote, unsecure and hard-to-reach areas pose additional challenges.
6. WASH responses in RRM, increasingly used as part of the UNICEF WASH response, are reported to be relatively better prepared, respond in a timelier manner, and work more inter-sectorally.
7. Needs assessment are not systematic, and when conducted, they are not comprehensive and equity/gender-lensed enough to usefully guide the design and planning of the WASH response, and do not sufficiently involve beneficiaries.
8. Reliable and disaggregated data on costs and results are lacking, making it impossible to assess the efficiency of the WASH response.
9. There has been progress on AAP, with work still to be done on monitoring and reporting, beneficiaries' involvement and accountability mechanisms.
10. Investment in infrastructure operation and maintenance (O&M) and behaviour change through Communication for Development (C4D) practices supports sustainability. Investments have generally been more significant and effective in C4D than in O&M, which limits the potential for maximizing long-term benefits of WASH responses and supporting the resilience of the affected communities.
11. The UNICEF WASH response is still in the learning phase when it comes to working in urban settings and with cash/voucher systems. Considerable potential exists for learning and further advancing these increasingly high priority items on the humanitarian agenda.

## Key recommendations

Recommendations to WASH sections in UNICEF Headquarters and in regional offices: on evidence generation and utilization

1. Improve the overall evaluation coverage of the UNICEF WASH response (and coordination) in emergencies.
2. Assess the added value and challenges/risks associated with the RRM arrangement for WASH and how it articulates with the other components of the response. Integrate lessons from this assessment and practical tips into existing or future humanitarian and WASH in emergency guidance and professional training initiatives, with particular attention given to improving continuity and linkages between development and humanitarian work, and bridging silos between the various components of the response (WASH, health, protection, nutrition, education etc.)
3. Examine the opportunities and practicalities of integrating cash- and voucher-based approaches into the WASH responses. If appropriate, develop or revise practical guidance and training on how to prepare and implement this type of intervention.
4. Institutionalize learning and evidence utilization. UNICEF should support the development of a centralized, thematic, annotated and continuously and collaboratively updated bibliography or online repository of existing resources for WASH staff in emergencies. This would serve as a concrete medium and end product for the learning process, as well as an open community of practice to guide the response to various types of emergencies. UNICEF could also further extend, strengthen and roll out the global WASH in emergency training, and develop other ways to institutionalize or incentivize learning and evidence

utilization at the country, regional and Headquarters levels, within existing corporate planning, monitoring and evaluation processes.

Recommendations to WASH sections in UNICEF country offices with support from regional offices and Headquarters: for future WASH responses

5. Improve, strategize and systematize emergency preparedness. Country offices should replicate good practices identified in other countries and documented in the above proposed bibliography or repository as well as in the WASH in emergency training module. Priority support and resources should be given to countries with moderate and high emergency risk levels (related to 'natural and manmade hazards' as well as to public health emergencies such as cholera, Ebola and Zika) as per the country office annual risk assessments and in line with the UNICEF Procedure on Enterprise Risk Management. Emergency simulations/drills could be made part of periodic training in UNICEF country offices or WASH sections.
6. Continue efforts to deliver better on the AAP operational framework, and involve affected populations more actively at each stage of the response including in: needs assessments, C4D, O&M arrangements for WASH infrastructure, result communication and community feedback mechanisms.
7. Learn from available experience and evidence on WASH emergency interventions in urban settings and on cash transfers/vouchers. Collaborate or directly partner with other organizations that have the relevant experience, clear comparative advantages, or a potential for synergies and complementarities.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Rationale and objectives

UNICEF water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) staff have always been involved in emergency responses globally, as a result of which UNICEF has a recognized role in WASH in humanitarian action. By virtue of this role, UNICEF has led the global WASH cluster since its creation in 2005, and is also typically the lead agency when the WASH cluster is activated in a country. UNICEF's actions, both as a financial and technical support agency and as cluster lead, affect a large network of humanitarian partners in the sector.

The period 2010-2017 saw an unprecedented frequency and density of major emergency responses for UNICEF, including in the WASH sector. The character of emergencies has also changed; while at the beginning of the period those triggered by environmental factors dominated, at present, complex and protracted conflict-related crises demand most of UNICEF's humanitarian action in WASH.<sup>a</sup> The scale of UNICEF WASH interventions in emergencies increased substantially in this period, both geographically and financially. WASH in emergencies currently makes up 50% of UNICEF's total global expenditure in the sector.

The UNICEF Evaluation Office and the WASH Section in New York Headquarters jointly commissioned this report to support accountability for performance and ensure systematic learning from the available evidence on this growing area of engagement. It synthesizes findings from evaluations of UNICEF's humanitarian action in WASH between 2010 and 2016. In 2010, UNICEF underwent the formative experience of the Haiti earthquake. In 2016, UNICEF's response to the unprecedented health emergency of the Ebola epidemic was evaluated.

The synthesis asks three main questions:

- How has UNICEF's humanitarian action in WASH from 2010-2016 performed, and to what extent has it improved over time?
- What factors have supported or constrained improvement?
- What can be learnt, and what improvements made for the future?

The overarching purpose of this evaluation synthesis is to help UNICEF WASH – and the sector more generally – further improve both the quality and the coverage of its humanitarian response. This WASH-focused evaluation synthesis complements a broader synthesis of evaluations of UNICEF's humanitarian actions, conducted in 2017 by the Evaluation Office with a similar time frame (2010-2016).<sup>1</sup> Correlations between findings in both are highlighted.

## 1.2 Structure

Section 2 of this report summarizes the role of WASH in UNICEF's humanitarian action, followed by a presentation of the evidence base and the synthesis methodology in Section 3. Section 4 then presents findings from the selected evidence base.

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<sup>a</sup> This is confirmed by the ALNAP State of the Humanitarian System Report (2015): "The SOHS 2015 evidenced that the 2012–2014 period was less about natural disasters, and more about conflict and chronic crises. Needs tended to accumulate as these new complex emergencies came in more quickly than older ones dropped off". [www.alnap.org/our-topics/the-state-of-the-humanitarian-system](http://www.alnap.org/our-topics/the-state-of-the-humanitarian-system), accessed 5 December 2017.

Different from the larger synthesis of humanitarian evaluations, Section 4 does not follow the strict structure of evaluation criteria used in the analytical framework (see notes on methodology in Section 3 for details). Rather, it aims for maximum readability and synthesizes findings along the sequence of the humanitarian response: preparedness – activation – quality – interaction with others – results and effects – efficiency. To allow comparison to the wider synthesis, Annex 1 presents the key findings along the traditional evaluation criteria of relevance (appropriateness), effectiveness, sustainability (connectedness), coherence, coordination and efficiency.

Section 4 presents findings using examples from the evaluations. The bigger picture emerging from these examples is summarized at the beginning of each topic, together with a synopsis of trends over time or by emergency typology, and a quantification of the evidence base. Section 5 draws conclusions from these findings and presents specific additional lessons learnt. Section 6 discusses these findings and conclusions, placing them in the broader context and knowledge base of the sector. This allows for contextualized results and hopes to maximize the practical utility of the synthesis. Section 7 then recommends key actions for UNICEF based on the evidence, both for evaluative coverage and for operational response.

## Chapter 2: WASH in UNICEF's humanitarian action

Along with food and shelter, safe water and sanitation are often considered the highest priority interventions in emergency situations. Unless adequate water and sanitation services are quickly provided to emergency-affected children and their families, disease and death will follow. And unless the affected people consistently practice good hygiene, the danger of diarrhoea, cholera and other disease outbreaks will persist. This is true in all types of emergencies, from rapid onset natural disasters to long-term crises caused by a range of complex factors.

Today, UNICEF is the lead emergency agency in the humanitarian WASH sector in terms of geographical reach and level of expenditure. Guided by its Core Commitments for Children (CCCs) in Humanitarian Action, UNICEF continues to respond directly to emergencies around the world. UNICEF is also responsible for coordinating the overall emergency WASH response as the designated lead agency under the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) cluster approach. In both roles, UNICEF is also heavily involved in emergency preparedness planning, and in support to post-emergency reconstruction efforts.

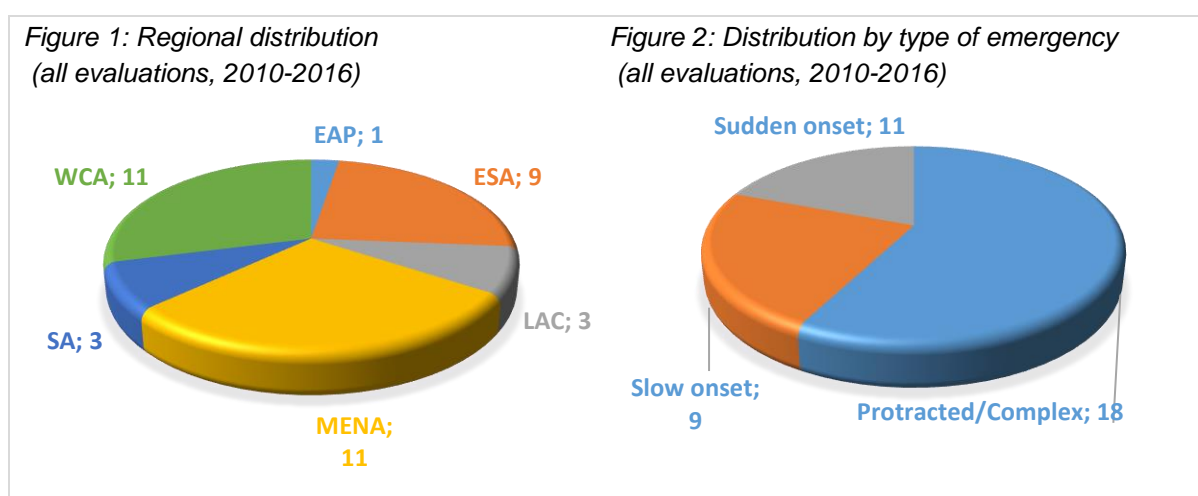
Emergencies affect children around the world, and UNICEF responds with a package of WASH interventions. Response programmes range from rapid and limited interventions in acute emergencies – such as the distribution of water purification tablets and family water kits during floods and earthquakes – to more comprehensive and longer lasting interventions in complex emergencies.

Readiness is of critical importance when disaster strikes in risk-prone countries, and emergency preparedness planning is an important part of the UNICEF programme of support. Country preparedness activities include planning for emergency staff deployment, pre-positioning of strategic supplies, preparation of pre-approved contracts with local implementation partners (such as water trucking companies) and suppliers, as well as advance coordination arrangements with government partners and other stakeholders through the cluster approach. UNICEF's longstanding partnership with governments means that it is often invited to participate in the development of national preparedness plans and policies.

## Chapter 3: Evidence base and methodology

### 3.1 Evaluation coverage of WASH in UNICEF’s humanitarian action

Between 2010 and 2016, 38 evaluations specifically assessed the UNICEF WASH response in emergencies using the analysis criteria and methods recommended by OECD-DAC<sup>2</sup> and ALNAP.<sup>3</sup> These formal evaluations covered the UNICEF responses in six of the seven geographical regions the organization operates in, either as sector-specific or multi-sector analyses. Figure 1 shows the distribution of this evidence base by region, and Figure 2 the type<sup>b</sup> of emergency they evaluated.



This distribution adequately reflects the incidence of emergencies globally and is a good representation of the UNICEF WASH responses in the 2010-2016 period. The bulk of the evaluations relate to emergencies that have been classified as ‘Level 2’ and ‘Level 3’ emergencies: of the 38 evaluations, 15 pertain to such humanitarian situations requiring a large scale response. This echoes the finding of a wider synthesis of humanitarian evaluations<sup>4</sup> that large crises are disproportionately well evaluated, while smaller and sub-national emergency responses receive less evaluative attention.

It is apparent from this collection of evaluations that WASH-specific coverage of the largest emergencies is low. The responses to the major crises of the past years (such as Haiti in 2010; Somalia in 2011; Mali in 2012; the Sahel in 2013; the Central African Republic, Philippines and Ebola in 2014; and South Sudan, Syria and Nigeria+ in 2015) were only assessed by overall evaluations, without particular attention to the performance of the WASH component of the response. The learning from these for the WASH sector is therefore limited.

<sup>b</sup> ‘Slow onset’ emergencies are those where situations gradually worsen, e.g. droughts or food security crises. ‘Rapid onset’ emergencies are those that occur suddenly, such as earthquakes or storms. ‘Protracted/complex’ emergencies are situations where an element of conflict or instability prevails over a longer period, affecting livelihoods and worsening other, e.g. climate-related, problems; they have become increasingly prominent.

## 3.2 Evidence base for this synthesis report

To ensure the quality of the evidence applied for the synthesis, evaluation reports that were not rated at least 'satisfactory' by the UNICEF Evaluation Office's independent quality rating system for evaluation reports<sup>5</sup> were excluded from the selection. This reduced the number of formal evaluations used for this synthesis from 38 to 26. The list of evaluations included in the synthesis is provided in Annex 2. They cover all major emergencies to which UNICEF has responded since 2010 (albeit not WASH-specific), including the Horn of Africa and South Sudan, which were addressed through inter-agency evaluations. The adequate distribution (by geographical areas and by type of emergency) of the evaluation evidence base was maintained during this selection process (Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 3: Geographical distribution of evaluations included in this synthesis

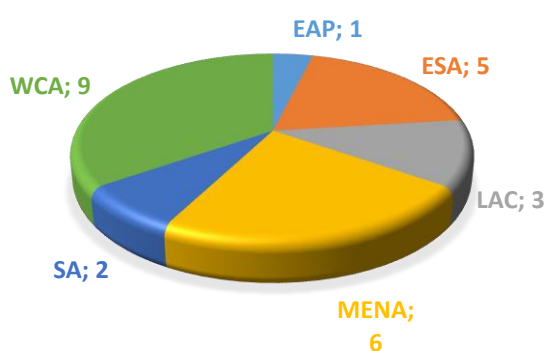
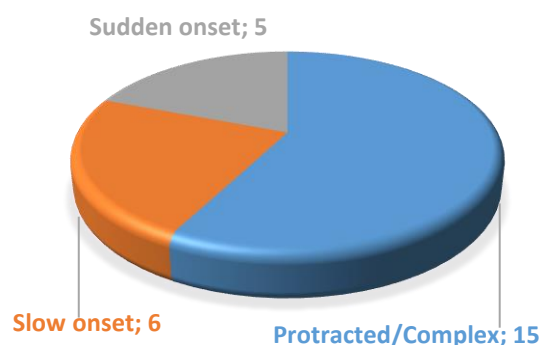


Figure 4: Distribution of evaluations included in this synthesis by type of emergency



In addition, the synthesis draws on 26 other documents (also listed in Annex 2) that complement the findings from evaluation reports. They are mainly assessment, study, review or lessons learnt documents, which do not have the same level of independence and do not use the analysis criteria and methods recommended for evaluations by OECD-DAC<sup>6</sup> and ALNAP. A few of these additional documents are formal evaluations that not directly relate to the UNICEF WASH emergency responses but are still useful for the purpose of this review, including relevant reports from outside UNICEF. They provide valuable insights and lessons from multiple contexts, and help put the findings from the 26 evaluation reports in a broader perspective.

## 3.3 How the synthesis was conducted: methodology

The synthesis exercise adopted a systematic approach. The following steps were taken to arrive at the findings:

- An analytical framework geared to the main lines of enquiry for the synthesis was developed. It was derived from the framework used in the broader evaluation synthesis mentioned above, to ensure comparability. This included the evaluation criteria of relevance (appropriateness), effectiveness, sustainability (connectedness), coherence, coordination and efficiency, as well as related, standard evaluation questions. WASH-specific areas of interest for UNICEF's global WASH strategies for 2006-2015 and 2016-2030 were included where possible. The analytical framework is included in Annex 3.

- Evidence was then systematically extracted from the selected evaluation reports, against the fields of the analytical framework. This exercise generated the composite evidence base.
- Analysis was conducted of the density of evidence against the analytical fields (how many evaluations reported against the field). Common themes arising from the analysis were identified and analysed, quantified by volume of evidence. Figure 5 below shows the analytical fields/questions, grouped by the section in this report, and the strength of the evaluation evidence for each of them (number of evaluations that cover the analytical field/question, out of the 26 evaluations selected for review). The colour-coded inset shows the field/questions for which the evaluation evidence base is strong (green), medium (blue) and weak (orange).
- The synthesis report was drafted and checked against the original evidence base for verification.
- To enrich the synthesis for its main purpose of learning, the evidence from the formal evaluations was then triangulated with key non-evaluative evidence that covered the same period and emergency distribution. This additional information in the report is provided within text boxes, thus augmenting but not interfering with the evaluative evidence reported here.
- Throughout the process, the UNICEF Evaluation Office and WASH Section provided a sounding board and comments to ensure the usefulness and quality of the final report.
- The recommendations were developed jointly by the consultant and UNICEF. This participatory process ensured that the recommendations flowed directly from the review findings, and are appropriate and practical for those who will be implementing them.

Figure 5: Strength of the evidence base for the various fields of the analytical framework



### 3.4 Limitations and mitigation measures

As with any evaluation synthesis, this report relies on the content and quality of the reviewed reports, which varies considerably. It was not possible either to access primary data to verify the accuracy of analysis in the evaluations, or to contact programme managers to gather missing information. This reduced the breadth and robustness of the evidence base. This limitation was mitigated by the exclusion of all evaluations rated less than satisfactory. Furthermore, this evaluation synthesis quantifies the breadth of the evidence on which findings are based; focuses on global findings, patterns and trends across all evaluations rather than on anecdotal cases; and triangulates with other, non-evaluative sources of evidence. This compensates for potential weaknesses in individual evaluation reports. More generally, this synthesis report is meant to complement other sources of evidence such as situation reports, annual reports, donor and implementation partners' reports, monitoring data, studies, etc.

As the synthesis covers the reference period 2010-2016, it does not reflect the most recent corporate changes and ongoing initiatives within UNICEF that have not yet been evaluated. However, a separate section on context was included to address this weakness (section 6), and the recommendations formulated at the end of the report aim to take these recent developments into consideration.

Finally, the synthesis is explicitly not itself an evaluation. It does not include primary sources of evidence; its content and findings reflect those of its component evaluations. With limited WASH-specific evaluations of humanitarian action available, it also draws on multi-sector evaluations and uses their findings where they are relevant and can be applied to all sectors, including WASH. The synthesis cannot, therefore, provide a comprehensive overview of the trajectory for WASH in UNICEF's humanitarian action during the period 2010-2016. Nonetheless, the breadth and depth of its evidence base – 26 high-quality evaluations, over a seven-year period, covering six out of seven of UNICEF's programme regions – enable it to offer illuminating and, it is hoped, interesting, insights into how WASH responses have evolved as part of UNICEF's humanitarian action over the last six years.

## Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter is structured in accordance with the timeline of the response. It starts with evidence on preparedness, then continues with findings on the speed of starting a response. For the period of the actual response it looks at quality and at integration into the wider environment as the main determinants of an effective response. For the end of the intervention cycle, it presents evidence on results and on the extent to which the WASH response transitioned into the post-emergency phase, supporting recovery and building resilience. The final section combines evidence on the efficiency of the responses.

### 4.1 How prepared was UNICEF in WASH and how timely was its response?

This section collates findings on preparedness and emergency activation, including pre-arrangements for supplies and partnerships, as well as timeliness.

**Key findings:** WASH programmes were not always fully prepared when an emergency occurred. At the same time, there was evidence that fast and decisive action could to an extent compensate for a lack of preparedness. In some emergencies, supplies had been pre-positioned, but prior arrangements for implementation were lacking. Four evaluations of large-scale emergencies found preparedness to be inadequate for the scale of the (later) emergency – Syria, South Sudan, Philippines and Ebola. While in some emergencies the timeliness of the WASH response was outstanding, either by itself or as part of the overall UNICEF response, in others it was not fast enough. Common factors aiding timeliness, in addition to preparedness, were presence and effective management of the response. Rapid response mechanisms (RRMs) also aided timely responses. Factors that hindered timeliness were inadequate staffing and funding, lack of partner capacity, lack of access, as well as internal processes.

#### Over time

There is no clear trend regarding preparedness or emergency activation over time. While the increasing use of RRMs, of which WASH is a core component, has reduced response times, this may not reflect the trend in all WASH responses. There is evidence that the Simplified Standard Operation Procedures (after their introduction in 2011/12) accelerated processes for Level 2 and Level 3 emergencies, but most country offices did not make full use of them.

#### Evidence base: medium

- 12 out of 26 evaluations cover preparedness.
- 11 out of 26 evaluations analyse the emergency activation and partnership agreements in emergencies.
- 19 out of 26 evaluations cover timeliness.

#### By emergency type

Responses in rapid onset emergencies have benefitted from and/or were hindered by the level of pre-positioned stocks and prior agreements with partners. These effects were less pronounced in slow onset or protracted/complex emergencies. Common constraints for timely responses were lack of access and/or lack of partner presence due to access problems in complex/protracted emergencies.

**An example of good preparedness** is the emergency response in Nepal, where sound contingency planning allowed the country office to respond swiftly after the earthquake in 2015 and distribute pre-positioned supplies to affected people at very short notice.

The response in Nepal, however, also highlights how a lack of contingency agreements with partners can be a challenge to an otherwise fast response. In the earthquake response in 2015, the country office had no standby or contingency Programme Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) in place. Despite having regular non-governmental organization (NGO) partners, it found that as larger partners had their own fundraising channels, they were not reliant on UNICEF for funding and implemented their own programmes. Consequently, UNICEF had to work with smaller and less experienced partners, increasing the complexity of partner management.<sup>7</sup> The evaluation of the response found that “there was a notably high number of PCAs mobilised for Child Protection, Education and WASH. These PCAs required an effort to monitor and harmonise, and implied multiple management and administrative costs.”

In Somalia (2014), the establishment of regional supply hubs was essentially a WASH preparedness measure, and was seen by the evaluators as speeding up response. In the Philippines, the evaluation of the response to Typhoon Haiyan in 2014 found that preparedness could not “reasonably be expected” to be adequate for a rapid onset Level 3 emergency (which immediately followed two Level 2 emergencies). Yet, the lack of working arrangements with local government was an obstacle for a rapid response outside main urban areas. The existence of a WASH emergency officer when the disaster occurred was an advantage, however. The evaluation of the response in South Sudan in 2015 notes that there was a lack of pre-crisis preparedness, and contingency plans were absent. In the Central African Republic (CAR) in 2014, UNICEF was caught unprepared, causing delays in the sector response. Interestingly, in Haiti in 2010, UNICEF had no WASH programme of note in the country prior to the earthquake. Despite this, WASH was the only sector that mounted a timely and effective response in the first days after the event, making up for the lack of physical preparedness through an efficient and fast scaling up of human capacity.

**There is evidence of both timely and of delayed responses in WASH, without a discernible trend.** At the beginning of the reviewed period, the fast response to the Haiti earthquake stands out when looking at emergency activation in the sector. The WASH Cluster first met one day after the earthquake to plan its response, and was fully functional three days later with the arrival of surge personnel.<sup>c</sup> The reviewed documentation does not provide many other examples of WASH-specific emergency activation, or of the systematic use of UNICEF’s Simplified Standard Operation Procedures (SSOP). For the response in the Philippines in 2014, however, evaluators pointed out that “WASH was one of the few sections that used the SSOPs to accelerate PCA processes.” Here, where UNICEF had primarily worked through the government, WASH was the sector that had the strongest non-governmental organization (NGO) partnerships when the emergency hit, allowing it to scale up faster than other sectors.

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<sup>c</sup> The very different performance of all other sectors subsequently triggered the introduction of the Level 2 and Level 3 Simplified Standard Operation Procedures (SSOPs) from 2011 onwards.

UNICEF Afghanistan provides a good example of reducing response time through pre-arrangements with NGO partners.<sup>8</sup> In 2016, the WASH section applied learning from contracting approaches used by the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) to its relationship with partners. Based on multiple proposals from its main partners it established standard per-capita costs, and a basic agreement with partners that these would be applied to all responses up to 50,000 beneficiaries. The costs considered a mix of all typical actions. Overhead and technical design costs were distributed over the different interventions and together with the cost of construction materials, a per capita cost was calculated for each of the different interventions based on existing standards (Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action and 'SPHERE') for the number of people to be served. These costs incorporate all key expenses including staff costs, office costs, warehousing, needs assessments etc. When a humanitarian crisis arises, an organization can submit an itemized cost estimate (ICE Form) to UNICEF based on a rapid WASH needs assessment. The assessment is typically completed within a day, given that 98% of the situations involve less than 300 families. The ICE Form provides information on the number of people affected and the different types of interventions that they will receive. With the agreed-upon per-capita cost, this information is sufficient to arrive at a total budget for the intervention. The costed proposal is then reviewed and approved by UNICEF's emergency WASH focal point in consultation with the WASH Cluster Coordinator. This can be done in half a day or, when more information is needed, in one to two days. The overall response time is thus cut from several weeks down to only a few days. At the time of writing, this approach had been used for close to a year, and there are plans to evaluate it in the near future.

The Water and Environmental Sanitation Coordination (WESCOORD) mechanism in Kenya facilitated timely responses to WASH emergencies. UNICEF's pre-emergency presence in Central and Northern Mali aided a timely response. The rapidity in the implementation of UNICEF field interventions in Northern Nigeria during the evaluated period (April 2015–July 2016) is also noted in the Nigeria+ evaluation. Timely responses on WASH interventions were also noted in countries where WASH was part of an RRM (Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), CAR, South Sudan and Niger).

The Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) is an emergency response approach that was initially designed by UNICEF and its partners in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in 2004 (more information on the DRC 'Réponse Rapide aux Mouvements de Populations' programme can be found in Section 4.3). The RRM aims to provide quick, life-saving assistance to children and families affected by a disaster. It specifically targets displaced populations and hard-to-reach locations where more traditional interventions are unable to respond adequately, often because a permanent presence is not possible for logistical or access reasons. A typical RRM assembles teams of emergency specialists, relevant sector specialists and operational and security personnel. The RRM team is equipped for self-sufficiency and travels with all required materials to presently and sometimes only temporarily accessible sites with people in need. It then conducts a rapid multi-sector assessment and provides a set of services that are appropriate to the situation, within the limitations of the mission design. The RRM is always a multi-sectoral emergency response, usually including nutrition, WASH, non-food items, health, education and protection. The RRM normally also has a framework for humanitarian access, and links to inter-agency and cluster coordination. At the time of writing, different varieties of the RRM approach were being used in the DRC, CAR, Iraq, Haiti, South Sudan, Yemen<sup>9</sup> and Niger.

There have also been situations where UNICEF action in WASH has not been as timely. In Somalia, prior to the 2011 emergency, a joint position paper by the WASH and livelihood clusters had argued for early action; despite this, action was not taken until the emergency had reached Level 3 proportions. Other examples are the average response time to emergencies during the evaluated programme period in Sudan (2002-2010), the WASH programme in the State of Palestine, the WASH response to the Sahel food crisis in 2012, the response in the CAR in 2014, and the Ebola response in 2015. Timeliness also relies on the

presence of NGO partners when an emergency response commences, as highlighted by the responses in the CAR from 2013 and in the Lake Chad Basin from 2015. In both emergencies, international NGOs had reduced their presence prior to the worsening of the humanitarian situation. This, as the Lake Chad Basin evaluation (2016) found, led to “limited capacity in the main sectors of intervention (e.g., in the area of child protection and WASH)” where UNICEF had to rely on NGO partners.

Other factors contributing to a slow response listed by the evaluations are lack of funding, limited partner presence and/or partner capacity, lack of access and delays in establishing partnership agreements. In the State of Palestine, the timeliness of WASH responses was seen to be hindered by UNICEF’s procurement and contracting procedures.

## 4.2 What was the quality of WASH responses?

This section combines evidence on quality parameters, including the use of needs assessments, the quality of needs assessment, the quality of plans, and the quality of the response in relation to internal and international standards, including the equity imperative. It also looks at the level of integration with other sectors.

**Key findings:** Evaluations found WASH humanitarian responses to generally be of good quality. While formal needs assessments were not consistently used for planning, the resulting interventions were usually appropriate to the circumstances, and fit well within wider response plans. There was limited evidence that UNICEF WASH emergency programmes were more challenged by urban settings. While humanitarian WASH appeared to aim for equitable services, there were challenges such as access, or poor data, that prevented fully equitable coverage. Evaluations note that UNICEF WASH programmes considered gender and protection issues, and it appears that the risks for women and girls from inappropriate WASH services were often, but not always, considered when planning an intervention. Data availability and data quality were a main constraint in this. As found by the overall synthesis of humanitarian evaluations<sup>10</sup> in UNICEF, evaluations hardly addressed humanitarian principles or the UNICEF CCCs. WASH responses could therefore not be measured against these quality standards. Where the CCCs were referenced, evaluations found mixed use of these standards, and in one case suggest that their strict sector division may have contributed to a response remaining in ‘silos’ (see also findings on working inter-sectorally in Section 4.3).

### Over time

Varying use and quality of needs assessments is evident throughout the reviewed period. Where RRM was introduced, it brought consistency in the use of multi-sector assessments and in the utilization of the assessment data as the basis for responses. There is insufficient evidence on the effect of RRM on WASH response quality beyond the consistent use of needs assessments.

### By emergency type

There is clearly a challenge with regard to finding appropriate solutions for WASH in urban areas; clear trends relating to other typologies are not supported by the evidence base.

**Evidence base: strong on alignment with needs and plans, weak on standards and principles**

- 21 out of 26 evaluations cover the alignment with humanitarian needs/findings from joint assessments.

- 23 out of 26 evaluations cover the appropriateness of intervention design/actions.
- 17 out of 26 evaluations cover the coherence with joint response plans.
- 17 out of 26 evaluations cover the equity considerations integrated.
- 3 out of 26 evaluations cover the Humanitarian Principle of Humanity.
- 1 out of 26 evaluations covers the Humanitarian Principle of Impartiality.
- 3 out of 26 evaluations cover the Humanitarian Principle of Neutrality.
- No evaluation covers the Humanitarian Principle of Independence.
- 9 out of 26 evaluations cover the alignment with CCCs.
- 11 out of 26 evaluations cover the integration of gender/protection issues.

**There has been inconsistency in the use of structured needs assessments for response planning.** This reflects the finding of the wider synthesis of humanitarian evaluations on alignment with humanitarian needs and findings from joint assessments.<sup>11</sup> Despite this deficiency, the reviewed documents indicate that the respective WASH interventions were broadly responsive to identified humanitarian needs. How these needs were identified, however, was not always well reflected in the evaluations, and there is little evidence of formal/structured needs assessments underpinning the response plans.

Evaluations of some of the responses specifically point out the absence of (timely) needs assessments, as was the case in Haiti in 2010, Somalia in 2011, Mali in 2012, the Philippines in 2014 and Nepal in 2015. While these are evaluations of multi-sector emergency responses, no evidence points to a different performance in the WASH component.

At the same time, many of the large responses used needs assessments, and even inter-agency or multi-sector needs assessments. This was the case in all RRM, where multi-sector assessments were standard. RRM with a WASH component were in use in the DRC (2013), the CAR (2014), South Sudan (2015) and Niger (2016). Outside of RRM, joint needs assessments were the basis for the WASH response in Iraq (2010), Sudan (2002-2010), the CAR (2014) and South Sudan (2015).

**WASH intervention design/actions in emergencies are overall seen as appropriate to the situation.** The evaluations cover the standard response spectrum from rapid response through water trucking and WASH supplies for households, to building or rehabilitating water systems and sanitation facilities, and transition through behaviour change approaches.

Good practices were found in the design of the interventions. In the support to water quality monitoring in Iraq between 2007 and 2009, UNICEF considered the fluid security situation and invested in mobile laboratories that could work where and when the situation allowed. In Somalia, a decentralized network of WASH supply hubs catered for similar challenges. In Sudan, the programme was tailored to different needs, for example, for internally displaced person areas in Darfur or remote rural communities. In the State of Palestine, UNICEF worked through schools to reach school-aged children and adolescents, a programme that was seen as relevant to the needs of Palestinian beneficiaries. WASH as a key element of an RRM was evident in the DRC, South Sudan and the CAR. The important role of WASH in an integrated response was underlined by its effective promotion of safe sanitation and handwashing practices in addressing the Ebola epidemic.

Several evaluations point to challenges to implementing appropriate solutions in an emergency response. In WASH, the sensory quality of the water is important for acceptance by users. Issues of non-acceptance of water are documented in evaluations of the 2012 Rwanda returnee response and the 2016 Lake Chad Basin response. In both cases, certain borehole locations produced water that was different from what communities were used to

(low pH in Rwanda and high salinity in Chad). While such water may have been safe for human consumption, the fact that users rejected it challenged the response.

In other cases, the type of infrastructure built by UNICEF was found to be inappropriate. The evaluation of the Haiti cholera response after 2013 points out that external studies had found the installed water kiosks to be ill-suited to the context of rural Haiti. In the Rapid Response to the Movement of People (RRMP) programme in the DRC, an occasion was reported where a permanent borehole was identified as the optimum solution, but it could not be installed within an emergency response time frame. The quality of materials used in some cases was an issue. In Somalia, users found the water canisters available through the regional supply hubs to be of poor quality. Latrines constructed in schools during the response to the Gorkha earthquake in Nepal in 2015 used material that did not stand up to the frequency of use.

Factors arising from social norms and cultural practices can affect the appropriateness of emergency WASH interventions. The evaluation of the Lake Chad Basin crisis in 2016 found that “The implementation of technical solutions provided as part of the WASH programming in all four affected countries did not always take the cultural context into consideration”, being mostly driven by an engineering perspective. The report cites unusual-tasting water or latrine design as causes of rejection by beneficiaries. This resonates with earlier evaluations: The review of the Haiti 2010 earthquake response found that “different options should have been thought of rather than just highly expensive portable toilets that need constant maintenance. Had a proper assessment of prevailing sanitation practices, cultural practices and geophysical contexts been carried out, a very different approach to sanitation could have been taken”. The evaluation of the rural sanitation response to the Pakistan floods in 2012 questioned the appropriateness of using the Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach of “shock, shame and disgust” in a post-disaster recovery context. In contrast, the evaluation of the UNICEF WASH programme in Sudan (2002 to 2010) found that “the approach to and content of hygiene education (was) developed according to the culture and traditions of the specific community.”

UNICEF’s Global WASH Strategy for 2016-2030<sup>12</sup> lists humanitarian response in **urban areas** as a key focus area to support. The UNICEF WASH programme has been traditionally geared towards rural water and sanitation projects at the community level in poor countries. The crises in the reviewed period had an increasingly prominent urban dimension, partly because of steady urbanization in poor countries, but also because of more conflicts affecting middle-income countries. Examples of the former are the responses in the Haitian capital (2010, 2016), in urban areas in Liberia (2012), and in cities of the affected countries during the Ebola response (2015). Examples of the latter are the responses in Baghdad in Iraq (2010), Manila in the Philippines (2014), Kathmandu in Nepal (2015) and in various Syrian cities (2015).

A conclusion from an internal lessons learnt exercise from the Haiti response in 2010 summarizes the challenges humanitarian WASH responses have faced in urban areas in the reviewed period as follows: “WASH programming in an urban context requires a specific and comprehensive skill set, which is a huge challenge to the international community”. The report provides illustrative challenges such as urban planning for siting latrine facilities, land tenure negotiations and working on hard surfaces (roads and concreted areas).<sup>13</sup>

The evaluations of these responses provide some evidence on how appropriate the WASH response in urban centres was, and how it was adapted to different environments. The evaluation of the Haiti 2010 response points out that providing the traditional latrines that were common in rural areas was not appropriate for the capital, as the ground there was harder, as a result of which the latrine pits were shallow and became rapidly full. The alternative of providing portable toilets that needed regular waste removal in the absence of municipal

capacity for such services was reported as equally inappropriate. In the urban areas of Liberia's capital, the UNICEF WASH response was seen to provide appropriate solutions. However, given the limited time period within which humanitarian funding was available, the evaluation was not convinced of the sustainability of the investment made in infrastructure and training. In Baghdad in 2010, the security situation did not allow the repair of the municipal water system, as was done elsewhere in the country in other projects. In a humanitarian measure, UNICEF therefore supported water trucking to vital locations such as hospitals to maintain a basic level of access to safe water for the population.

Anecdotal evidence from the Syria response offers a possible alternative to water trucking. In one Syrian city, which was contested between the government and rebel forces for an extended period, UNICEF found that the most appropriate solution to maintaining basic access to safe water for the population was to support the local water supply utility. Its production and distribution infrastructure had remained intact, but the utility required fuel to power its pumps. UNICEF consequently provided fuel to the utility, ensuring an uninterrupted water supply to the inhabitants. Supporting existing public or private utilities to continue to provide water supply in emergencies could be a more viable option in the WASH emergency portfolio than water trucking.<sup>14</sup>

**UNICEF's WASH responses appear to have been coherent with wider humanitarian response plans**, although there is little specific evidence on the alignment with joint response plans. In Mali in 2013 the response was found to be coherent with the wider aid architecture in the country. In the DRC (2013), WASH within the RRMP fit into relevant joint response plans, and in the CAR in 2014 and South Sudan in 2015 the responses were under a Strategic Response Plan. UNICEF's WASH work in Haiti in 2015 was aligned with the national cholera plan, while all WASH activities in the Syria region fit into the regional response plans (2015). Notably, in host countries around Syria, UNICEF took on WASH in refugee camps, a task normally assigned to UNHCR. The Ebola response challenged the role of WASH as the United Nations Mission for the Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) initially did not provide high-level coordination for the sector (i.e. it did not have a separate pillar), and additional coordination mechanisms were required.

**WASH responses programme for equity, but were often constrained by external factors, notably where the scope of the response did not include host communities, and because of limited access.** The assessment of the UNICEF response to the Lake Chad Basin crisis saw significant effort by UNICEF to ensure equity: "UNICEF, more than other partners engaged in the response, specifically targeted vulnerable categories, such as unaccompanied children and pregnant girls, affected by the crisis". Despite best intentions, however, providing equitable services around WASH in emergency responses often seems to be a challenge, for different reasons. In Sudan, the evaluation of the WASH programme during the period 2002-2010 found that while in internally displaced person camps the water points were distributed fairly, the walking distance to water points in rural locations was much further. This was mirrored in the consistency of chlorinating water sources, and in the degree of achieving open defecation-free areas – internally displaced person camps fared better than other locations that were part of the emergency response. The evaluation of the urban WASH programme in poor areas of Monrovia (2012) notes that the practice of charging for water and the use of public latrines excluded some segments of the population.

In the response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in 2014 assistance was seen to be given with priority to urban areas, at the expense of rural areas. While the evaluation points out that this was done in accordance with the risk assessment, which gave priority to providing assistance to the largest number of people, it effectively created an inequitable distribution of support. Some evaluations, including for Liberia in 2012, the CAR response in 2014 and the Nepal response in 2015, point to limited utility of facilities for users with disabilities. These

challenges to a truly equitable response may have been partly due to limited availability of data, as the Lake Chad Basin evaluation found in 2016: "...real-time data on the needs of the affected populations was not collected on a regular basis and vulnerability assessments were rarely conducted during profiling exercises" (see also findings above on needs assessments and below, on data on gender). Also, as the same report points out, the most vulnerable may also be the most unreachable, echoing the priorities found in the Sudan and the Philippines responses. In South Sudan, the evaluation found in 2015 that assistance was focused on "more accessible aid centres".

**Reference to International Humanitarian Principles is notably absent in UNICEF humanitarian evaluations, including in WASH-specific evaluations.** This is in line with a similar finding in the overall synthesis of humanitarian evaluations.<sup>15</sup> While assessing adherence has obvious utility in understanding the quality of principled humanitarian action, few UNICEF evaluations report in this area, and certainly none specifically on WASH. This reflects a gap beyond the sector (and beyond UNICEF, as noted by a report on wider United Nations evaluations<sup>16</sup>) and cannot be addressed only within the evaluation of WASH responses.

**With limited evidence, WASH appears to have overall fulfilled its commitments under the CCCs.** UNICEF's CCCs provide a global framework for UNICEF and its partners. Based on international humanitarian law and human rights frameworks, in particular the Convention on the Rights of the Child, they provide sector-specific programme commitments that define minimum achievements to be realized for all affected children. The CCCs provide a sector-by-sector set of phased priority actions to be implemented in an emergency response. The 2017 synthesis of evaluations of humanitarian action<sup>17</sup> found that only about one third of the reviewed evaluations analysed the response with a CCC lens. The reviewed evaluations for this synthesis show the same ratio.

For the responses in the Sahel in 2012, in the CAR in 2014 and in Nepal in 2015, the WASH response or the overall response was found to be well aligned with the CCCs. For the response to Syrian refugees in Jordan, the evaluation found remaining rights challenges in WASH amongst other sectors, while the wider Syria response evaluation calls for better contextualization of the CCCs in the response. The Nigeria+ evaluation in 2016 suggests that an observed disconnect between the education and the WASH response, and also partly between the nutrition and WASH response, may have been due to the stringent use of the CCCs for response planning. Their structure around sector 'silos' is given as one reason for the prevailing inter-sector barriers.

**There are positive examples of the integration of gender and protection issues, but room for improvement remains.** WASH interventions in emergencies face several gender and protection issues that need to be addressed through the design of the intervention. Women and girls are often in charge of water and sanitation in the family, and are therefore, for example, exposed to the risk of gender-based violence when fetching water from faraway sources. They can also be vulnerable to violence depending on the location of sanitation facilities. The Global Protection Cluster provides guidelines specifically for the WASH sector.<sup>18</sup>

The evaluations that specifically addressed gender and protection issues found positive examples as well as room for improvement. In the RRMP in the DRC, the evaluation found in 2013 that RRMP partners were "observed to regularly consult with girls and women to determine physical placement of water points and toilets in order to reduce time spent waiting and collecting water and reduce risk of violence".

The RRMP mechanism adopted in the DRC is the origin of the now widely used RRM approach in UNICEF responses. First used in 2004, it has now become a permanent feature of UNICEF's response in the country. Initially conceived for the distribution of non-food items to beneficiaries, it later incorporated a WASH component (including supplies), and subsequently other sectors were also included. The RRMP is based on multi-sector assessments providing key data on the situation around the country. It has set new standards in monitoring and evaluation and humanitarian information management. ActivityInfo was originally developed for the specific purpose of the RRMP programme in DRC.

The evaluation of the Typhoon Haiyan response in the Philippines in 2014 found that WASH was one of the stronger sectors in terms of addressing gender as a cross-cutting issue, while the WASH cluster in South Sudan in 2015 was found to have mainstreamed gender-based violence prevention and response activities in some locations. The 2013-2019 WASH project in Haiti “recognized the importance of latrines in women's safety in a domestic environment”, and the response after the Nepal earthquake in 2015 directly addressed the needs of women and girls in the WASH response. Despite these positive examples, both the depth of investigating gender dimensions in the reviewed evaluations and the extent to which gender is addressed in WASH responses in those that did, are limited. Evaluations that assessed the gender dimension in multi-sector responses found overall (including WASH) weak gender awareness in the responses in Mali in 2013 and the Nigeria+ crisis in 2016. In Mali, this related to only a few instances of breakdown by gender in the data used, and in Nigeria, there was a limited depth of understanding of gender in emergencies among staff and partners, despite strong commitment on paper. In Syria, the 2015 evaluation found that non-disaggregated data prevented gender analysis.

### 4.3 How well did WASH humanitarian action interact with its environment?

This section presents evidence of support to national capacity, ownership/leadership, and the integration into coordination mechanisms. It addresses coherence with other sectors and provides evidence on the extent to which the response was accountable both to beneficiaries (AAP) and upwards (within the organization and to donors through monitoring and evaluation and reporting).

**Key findings:** In all the examples covered, UNICEF's presence in affected countries prior to emergencies ensured that national ownership of the WASH response was promoted, and that where possible, national capacity was built and maintained. This may, however, have affected the response in situations where the government was party to a conflict – as in the CAR, South Sudan and Syria. WASH cluster leadership was generally seen to be strong and proactive, with examples of outstanding performance, including in Haiti in 2010. Transition from cluster to national coordination was well supported, with evidence from several countries, notably the WESCOORD structures in Kenya. Generally, WASH initiatives worked closely with other sectors, but many evaluations that cover the topic still refer to ‘silos’ in the response. Better inter-sectoral work was reported when an RRM was used. On AAP, positive and negative examples are in balance, but WASH sections have arguably developed proactive approaches to involving beneficiaries in the response. While interactions with new financing models and cash and voucher programmes were few, it appears that, when used in parallel, WASH programmes benefited. As in the overall synthesis,<sup>19</sup> the level and quality of results measurement was not consistent across different responses. It was better in some emergencies than in others, and the application of the

humanitarian performance monitoring (HPM) approach has remaining challenges, especially when not well contextualized.

#### Over time

The coherence of WASH with other sectors and its wider environment in emergencies has been of steadily good quality over time. Efforts to be accountable to the affected populations are also more noticeable in recent responses.

#### By emergency typology

In complex/protracted (often conflict-related) emergencies, work with government is not always as productive as in sudden onset (often environmental) emergencies.

Complex/protracted emergencies also pose additional access challenges that affect inter-sector work, AAP and results measurement.

#### **Evidence base: strong, except for cluster transition and new financing instruments**

- 21 out of 26 evaluations cover efforts to strengthen national (state, society, private) systems.
- 23 out of 26 evaluations address coherence with the actions of other partners operating in the context/cluster leadership.
- 7 out of 26 evaluations have evidence of support to transition from cluster to national coordination.
- 18 out of 26 evaluations document approaches to working inter-sectorally.
- 6 out of 26 evaluations reflect on working with new financing/cash/voucher instruments.
- 20 out of 26 evaluations report on AAP.
- 21 out of 26 evaluations present evidence on results measuring and reporting systems.

**UNICEF's often established relationships with host governments support its efforts to strengthen national and local systems** during an emergency response. Evaluations consistently found UNICEF's WASH response to be well aligned with national priorities, often the result of long-standing partnerships with the government and relevant institutions. While there is little specific evidence beyond general remarks, an example from the response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines is illustrative: "With the government, UNICEF built well on existing working relations with central government departments, and took the bold step of concluding MoUs with 40 LGUs in the areas affected where it had not previously worked". Evaluators saw this as appropriate and as providing good potential for locally grounded and "politically accountable" work that would carry over into the recovery phase. Building government capacity is also in the interest of an effective response; for example, the evaluation of the Sahel response (2012) points out that limited government capacity may have slowed down the response in a region where, before the crisis, UNICEF had mostly implemented initiatives through government departments.

UNICEF was generally found to be effective in including government and other relevant structures in its response at all levels, and imparting knowledge and capacity. Positive examples come from the evaluations of the WASH projects in Iraq (2010), where UNICEF worked closely with and trained government staff; the work with the government water agency in the Haiti earthquake response (2010); the investment in training of government staff in Sudan over a longer period; and the bold investment in direct relationships with local government units in the Philippines in 2014. In Nepal in 2015, UNICEF worked closely with the government and provided capacity building, along with co-chairing the WASH cluster. However, due to the emergency situation, progress in capacity building was assessed as 'fragile'. In the Lake Chad Basin response, UNICEF contributed to strengthening the capacity of local actors, which included government staff in line ministries, implementing partners and

community-based groups. However, the evaluators noted that the workshops and training programmes were not always adapted to the participants' needs and interests.

In South Sudan in 2015 the government was party to the conflict, which prevented it from being given a prominent role in the response or providing capacity support during the response. The evaluation of UNICEF's response in Syria (2015) also raises this concern, but notes additionally the lack of an engagement strategy. In the CAR, where the role of the government was not always clear, some degree of controversy arose, but UNICEF worked consistently through government structures to implement WASH responses where such cooperation made sense.

**UNICEF provided consistently strong cluster leadership in WASH, and ensured coherence with the work of its partners.** During emergencies, UNICEF has not worked in isolation, and as the cluster lead it has had a prominent role in establishing and maintaining partnerships in the WASH sector. In the reviewed documentation, several positive examples underline UNICEF's active role as WASH cluster lead and WASH partner. In Haiti in 2010 it notably worked with both government and cluster partners from day one, and was able to rapidly deploy its standby partners in the WASH cluster. Its leadership on setting standards and developing a cluster strategy early on – by the end of the fourth week – was lauded by the evaluation.

The UNICEF-led WASH cluster also stood out positively in the Horn of Africa drought response in 2011. While there was no single response strategy, evaluators noted that WASH, together with the livelihoods, nutrition and health clusters, had developed a multi-sector strategy for their common response. In the same context, the WASH cluster is mentioned as a positive example for establishing sub-national cluster structures. In the Syria response, the 2015 evaluation notes the successful advocacy to get more WASH partners on board with the UNICEF response. WASH cluster leadership was also seen as successful in the Nepal earthquake response of 2015. The choice of a dedicated WASH cluster lead at the sub-national level in one area of South Sudan in 2015 was seen as very effective and productive as compared to other arrangements.

The responses in the CAR in 2013 and in the Lake Chad Basin in 2015 highlight the extent to which UNICEF relies on the presence of NGO partners. In both emergencies, international NGOs had reduced their presence prior to the worsening of the humanitarian situation. This, as the Lake Chad Basin evaluation found, "limited capacity in the main sectors of intervention (e.g., in the area of child protection and WASH)".

**UNICEF WASH played a positive role in joint leadership and in the transition from cluster to national coordination.** Both are important factors to supporting and maintaining government ownership and capacity in humanitarian response. There are several examples of this positive role, although many of the reviewed evaluations do not consider this aspect of UNICEF's role as WASH cluster lead. In Haiti in 2010, UNICEF notably led the new WASH cluster together with DINEPA, its government partner, supporting full national ownership from the start. The WESCOORD system in Kenya (evaluated in 2010) is another example that stands out from the reviewed literature for promoting full government ownership of humanitarian WASH coordination. The system was fully localized to the level of district authorities.

From the reviewed evidence, the Kenya example may be the most prominent case of fully established and sustainable country leadership in humanitarian WASH coordination. A series of studies on WASH cluster transition<sup>20</sup> in Ethiopia, Ebola-affected countries, Haiti and Mali in 2015 identified several general as well as country-specific barriers to achieving the same level of national ownership as seen in Kenya. The reason for the success in Kenya may lie in an

unprecedented and early investment in ‘resilience-building’, which took place even before the term became commonly used in humanitarian and development practice. The World Bank, as far back as the 1990s, had supported the Arid Lands Management Program (ALRMP), a unit in the Office of the President that promoted national leadership for preparedness and response in the arid districts of the country that had traditionally been marginalized. Consecutive droughts yielded a cumulative build-up of a national coordination structure for response in all sectors, including WASH, that was fully decentralized to the district level. District Steering Groups locally coordinated humanitarian actors from the government side, including for WASH, who were usually local representatives of sector ministries, in this case of the Ministry for Water and Natural Resources and the Ministry of Health. Under the ALRMP, the WESCOORD, co-chaired by the government and UNICEF, represented these district-level structures at the national level. None of the available documentation on cluster transition in other countries describes a degree of national ownership as strong as that in Kenya.

In Sudan, between 2002 and 2010, coordination was always in the hands of the government, while in Mali in 2013, UNICEF actively combined the clusters it led with the development partner’s technical working groups, a first step back to national ownership. In the Philippines in 2014 the clusters were co-led by the government, as was the case in Nepal in 2015. In Nepal, a formal cluster transition plan was implemented.

**WASH programmes demonstrated intent to work inter-sectorally, but often remained stuck in silos for a variety of reasons.** Inter-sectoral work is now seen in UNICEF as an essential prerequisite for a more effective and efficient emergency response. It is seen as maximizing results for beneficiaries, while reducing operational costs. A fully integrated response would mean that there are joint processes for planning, implementation and management of the response. The UNICEF structure of distinct programme sections, mirroring the sectoral division of the CCCs, however, does not facilitate such cross-sectoral links – which are also impeded by the wider cluster system’s comparatively siloed approach.

A 2014 UNICEF study on integrated programming in humanitarian action<sup>21</sup> points to a more systemic problem: “The aid system (ministries, NGOs, donors, multilateral organisations, funding appeals, aid-flows, advocacy, monitoring, MDGs, accountabilities, responsibilities, human resource requirements) is typically set up to facilitate a silo approach to development cooperation and emergency response”. While this study sets out approaches to achieving more integration, to date no organization-wide change in practice can be observed: The wider synthesis of humanitarian evaluations<sup>22</sup> found that “Integrated programming across sectors remains a clear area of weakness in UNICEF humanitarian action over time.”

The Lake Chad Basin evaluation in 2016 in fact suggests that an observed disconnect between the education and the WASH response, and also partly between the nutrition and WASH response, may have been due to the stringent use of the CCCs for response planning. Their structure around sector ‘silos’ is given as one reason for the prevailing inter-sector barriers.

An interesting aspect of connectedness was brought out in a lessons learnt exercise from the Haiti response in 2010<sup>23</sup>: “The division of the WASH cluster into sub-groups (sub-clusters) created some issues with sub-groups working in isolation from each other; for example, the sanitation group worked on technical options/solutions for toilets in isolation from hygiene promotion group and the latter developed messages on keeping latrines clean without consulting with the sanitation sub-group on the hardware aspects.” This highlights the possibility that disconnects can happen even within the WASH sector.

WASH programmes traditionally work closely with health programmes, especially when outbreaks and epidemics are to be tackled, and education programmes usually incorporate WASH in school elements to ensure a holistic approach to child-friendly facilities. The Global

WASH Cluster has a specific principle of integration with other relevant clusters in its current strategy.<sup>24</sup> The reviewed evaluations found several positive examples of this integration in the responses in Sudan (2002-2010), Mali (2012), the Philippines in 2014 (where it started in silos but increasingly became integrated, especially at the local level), Haiti (2015) and Jordan (2015). Where RRM were used, WASH appeared to be well integrated into the wider package.

Some evaluations, however, present a more sobering picture of the success of these common linkages. The assessment of the Sahel response in 2012 voiced “concerns about their internal articulation within UNICEF and the ‘siloeing’ of the sections”, which confirms the finding from the Nigeria+ evaluation in 2016 (see above). It was found that implementation steps between sectors were not synchronized in Liberia in 2013, and in Nepal in 2015.

Inter-sectoral coordination is indeed not necessarily sufficient for an effective and efficient response. For instance, the sequencing of interventions between sectors can be crucial. An external review of the UNICEF drought response in Kenya during the Horn of Africa crisis<sup>25</sup> found that most WASH facilities in schools targeted by the UNICEF WASH and Education sections for emergency response were implemented only in August 2011, over a month after the declaration of the Level 3 emergency. Consequently, the reviewers found that “most school WASH facilities were either under construction, incomplete or damaged”, while schools were trying to cope with a growing number of pupils due to displacement.

**There is yet little evidence of working with new financing modalities, including cash and voucher responses.** When implemented in appropriate contexts, cash and voucher arrangements can support the ability and willingness of affected populations to pay for WASH goods and services, and help resolve any lingering issues around O&M in emergency response. There is no concrete evidence in the reviewed evaluations of such impact specifically on the WASH sector. The evaluation of the regional supply hubs as a strategy for WASH preparedness in Somalia (2012) points to the OXFAM ‘M-WASH’ programme, which provided vouchers that could be used for WASH supplies from these hubs. The results are not reported in the evaluation. Cash vouchers were used in South Sudan, but the 2015 evaluation does not elaborate on their effect on WASH-related outcomes. Similarly, in the reviewed literature there is no evidence of the effect of the cash assistance programme in Syria on WASH results.

The 2012 evaluation of the Somalia cash transfer response during the Horn of Africa Drought Emergency<sup>26</sup> presents evidence that recipients of cash transfers used their additional income to pay for water in urban areas.

An article on the same programme<sup>27</sup> in the Humanitarian Practice Network’s *Humanitarian Exchange* magazine in the same year suggests that “Food expenditure was gradually replaced with spending on non-food items, including agricultural inputs, livestock, water, education, medicine, business investment and savings”. In parallel, WASH cluster partners introduced a voucher system for water supply.

A 2012 case study by the Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP)<sup>28</sup> on a non-food item voucher programme in the DRC provides evidence that 5 % of non-food item voucher value was spent on WASH-related items such as soap, washing materials and water containers. A second study from the DRC on the UNICEF Alternative Responses for Communities in Crisis (ARCC II) programme<sup>29</sup> estimates that 2% of total cash value given was spent on WASH-specific non-food items.

In 2013, Oxfam evaluated the water voucher programme in Gaza.<sup>30</sup> Cash vouchers for safe drinking water from vendors were given to targeted beneficiaries. The evaluation concluded that this approach was effective in an environment where vendors could provide clean water, but was not necessarily sustainable and to be sustained beyond the response. Oxfam accompanied the voucher response with ‘traditional’ WASH activities such as water quality monitoring to safeguard

aspects that purchasing power alone could not necessarily ensure. The 2016 position paper<sup>31</sup> of the Global WASH Cluster on cash and market-based approaches recommends that cash or vouchers for water be always accompanied with complementary activities such as infrastructure development, capacity building, and community mobilization activities.

A 2017 set of case studies on UNICEF's cash response in humanitarian crises in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region<sup>32</sup> notes that in the region, there has been "little adoption of cash and vouchers within the WASH section to date" (of the study) "although hygiene kits can be monetised as easily as winter kits". It lists as a key barrier to WASH sections in the region the "lack of experience within technical sections in designing (Cash Transfer Programmes), including the requirements for market assessments and trader assessments for voucher programmes". The one concrete example cited by the study is from the State of Palestine, a one-off payment for WASH and winterization vouchers to allow families to cope with increased expenses during winter months.

Two other examples are notable for using different financing modalities. In the Philippines, UNICEF took the unusual step of providing general emergency response funds to local authorities to be allocated to the most urgent interventions in all sectors, including WASH. The evaluation does not, however, provide any evidence on the extent to which this approach improved WASH conditions in these areas. In the Lake Chad Basin region, UNICEF decided to directly provide local construction materials to communities for the construction of schools and toilet facilities.

**WASH responses did not consistently ensure accountability to affected populations.**

UNICEF applies the IASC Task Force on Accountability to Affected Populations Operational Framework (2011) as its main set of standards. It is part of the IASC Task Team on Accountability to Affected Populations and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and has a range of tools and guidance (though not a corporate statement of expectations) on AAP implementation. AAP is a key element of the humanitarian programme cycle.

For AAP to work, direct interactions between the affected populations/communities and UNICEF are crucial. These were documented for only some responses, however. In Iraq in 2010, in Liberia in 2012 and 2013, and in Sudan (2002-2010), needs identification was done with the close involvement of community leaders. In Rwanda in 2014 and in the Philippines in the same year, UNICEF established active consultative mechanisms, particularly with women and children in the affected communities.

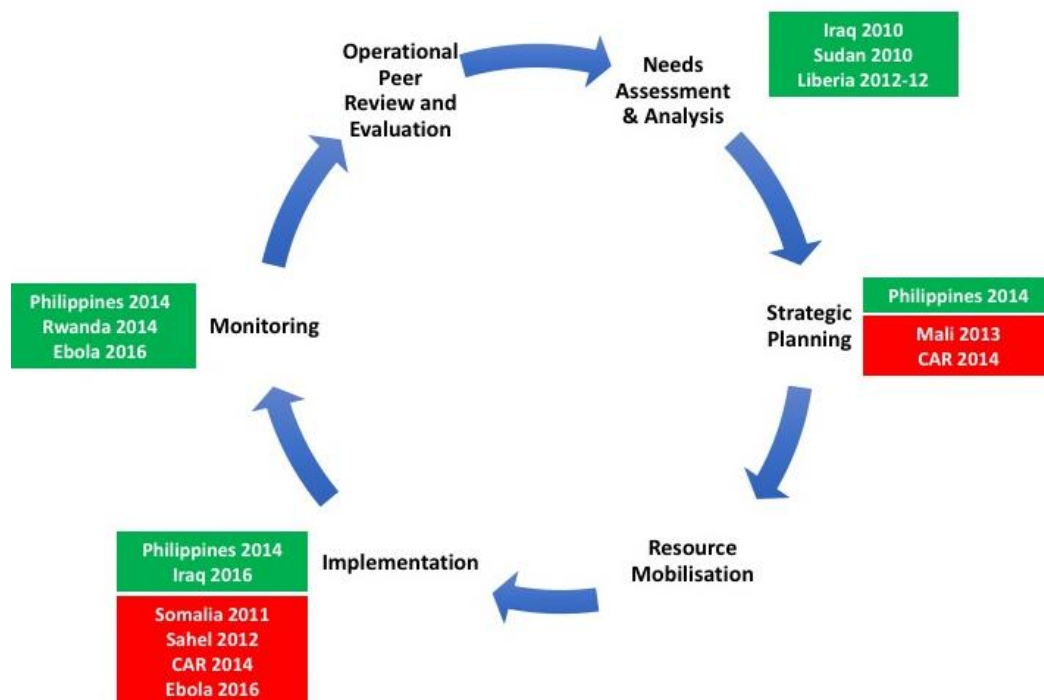
Involvement of beneficiaries in the response is a strong factor in accountability. The internally displaced person response in Iraq offers an innovative example<sup>33</sup> of such involvement. To overcome obstacles arising from population mobility and dysfunctional stationary water systems, the country office used the 'WASH service centre' approach. These centres were established where there were concentrations of internally displaced persons. They are run by a local NGO, and are staffed by the internally displaced persons themselves. They have a coordination function, monitor water quality, facilitate basic response, including supplies, and support hygiene promotion. A total of 15 service centres were in operation at the time of writing, reportedly serving around 1 million children.

Such strong involvement at the community level did not, however, take place consistently. In Somalia in 2011 this crucial task was left to local NGO partners, and the evaluation of the Sahel response in 2012 states that "The lack of beneficiary involvement in the response is striking." Similarly, the evaluation of the response in Mali one year later found that "possibly, not enough attention had been paid to community participation and initiatives in the pre-crisis development operations or some sort of fatigue has occurred, and this may have contributed to the poor performances generally reported". This, according to the evaluators, affected all activities requiring community-level involvement, notably CLTS.

CLTS (Community-Led Total Sanitation) is an approach to fight against open defecation practices in rural areas. It was initially conceived as a behaviour change process in development settings, not in emergency responses, as it takes time to trigger the process, monitor progress in latrine self-construction, verify results and certify communities as ‘open defecation free’.<sup>34</sup> It was used, however, during the Ebola crisis in late 2014 and is increasingly applied in post-emergency and fragile settings.<sup>35</sup> In the reviewed documentation, two examples demonstrate this use in non-acute humanitarian settings. In Pakistan, after the 2010 floods, UNICEF, in close cooperation with the government, decided to commence CLTS as the emergency was ongoing, instead of pursuing the more traditional approach of providing sanitation hardware together with more transient behaviour change communication. CLTS also features strongly in the Artibonite cholera response programme in Haiti, which has been running since 2013. (See also the section on effect on social norms and individual behaviour in Section 4.4.)

The evaluation of the response in the CAR (2015) notes similar disconnects with the affected population across all sectors, as does the evaluation of the Ebola response in 2015. The Ebola response, however, evolved with the implementation of the community-centred approach and transparency. Subsequently, feedback and participation increased. Figure 6 maps the evaluations with positive and negative findings regarding AAP against the humanitarian programme cycle.

Figure 6: AAP in humanitarian WASH within the humanitarian programme cycle



(Green indicates a good case/practice in integrating AAP in the WASH response; red indicates a weak AAP integration)

While WASH responses invested in good results measurement and reporting, constraints remain in the full implementation of the HPM approach. Monitoring and evaluation, where discussed in evaluations, was found to be a positive factor in UNICEF’s overall accountability. In Sudan (2002-201), evaluators found an extensive WASH monitoring and tracking system to be operational. The appointment of a dedicated information management specialist by the Somalia WASH cluster in 2011 was seen as benefitting “the quality and depth of information”. Evaluators noted that the better integration of the RRMP

performance measurement systems into UNICEF’s information management system and the adoption of ActivityInfo by the WASH cluster strengthened information management of the response (2013).

ActivityInfo, a monitoring and reporting database, emerged from a bespoke software solution for gathering and reporting basic 4W (who, what, where, when) data on a map. It works both online and offline. It is particularly suited for reporting on activities that are geographically dispersed and implemented by multiple partner organizations. Originally developed for UNICEF’s RRMP programme in Eastern DRC, it later became a standalone software/service combination further developed by a private company with support from UNICEF, UNHCR, OCHA and other organizations, and is used in several countries.

However, the data on WASH activities that was fed into such information management systems was not always of sound quality or fully representative of the reality on the ground. In Mali (2013), the target set for a key WASH indicator (safe water coverage) was judged by evaluators to be unrealistic, as it would have required detailed data on chlorination levels and water quantities at the point of use. They also felt that the addition of HPM indicators to Partnership Agreements was “an additional burden” rather than an improvement. In the Philippines in 2014, UNICEF initially ran parallel systems for monitoring data from the emergency and from the regular programme, and only merged them later in the response. In Nepal in 2015, evaluators felt that the HPM was “rigid and unable to adapt to the country context”. These issues are also reflected in the wider synthesis of humanitarian evaluations and pointed out by a recent review of the HPM approach.<sup>36</sup>

## 4.4 What were the direct effects of WASH humanitarian action, and their likely sustainability?

This section looks at the overall performance of WASH humanitarian action, its direct effects, and at how humanitarian action transitioned into recovery, what structures it helped develop, and whether it contributed to better resilience and ultimately, sustainability.

**Key findings:** UNICEF WASH responses were generally seen as effective, within access and funding limitations, with only a few exceptions in the reviewed documentation. The good responsiveness of WASH as a sector is referred to repeatedly. Many evaluations found that WASH interventions had a positive effect on social norms and/or individual behaviour, with some deficits noted in relation to poor community involvement and inappropriate design of communication. Aside from improving practices and behaviour, how well O&M arrangements work clearly determines the sustainability of WASH interventions. Here, evaluations present a mixed picture of good and bad examples. The most productive examples where WASH contributed to resilience are those where the effect on social norms and individual behaviours was strongest.

### Over time

WASH programmes over the reviewed period have been generally effective, with a mix of positive and negative examples of long-term effects after the emergency. While UNICEF has made progress in incorporating resilience in its response since 2013, when it held its first global conference on resilience,

### By emergency typology

WASH excelled in two high profile responses to sudden onset emergencies in terms of responsiveness and impact. Complex/protracted emergencies appear to pose more challenges to an effective WASH response, as do urban environments.

results are not yet evident in the reviewed documents.

**Evidence base: strong**

- 25 out of 26 evaluations report on the performance of interventions in terms of their own intended objectives.
- 25 out of 26 evaluations cover effects on social norms and individual behaviours.
- 22 out of 26 evaluations provide evidence on complementarity with development – integration of transition/resilience strategies.

**WASH responses were generally found effective against their own intended objectives.**

With the assumption that targets are realistic, and within the limitations of available funding, WASH responses usually appear to address the needs they intend to cover (see also evidence on equity in Section 4.2). This points to a general effectiveness of WASH interventions in emergencies. Several evaluations point to the high responsiveness<sup>d</sup> of WASH interventions, especially when WASH was part of an RRM,<sup>e</sup> as was the case in the DRC, the CAR and South Sudan. WASH interventions were singled out for praise after the Haiti earthquake in 2010 and after the Nepal earthquake in 2015, where WASH was the one sector that stood out in limiting and ameliorating the effects of the disaster. In Mali (2012) and Nepal (2015), WASH, together with health, was commended on limiting and controlling a post-disaster cholera outbreak. In the Ebola response in 2014, WASH was a key factor in the community-centred approach that turned the epidemic around. Positive factors in these instances were good relationships with partners, good coordination and a well-established WASH programme before the crisis (although in Haiti the opposite was the case). According to the 2013 evaluation, in the RRMP in the DRC, WASH assistance reached 88 % of its target. This also speaks to the effectiveness of the RRMP in the context.

A small number of evaluations voice some concerns about WASH effectiveness. In the Sahel response in 2012 and the Lake Chad Basin response in 2016, evaluations found the WASH response to be less effective; in both cases a funding constraint was suggested as a limiting factor. In some emergencies initial targets were revised, for example in the CAR response and the Syria regional response, opening potential questions on target setting.

**WASH humanitarian action generally had a positive effect on social norms and individual behaviour.** These 'soft' elements are a key part of WASH responses, especially in the sanitation and hygiene components. In almost all evaluations reviewed, UNICEF's effect on improved social norms and individual behaviour was judged as positive and comprehensive. The pivotal effect of supporting good handwashing practices was specifically noted by the evaluation of the Ebola response in 2015.

<sup>d</sup> The term 'responsiveness' is used in the sense of implementing an appropriate response when and where it is needed. As such, it is a compound term for the dimensions of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency.

<sup>e</sup> The RRM exemplifies this use of 'responsiveness' – by design it combines a timely response with a multi-sector response based on a collective needs assessment.

The evaluation of the UNICEF response to the Ebola crisis, however, highlights a shortage of skilled staff in behaviour change communication (Communication for Development, or C4D), which affected the overall response.<sup>37</sup> A similar issue had already been pointed out in the evaluation of the response to the earthquake in 2010 in Haiti: “It must be appreciated that hygiene promotion requires a different skill-set to other areas of WASH; the Haiti response has emphasized that there is a lack of global surge capacity for hygiene promotion. This work requires a different set of skills from sanitation or (especially) water interventions – C4D and social mobilization skills – often seen as the ‘soft’ side of WASH. UNICEF WASH staff globally are most comfortable with water interventions (especially the engineering side) but less so [with] hygiene promotion and many staff deployed to Haiti seemed outside their comfort zone in dealing with hygiene promotion interventions. For this area of WASH, managers need the right skills [to] ensure oversight, to bring people together and to effectively implement plans.”<sup>38</sup>

In this endeavour to make individual behaviour safer, some evaluations note challenges to the effectiveness of UNICEF’s interventions. Limitations to community participation, partly because of social norms but also as a result of the appropriateness of intervention design (see also Section 4.2) were noted in the evaluations of the Mali response (2012) and the evaluation of the Lake Chad Basin response (2016). The evaluation of the 2013-2019 WASH project in Haiti points out that there was insufficient focus on household water safety, which may have hampered efforts to provide safe water at the source.

**There are examples of both good and poor performance in integrating transition and resilience strategies in WASH responses**, and their complementarity with development programmes. This integration and the transition into development have become major features of humanitarian discourse, featuring strongly at the World Humanitarian Summit.<sup>39</sup> Yet it can be challenging to embed such inter-linkages in operational practice.<sup>f</sup> With a few exceptions where water trucking was a significant part of the response (Haiti and Iraq in 2010), WASH responses have included the creation of infrastructure and services even during emergencies that have the potential to strengthen the foundations for recovery and ultimately development. Behaviour change results can contribute to the resilience of populations.

O&M is important for maintaining installed infrastructure. It is closely linked to the willingness to pay for water and sanitation services, a crucial dimension of how sustainable and supportive of resilience WASH investments are. The reviewed evaluations have examples of both strong and weak O&M systems. In Iraq (2010), two operations – water delivery to essential facilities and mobile water testing – both depended on the willingness of the government to fund them after UNICEF’s contribution ended. Such willingness was seen in Kenya in 2010 at the coordination level, where the government was seen to have full ownership of the national emergency coordination system for water and sanitation. In the urban interventions in Liberia in 2012, user fees were chosen as a viable option; however, evaluators noted that these may have been too high for some users, constraining usage. In Sudan in the 2002-2010 programme, willingness to pay was noted at around 70 % of surveyed respondents outside of emergency areas, but was notably lower in emergency areas at 56%.

A consequence of unresolved O&M issues can be deterioration of infrastructure. For example, the State of Palestine evaluation (2012) notes that evaluators found that the facilities in several locations were not sufficiently maintained. An often-used solution appears to be the setting-up of WASH committees. In the urban project in Liberia in 2013 these were observed to provide limited transparency on pricing and on the influence of private landowners who had provided sites for facilities. In the evaluation of the Lake Chad Basin response in 2016 a lower

<sup>f</sup> On 22 December 2015 UNICEF issued an addendum to its Level 3 procedures that defines a “consolidation phase” for protracted emergencies that is to follow an acute response phase. Whilst this addendum is not reflected in the evaluations under review here, it may demonstrate effects on transition processes in the future.

than expected level of latrine maintenance was noticed, and attributed to unresolved effects of “local factors and customary norms” on the acceptance of the systems.

Immediate assistance during an emergency may have to be followed up with longer-term infrastructure development. An example was reported from the RRMP in the DRC in 2013: A successful rapid cholera intervention was not followed by timely (within three months) installation of a safe water system, rendering the initial intervention without lasting effect. Another example demonstrates the crucial role of linking development and humanitarian action, and of fundraising for it: In the responses in South Sudan (2015), the CAR (2015) and Haiti (national programme to fight cholera, evaluated 2015), it was found that the humanitarian-development nexus was not well-reflected in funding patterns.

In 2016, UNICEF published a dedicated study conducted by Overseas Development Institute (ODI) on the links between development and humanitarian action in the UNICEF WASH humanitarian response. It analyses the state of play in the organization and proposes the options for establishing a strong culture of linking development and humanitarian action.<sup>40</sup> The study points out the risk to good programming posed by separate funding and planning streams for regular and humanitarian programmes: “If UNICEF conceives of humanitarian action and resilience separately, they will remain parallel agendas, limiting the potential for humanitarian programmes to develop resilience”. This appears to be particularly relevant when humanitarian action transitions back to regular programmes, as described in the examples above. The study sees a very relevant role for the early recovery approach in this phase of programming.

For Haiti, this was attributed to a lack of technical resources amongst development partners. In the later WASH project in the same country, emergency and development elements were seen to be effectively decoupled, and the evaluation in 2016 warned of a risk of systems consequently not being sustainable.

The coordination of humanitarian and development interventions through separated mechanisms contributes to the lack of synergies between the two streams of external assistance. The 2016 UNICEF/ODI paper on the humanitarian and development nexus in WASH found that when development partners and humanitarian clusters interact more directly and intensively, such silos can gradually be overcome, as was the case in the DRC.<sup>41</sup> (See also details on cluster transition, in Section 4.3.)

Resilience depends to a large extent on the people themselves and their communities, and productive behaviour change efforts are crucial to strengthening it. This was, according to the evidence, successfully pursued in several responses. In the State of Palestine, positive behaviour change regarding hygiene and sanitation was noted (2012), as was the case in the earthquake response in Nepal (2015) and the Ebola response (2015). In Pakistan, following the 2010 floods, UNICEF, in close collaboration with the government, decided to pursue a strictly developmental approach to sanitation practices. Although the widespread destruction and the urgency of the problem would have warranted a more ‘traditional’ emergency response – as pursued for example in Haiti in the same year – it was decided to invest from day one of the response in sustained behaviour change. The Pakistan Approach to Total Sanitation, based on the CLTS approach, invested in teaching safe behaviours around sanitation as part of the emergency response, and was assessed by the evaluators as successful and sustainable.

A similar success in including a strong behaviour change communication approach within an emergency response was experienced in Nepal. UNICEF and the WASH cluster, with strong advocacy from the government and NGOs, supported a balanced approach to sanitation. While it was acknowledged that the traditional CLTS approach would fail due to lost livelihoods and the limited ability of affected populations to (re)build their own latrines, it was also agreed that (re)triggering activities as per the CLTS approach would help raise awareness around poor sanitation

practices, and support any external intervention. Consequently, an open defecation-free kick-start campaign kit was launched, which provided the most vulnerable households with a package of essential materials to reconstruct their own toilets. The normal CLTS approach was only implemented after these had been distributed, which is exceptional and signifies the compromise between the need to provide even basic supplies in the aftermath of an emergency and the long-term need to change underlying behaviours.<sup>42</sup>

## 4.5 How efficient was the response?

This final section looks at evidence of efficiency, including the cost-effectiveness of interventions and the functioning of logistics and supply, and demonstrates examples of where an understanding of cost and its effect on the overall response was evident.

**Key findings:** As across all of UNICEF’s humanitarian action,<sup>43</sup> there is little evidence on cost-effectiveness or efficiency in WASH. The reviewed evidence base provides two examples where evaluations have documented per capita cost, a basic prerequisite for comparing cost across responses. These estimates, however, are remarkably different. There is some qualitative evidence of high-cost interventions that evaluators suggest could have been more cost-effective, and a few references to the cost of not intervening. The latter is often caused by funding constraints, a factor in limited effectiveness, but also in limited efficiency of interventions. For example, the suggestion by one evaluation that behaviour change work is dropped when funds are short points to reduced effectiveness but also reduced efficiency – unchanged behaviour may require more frequent repetition of an intervention. Finally, the supply and logistics function received mixed reviews; while in some emergencies it excelled in supplying WASH items, in others it was reported to be a delaying factor.

### Over time

There is no clear trend or change in efficiency over time, mainly because of a lack of quantitative data.

### By emergency typology

Per-capita costs were estimated in responses to complex/protracted emergencies, while in sudden onset emergencies, costs were a lesser consideration.

### Evidence base: medium to strong

- 17 out of 26 evaluations looked at cost, if and where available.
- 17 out of 26 evaluations report on finance-related issues and funding limitations.
- 11 out of 26 evaluations document evidence on supply and logistics.

**Partly due to limitations in UNICEF’s internal data, it is challenging for evaluations to establish financial efficiency and cost effectiveness**, a finding also reflected in the overall synthesis of humanitarian evaluations.<sup>44</sup> The evaluations of the CAR response in 2014, the Ebola response in 2014 and the Lake Chad Basin response (2016) point to these deficiencies. Only two of the reviewed evaluations provide a cost estimate broken down to beneficiaries: In the DRC RRMP in 2012, the average expenditure was estimated to be between 5-10 USD per person, while in the refugee response in Rwanda in 2014, it was as high as 145 USD per person.

The average per-capita cost established by UNICEF Afghanistan for a typical, full WASH response (see section 4.1. for more details) lies at around 28 USD (18-44 USD), including needs assessment costs. According to the country office, this estimate is in the lower range of unit costs seen in other countries.<sup>45</sup>

Some of the reviewed evaluations provide more qualitative evidence and considerations on efficiency. The evaluation of the Haiti earthquake response in 2010 points out that the expensive option of water trucking was pursued for longer than perceived necessary, and that an expensive model of portable toilet was used instead of local construction of latrines. In Sudan, the evaluation of the WASH programme (2002-2010) found that “operational costs for delivering WASH services are generally found to be very high in comparison to estimates from the late nineties, especially in emergency areas”.

There is also a non-monetary opportunity cost linked to the performance of a response. While a response may be efficient in financial terms, if it is delayed or ill-prepared, it may not be able to reach certain beneficiaries at a certain time. These lost opportunities are counted in lost results, with an example coming from the evaluation of the response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in 2014. The evaluators pointed out that delays in the Programme Cooperation Agreement (PCA) process “were unduly high in some cases, leading to significant delays and lost opportunities”.

**Some of the reviewed evaluations also highlight the negative effect of limited funding on the scale or the quality of the WASH response.** In Sudan between 2003 and 2010, despite growing needs, UNICEF funding decreased. For the Sahel response, the real-time assessment suggested considering alternative funding approaches for WASH, including establishing a special Emergency Programme Fund (EPF) for WASH. In the cholera response in Haiti in 2015, evaluators noted that “C4D activities tend to be neglected whenever UNICEF experiences a shortage of funds”, while a substantial funding gap of 83% in Nigeria in 2016 forced the WASH intervention to focus on enhancing water access “in a few IDP sites and host communities”.

For supply and logistics, evaluators found that in the 2010 Haiti response, “key drivers underpinning the organization’s positive accomplishments include systematic action by its Supply Division, supported by clear procedures, to pre-position and rapidly deliver supplies.” In the Liberia intervention (2012), the UNICEF supply function was seen as a guarantor of cost-effectiveness, while the opposite was stated in the evaluation of the State of Palestine WASH programme. In the Mali (2011), Nigeria (2015) and Ebola (2015) responses, supplies underpinned an effective WASH response, while in the CAR response, WASH was evaluated as the section that was least effective with its supply component – together with the RRM.

## Chapter 5: Conclusions and lessons learnt

### 5.1 Conclusions

The conclusions that are formulated below are directed at UNICEF and, to some extent, at its government and implementing partners.

#### Conclusion on evidence and learning

1. **The evaluation evidence on WASH in emergencies is insufficient. UNICEF has not evaluated its WASH in emergency work sufficiently to be able to learn and adjust programmatic approaches.** This synthesis relies heavily on multi-sector evaluations when it comes to the most prominent responses of the recent past, with often little specific evidence on the WASH component. While there are dedicated evaluations of WASH humanitarian action, they do not include many of the Level 2 and Level 3 emergencies over the period under review. Even beyond the gap in Level 2/Level 3 coverage, the frequency of WASH evaluations relevant to emergency responses appears to have decreased – between 2013 and 2016, only one WASH-specific evaluation covered emergency-related responses each year. Protracted crises have been relatively better documented than rapid and slow onset crises. The content and quality of the reports varies significantly, including the way in which each evaluation criterion was approached in evaluations. This limited coverage leaves substantial evaluation gaps and cannot alone paint a complete picture of the performance of the UNICEF WASH response in emergencies. It also limits UNICEF's ability to learn from its past emergency responses and to capitalize on its considerable, long-standing and global experience in humanitarian situations in order to continuously improve the timeliness and quality of its WASH humanitarian response. Lastly, it leaves knowledge gaps in some aspects of humanitarian WASH programming.

#### Conclusion on the overall performance of the UNICEF WASH response to past emergencies

2. **UNICEF WASH teams are valued partners, which has helped UNICEF be a major and credible partner in humanitarian WASH, play its coordination role, and support national capacities and ownership.** WASH teams are generally considered to be legitimate, proactive and effective cluster leaders, maintaining strong links with and between cluster members and partners. This supported the effectiveness of emergency WASH responses in achieving results for children throughout the reviewed period. UNICEF WASH capitalized well on its long presence in-country prior to an emergency, on pre-existing partnerships with government and on its participation in existing sector coordination mechanisms. It produced outstanding (and growing) examples of supporting national ownership of humanitarian responses and coordination. When the situation permitted, WASH teams supported government in taking over as the sector/cluster lead. Where possible, national capacity was developed.
3. **The emergency WASH responses supported by UNICEF in the field performed well overall given the challenging contexts within which they operated, and the funding and staffing constraints. There was variability across operations, however, and some areas for improvement across the board.** The available evidence shows that over the past seven years, UNICEF has regularly and significantly contributed to a WASH

humanitarian response that was mostly timely, appropriate, effective and often life-saving. Recent reforms in procedures and strategies, such as SSOPs and RRM, have enabled faster and more effective responses. Yet, some emergency WASH operations have been more effective than others in certain areas/aspects, and there remain some areas for which it was not possible to identify clear trends towards improvements. Areas where a positive trend has been identified in evaluation reports include the application of the RRM approach and AAP. Areas where no clear improvement over time has been identified include emergency preparedness, needs assessments, resilience-oriented response, and data/monitoring of cost effectiveness. This points to a need for a more consistent process for learning, disseminating and applying knowledge and good practices generated through experience.

### Specific conclusions

4. **WASH emergency preparedness has not been systematic and, when done, has not always been appropriate or useful, focusing more on supply pre-positioning than on putting the right capacities and systems in place.** UNICEF WASH sections were not always fully prepared when an emergency occurred, and as a result, did not always respond fast enough. Both positive and negative examples have been documented over the reviewed period. Countries with previous, recurrent or protracted emergencies did not necessarily perform better in terms of preparedness (e.g. Palestine, CAR, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia) than those affected by on-off emergencies and without significant prior experience in WASH emergencies (e.g. Syria, Mali, Nepal, Nigeria). Specific good practices have been documented, such as the WESCOORD mechanism in Kenya, the regional supply hubs in Somalia, pre-arrangements with NGO partners in Afghanistan, and the use of SSOPs to accelerate PCA establishment in the Philippines. While pre-positioning of supplies is useful and has helped several responses, it has not been critical or sufficient for a fast response, especially when the emergency extended to an unexpected scale. Rather, it appears that effective systems and people, in terms of qualified and mentally prepared staff, pre-arranged cooperation agreements and partnerships, and well-internalized emergency procedures were instrumental to a fast response.
5. **UNICEF has not maximized the potential for a sectorally integrated emergency response.** WASH often intends to work in coordination with other sectors and create synergies. Intentions have rarely translated into actual practice: many of the evaluations that examined this dimension found 'siloes' responses. The internal structure of UNICEF and of government counterparts by sector as well as the organization of the aid system and of the CCCs themselves are obstacles, as they do not create the right incentives. Complex/protracted emergencies in remote, insecure and hard-to-reach areas pose additional challenges.
6. **WASH responses in RRM are reported to be relatively better prepared, respond in a timelier manner and work more inter-sectorally.** A clear, positive improvement over the last seven years is the growing use of the RRM with WASH as a core element of it. This arrangement has been reported to have been well prepared (including in terms of systems and people) and supported a timelier and more sectorally coordinated/integrated response than more traditional response strategies. Their response to acute needs is described to be generally effective. These findings come mostly from non-evaluative work, however.
7. **Needs assessments are not systematic, and when conducted, they are not comprehensive and equity/gender-lensed enough to usefully guide the design and**

**planning of the WASH response, and do not sufficiently involve beneficiaries.** Like other UNICEF sectors, WASH responses do not always base their planning on a thorough needs assessment. Consequently, opportunity-based, rather than needs-based programming, persists. Plans are primarily made and updated based on available resources and on the contribution capacity of other agencies. While the subsequent responses appear to have addressed the most urgent needs, this seems to have been a consequence of applying a standard approach that covers most situations, or tacit knowledge. The CCCs and related minimum standards, the need to involve beneficiaries, and the equity and gender dimensions are generally internalized, but this growing awareness did not translate into them being taken into account in needs assessments and response planning systematically. Constraints include lack of skills and ready-to-use methodological guidance on how to collect and analyse data accordingly; limited time and resources to do so; and lack of incentives.

8. **Reliable and disaggregated data on costs and results are lacking, making it impossible to assess the efficiency of the WASH response.** Most reviewed evaluations were not able to compare planned versus actual expenditures and results, and calculate per-capita costs, despite the usefulness of such calculations for decision-making and accountability purposes. Qualitative evidence pointed to a few instances of cost-effective design as well as of cost-conscious response management that can be used as models for others. Areas for potential efficiency gains in management processes and implementation approaches include well-thought out supply and logistics arrangements, and increased investment in community mobilization and behaviour change activities.
9. **There has been progress on AAP, with work still to be done on monitoring and reporting, beneficiaries' involvement and accountability mechanisms.** Although several WASH operations have embraced some aspects of the AAP agenda, there has not been a case where all principles have been adhered to across all phases of the programme cycle. There is notably little evidence of consistent involvement of affected populations and use of beneficiary feedback mechanisms. Nevertheless, some good practices have been identified that could be replicated elsewhere: inclusion of internally displaced persons in response management in Iraq, and establishment of dedicated consultation mechanisms allowing people to have a say in shaping the response in the Philippines and in Rwanda. While downwards accountability seems to be improving, upwards accountability is still often constrained by inadequate monitoring systems, unrealistic indicators, and a not yet fully internalized HPM approach. HPM needs better adaptation to local contexts.<sup>9</sup>
10. **Investment in C4D and O&M supports lasting improvements in both infrastructure and behaviours. Investments have generally been more significant and effective in C4D than in O&M, which limits the potential for maximizing long-term benefits of WASH responses and supporting the resilience of the affected communities.** The reviewed evidence has shown that WASH can bring about improvements that last beyond the emergency phase and support community resilience when sound investments are made in changing social norms and individual behaviour through C4D (as was prominently the case in the Ebola crisis) and when adequate O&M arrangements for WASH infrastructures are put in place. Yet, some evaluations point to funding constraints leading to supply-side (infrastructure and hardware) activities being given priority at the expense of O&M (and, in some cases, of demand-side/software interventions), jeopardizing the

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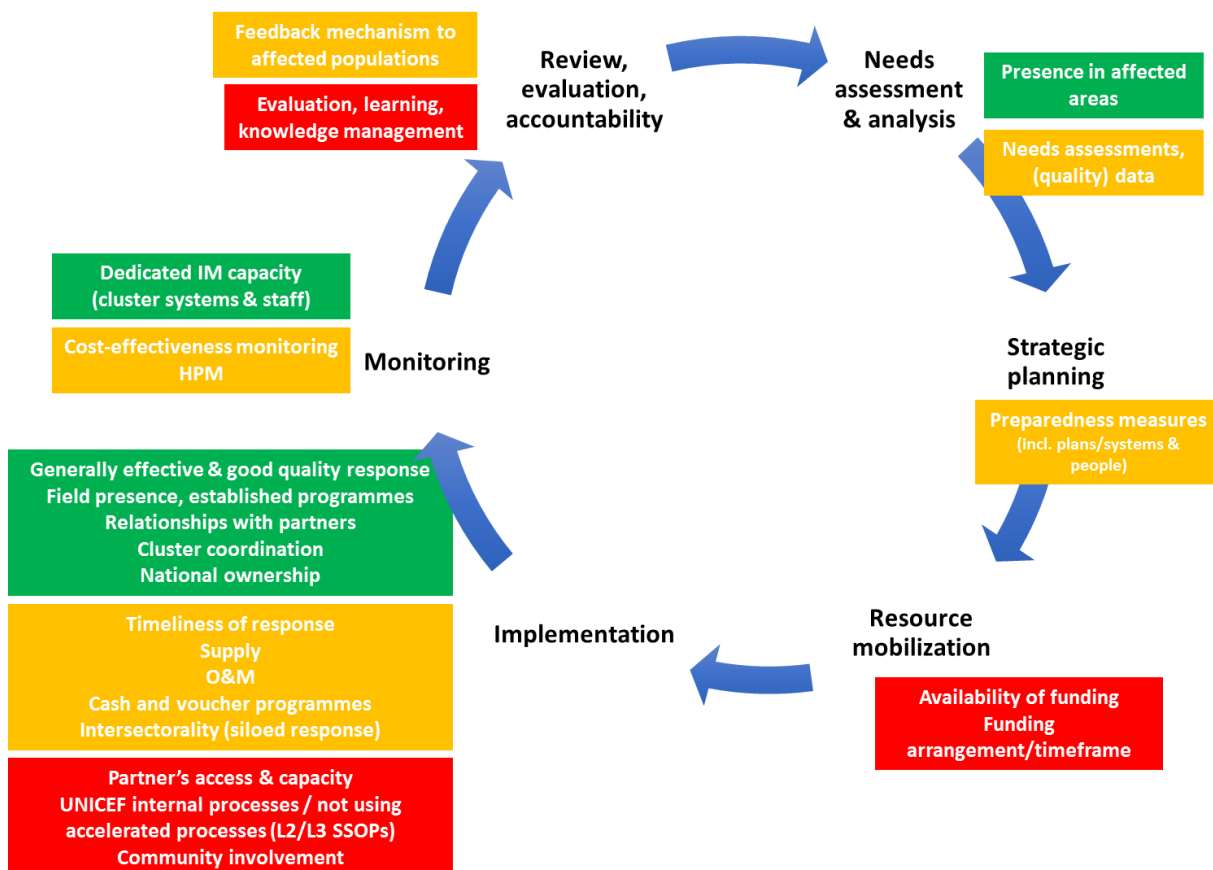
<sup>9</sup> This was also found by a recent review of the HPM approach: United Nations Children's Fund, *Review of Humanitarian Performance Monitoring Approach: Formative Assessment*, 2016.

effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of capital investment. No particular trend of improvement can be seen over the reviewed period. Needs and opportunities for increased investment (and improved intervention approaches) in O&M and C4D exist particularly in protracted crises and in urban areas.

**11. WASH is still in the learning phase when it comes to working in urban settings, public health emergencies and with cash/voucher systems.** The limited available evidence reveals that UNICEF has faced challenges in urban areas with regard to both hardware and software components. There are few WASH evaluations on responses to cholera outbreaks and other public health emergencies (Ebola, Zika, Chikungunya, etc.). Cash/voucher-based approaches have rarely been used and evaluated. Considerable potential exists for learning and further advancing these increasingly high priority items on the humanitarian agenda.

Figure 7 summarizes areas of overall strength and weakness throughout the programme cycle in the UNICEF WASH response to emergencies. It is based on the reviewed documentation, and uses the following colour coding: green for areas of overall strength; yellow when the overall picture is mixed; red for areas of overall weakness.

Figure 7: Areas of overall strength and weakness in the UNICEF WASH response to emergencies



## 5.2 Lessons learnt

**Emergency preparedness is a strategy on its own. It cannot be limited to supply pre-positioning.** Preparedness has often been limited to supply pre-positioning, which can be instrumental but is not sufficient for an effective response. Investing in people and systems is critical for a faster response. Moreover, previous experience with emergencies in one country does not guarantee faster or better responses to future emergencies in the same country. UNICEF has the capacity and the learning available to plan for emergencies more strategically. Not doing so is a missed opportunity for responsiveness and effectiveness.

**RRMs tend to support increased inter-sectoral coordination and response timeliness,** according to the limited evidence reviewed. This approach is being increasingly used by UNICEF in emergency responses, but has not yet been rigorously evaluated.

**Quality programming (and evaluation) relies on quality data.** While effective responses have been executed without dedicated needs assessments and robust monitoring systems, the evidence points to data being crucial for a quality response. Data are important for a much-needed tracking of results and expenditure for management purposes, and are equally needed for improved understanding of costs and areas of potential efficiency gains.

**There are significant gaps between principles and commitments and the way they are operationalized in practice.** The scarcity of references to and/or use of the International Humanitarian Principles, the CCCs, the AAP commitments and the equity agenda in the UNICEF humanitarian responses and evaluations is telling of an organizational culture that may prioritize action over principles, or has not yet fully internalized them in its field teams and operations.

**Collaboration and partnerships are vital for a good response.** UNICEF does not and cannot respond to an emergency alone. Complementarities, coordination, alignment and synergies with all stakeholders are to be sought from the onset. Whether with government, local authorities, other humanitarian agencies, or within the WASH cluster, when collaboration and partnerships were in place when a response started, the results were better. Greater collaboration and strong partnerships resulted in faster and stronger responses.

**Working inter-sectorally supports efficiency.** Especially in the RRM, a paradigm of inter-sector responsive action, there is abundant evidence that working inter-sectorally is more effective as well as more efficient (reduce operational costs while maximizing results for beneficiaries), although the lack of financial data precludes an accurate quantification of efficiency gains.

**C4D and O&M arrangements are key to lasting results and resilience-building.** Such investments should not be the first to be cut when funds run short, because they support effective, efficient, and sustainable results. They are part of the answer to the question of bridging the divide between humanitarian action and development. Approaches used in development contexts can be adapted and used in humanitarian contexts – as was the case with CLTS during the Ebola crisis.

## Chapter 6: Discussion: Putting findings into a broader perspective

This review and synthesis report extracts findings and lessons from UNICEF evaluations conducted in a significant number of countries over a considerable period of time. While evaluation reports are the most rigorous and independent type of evidence, they form only a part of the rich knowledge base on UNICEF's global humanitarian WASH programming. This section therefore aims to put the main conclusions drawn in the previous chapter into a broader perspective: how do the findings resonate with other sources of evidence and ongoing discussions? Are some of the identified areas for improvement already known and being addressed by UNICEF, or by the humanitarian WASH sector more generally? This section is based mostly on inputs from UNICEF staff and the Global WASH Cluster, and goes beyond the analysis of the consultant.

The critical role of UNICEF in humanitarian action and coordination has been recognized by donors and national governments in various external assessments.<sup>46</sup> Its position and credibility are notably supported by: its mandate (in both development and humanitarian settings, and in emergencies, as 'Provider of Last Resort'<sup>h</sup>); its continuous presence and close collaboration with national governments in-country; its share in global humanitarian expenditure; and its role and expertise as cluster lead for several sectors besides WASH. In WASH, emergency responses represent approximately half of the organization's total annual expenditure.<sup>47</sup> Its previous and current global WASH strategies place a significant emphasis on humanitarian action.<sup>48</sup> A large proportion of UNICEF WASH staff have experience in emergency situations. The Global Cluster led by UNICEF since 2005 is now composed of 32 partner organizations<sup>49</sup> and has accumulated extensive knowledge and know-how. These comparative advantages offer opportunities not only for emergency response and coordination, but also for emergency preparedness. Yet, the evaluation evidence indicates that UNICEF has not made the best use of its comparative advantages in this area.

Supplies play an important role in UNICEF's emergency preparedness. An evaluation of the supply response in emergencies in 2015 confirms the crucial role of the in-house Supply Division and its effectiveness in contributing to emergency responses.<sup>50</sup> As also discussed in several of the reviewed evaluations, supply pre-positioning is one of the most common preparedness activities in UNICEF WASH. Two recent return on investment studies estimated that it yields a return on investment in the magnitude of 1.6 to 2.0, and significant time savings of 10 to 21 days on average.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, other types of activities in which UNICEF has invested less were found to offer higher potential for financial and time savings and returns, such as: infrastructure pre-positioning (e.g. warehouses); data and information management systems strengthening; stand-by partnership agreements with humanitarian non-governmental and civil society organizations; long-term arrangements with humanitarian service providers; and capacity building.<sup>i</sup> The criticality of well-trained/experienced staff for a successful WASH response has also been identified by a recent literature review.<sup>52</sup> WASH

<sup>h</sup> In the WASH Cluster, as lead, UNICEF has the responsibility of 'Provider of Last Resort'. <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/other/documents-public/operational-guidance-provider-last-resort>

<sup>i</sup> According to the PricewaterhouseCoopers report, *UNICEF Emergency Preparedness: Return on Investment 2017*, investment in skills/training, data and information management systems, stand-by partnership agreements and long-term arrangements are "inexpensive with high programme impact". Infrastructure pre-positioning are "big ticket interventions, some with huge cost saving potential [...] Consistent, financial, time and carbon savings resulting from pre-positioning of off-shore supplies suggests greater investment should be made in high-risk settings".

emergency preparedness therefore needs to be more comprehensive/appropriate, and more systematic.

There is a recognized deficit in terms of operational guidance and documentation of good practices of WASH emergency preparedness. This may lead to a reactive, skills-based rather than proactive and evidence-based approach in the WASH response. Recent important developments within UNICEF to this end are not specific to WASH and therefore are not sufficient to fill the deficit: Procedure and Guidance Note on Emergency Preparedness 2016, Guidance on Risk Informed Programming 2017, Reference Document for Emergency Preparedness and Response 2017, Early Warning Early Action system reviewed and transformed into a new Emergency Preparedness Platform currently being piloted, and creation of a space for an internal, intranet-based document repository.<sup>j</sup> Two WASH-specific initiatives, however, are worth mentioning: the Shield and Sword strategy and the regional platform against cholera for the West and Central Africa region, launched by UNICEF and other partners in 2012<sup>53</sup>; and the WASH in emergency training for UNICEF and UNHCR staff, organized several times every year to build up a critical mass of prepared WASH professionals.<sup>k</sup> Availability of staff for training, and the turnover and attrition of trained staff are constraints, however. A recent multi-stakeholder WASH in emergency meeting convened by the Inter-Agency WASH Working Group in October 2017 also highlighted the increased availability of 'WASH in emergency generalists' but a lack of specialists trained on more specific issues.

The finding on the unsystematic use and usefulness of needs assessments resonates with the recent commitments of aid organizations and donors to the Grand Bargain to provide a single, comprehensive, cross-sectoral, methodologically sound and impartial overall assessment of needs for each crisis to inform strategic decisions on how to respond. An associated benefit would be to reduce the number of assessments and fund appeals produced by individual organizations. UNICEF's CCCs set the expectation for needs assessments, but there are no associated standards or guidance. Multi-cluster/sector initial rapid assessments (MIRA) developed by the IASC are commonly used through a joint assessment tool, notably in sudden onset emergencies, including IASC System-Wide Level 3 Emergency Responses.<sup>54</sup> The very nature of the needs assessments it is meant for (joint and rapid) makes their content limited/superficial and may explain their limited usefulness for individual sector planning purposes. MIRA can be used in combination with more sector-specific assessment exercises when needed. Sector-specific templates and data collection tools developed by NGOs or United Nations agencies are also adapted from one crisis to another. The Global WASH Cluster has a working group that aims to promote the use of WASH-specific needs

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<sup>j</sup> The IASC Handbook on Emergency Preparedness and Response (2010) is now partly outdated, not specific to WASH, and the chapter related to preparedness is limited in length and content. The new UNICEF internal procedure and guidance note for emergency preparedness (December 2016) and guidance on risk informed programming (June 2017) have a much richer content but again are not specific to WASH. The UNICEF Early Warning Early Action system has been recently revamped (now called Emergency Preparedness Platform), and is being piloted in several countries.

<sup>k</sup> The UNICEF *Humanitarian WASH Annual Report 2013* states that "in an effort to strengthen interagency collaboration and optimization of resources, UNHCR was incorporated into the course, allowing for a cohesive 'UN-WASH' orientation package to be delivered from 2014 with the aim of greater mutual understanding and improved efficiency on the ground. The joint course is expected to provide a 'one stop' orientation for the roster of standby partners, improving the efficiency and contribution of secondees to both UN agencies [...] Approximately 60 additional professional staff and partners participated in 3 training events in 2013 that took place in Thailand, Ethiopia and Sweden." Seven WASH in emergency training workshops took place in 2016, and six in 2017. In addition to this WASH-specific initiative, the 'Humanitarian training pathway' recently developed by UNICEF EMOPS will provide additional opportunity for WASH staff to gain broader understanding and know-how related to humanitarian work.

assessments including as part of inter-sectoral field surveys. Providing a universal set of WASH-related indicators and questions aligned with the SPHERE standards might be possible. But such a standardized tool would only serve as a starting point and would need to be customized based on the local situation/needs and combined with an expert analysis of the contextual factors.

The RRM approach has become a key element in an increasing number of humanitarian responses in rapid onset emergencies and complex and high-threat environments. Despite their long existence (over a decade) and application in several countries, they have only been evaluated once.<sup>l</sup> In 2017, the UNICEF Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS) completed a stocktaking exercise<sup>55</sup> and organized an internal workshop, but followed a descriptive rather than an evaluative approach. Both identified RRM as a valuable approach, and highlighted several strengths and challenges, including the need for less heavy/rigid internal administrative processes and stronger linkages with the preparedness and post-emergency phases.<sup>m</sup> A more comprehensive, independent and evidence-based analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in various contexts is still needed. WASH is a pivotal element in RRM as it often provides the most urgent part of the response and an entry point for (or contribution to) other interventions such as health, nutrition and protection. From a WASH perspective, it is therefore in the interest of the sector to analyse this arrangement compared to more traditional response strategies. A review by UNICEF of the WASH component of the Rapid Response Teams (a component of the broader RRM) in the context of cholera outbreaks is planned for 2018. Another approach that aims to bridge the disconnect between WASH and other sectors that has not yet been evaluated is the 'WASH in Nut(rition)' strategy developed by UNICEF and other partners in West and Central Africa in 2013.<sup>56</sup>

UNICEF made a strong commitment under the Grand Bargain on AAP. The international humanitarian community called for improved leadership and governance mechanisms at the level of the humanitarian country team and clusters/sectors to ensure engagement with and accountability to people and communities affected by crises. Priority areas for improvement include more active involvement of beneficiaries in needs assessments and monitoring and evaluation of the response, as identified above and in the British Department for International Development's (DFID) Multilateral Aid Review completed for UNICEF in 2016. The DFID review notably provides an overall positive picture of UNICEF's performance on the AAP agenda and concludes that main areas for improvement are systematizing community involvement in the identification of their needs in a timely manner, and including AAP in UNICEF's monitoring and reporting.<sup>n</sup> This indicates that AAP remains an agenda for the entire

<sup>l</sup> In the 2013 evaluation of the RRMP in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (part of the evidence used in this synthesis).

<sup>m</sup> Some of them were discussed in earlier initiatives such as the multi-agency webinar on 'Rapid Response Mechanism: Are we doing enough?' on 22 May 2015 (recording available at [www.deliveraidbetter.org/webinars/inter-agency-rapid-response-mechanism/](http://www.deliveraidbetter.org/webinars/inter-agency-rapid-response-mechanism/))

<sup>n</sup> The DFID report, *Raising the standard: the Multilateral Development Review 2016*, ([www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/573884/Multilateral-Development-Review-Dec2016.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/573884/Multilateral-Development-Review-Dec2016.pdf)), says: "UNICEF is committed to strengthening communication with, and inclusion of, crisis-affected populations in the design and provision of humanitarian assistance. Globally, affected populations have been consulted in more than three quarters of countries during one or more phases of humanitarian and emergency planning processes. In several country examples, UNICEF has been found to be good at involving communities and ensuring feedback mechanisms and local accountability, as well as ensuring a common approach among the NGOs which implement its programmes. They have been developing a range of tools to enhance their accountability to beneficiaries in development programmes e.g. applications to track the arrival of supply assistance to end-users. This was trialled in 2015 following the earthquake in Nepal and is now part of a range of e-tools available (including the use of U-Report, explained in the example below) [...] Ebola outbreak: UNICEF used new technologies to increase their accountability within the local communities in Liberia, as part of its social mobilisation strategy. UNICEF used a text-message based interactive social media platform, U-Report, during the disease

humanitarian community including UNICEF. The WASH section in UNICEF Headquarters is currently collaborating with EMOPS to strengthen this area of work. It also investigated this thematic for development contexts and published in 2015 a Reference Guide for Programming on 'Accountability in WASH'<sup>57</sup> in collaboration with UNDP, which could be adapted to humanitarian contexts.

UNICEF's approach to eliminating open defecation in rural areas offers another opportunity for further learning and adaptation. Through a successful scaling up of community-led sanitation approaches in development contexts,<sup>58</sup> and emerging experience as part of the emergency response, UNICEF has gained a better understanding of how to involve the beneficiary populations in an effective and meaningful way at the needs identification stage as well as in the implementation and monitoring of the intervention. The CLTS approach has made it easier for people in many programme countries to talk about and actively engage in WASH-related issues. This gives UNICEF considerable experience and an advantage when it comes to involving affected communities in WASH improvements.

The weaknesses documented within and outside UNICEF (including in a recent literature review<sup>o</sup>) regarding O&M of WASH infrastructure and – to a lesser extent – behaviour change communication in humanitarian programming point, again, to the challenges to linking (or finding the appropriate balance between) the immediate, life-saving response and longer-term objectives. Common constraints to incorporating some elements of sustainability into the response are numerous, including: time; financial means and duration of humanitarian funding; guidance and good practices from development programming not being adapted and used in humanitarian WASH; lack of human resources or appropriate skill sets among humanitarian teams; difficult access to intervention areas because of security or logistical obstacles; movement of populations and/or lack of stability/continuity within the beneficiary population, which impact their ability to receive and amplify hygiene education messages, join capacity-building activities, and take over the responsibility of managing and repairing WASH facilities. The multi-country study commissioned by UNICEF WASH and completed by ODI in 2016<sup>59</sup> also points to more systemic causes and disincentives, which are “deep rooted and extend beyond the WASH sector”. These range from diverging mission, principles and standards at the normative level, to separate mechanisms for dialogue and joint working at the operational level, leading to “humanitarian and development WASH operating as silos”. The lack of complementarity and collaboration has a cost for affected populations.<sup>p</sup> It can be

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outbreak, which served as a user-centred social monitoring tool designed to strengthen community-led response. It allowed communities, especially adolescents, to provide feedback, communicate with one another and send alerts to key stakeholders about issues and concerns in the communities.” In terms of areas for further progress, the report highlights: “Including crisis-affected populations in the design and provision of humanitarian assistance is still a growing area of UNICEF's work; only two thirds of countries reported that comprehensive information had been made available to affected populations in a timely manner to help them make informed decisions. [...] Although UNICEF have already undertaken actions to integrate information on AAP into their reporting, including incorporating dedicated clauses on AAP in their partnership agreements, there is opportunity for them to do more in this area. For example, continuing to work with others to ensure systems to monitor and gather information on AAP are as efficient and coordinated as possible will help lessen the burden of reporting and increase the volume and relevant of information collected.”

<sup>o</sup> International Initiative for Impact Evaluation 3ie, *Short-term WASH interventions in emergency responses in low- and middle-income countries*, 2017. The report states that “Technical efficacy of WASH interventions is generally established; however, effective and rapid behaviour change remains a primary hurdle to many emergency WASH interventions. [...] Intervention characteristics that influenced the success of emergency WASH interventions included: multiple communication modes; community-driven interventions; and clear links with previous development interventions.”

<sup>p</sup> International Initiative for Impact Evaluation 3ie, *Short-term WASH interventions in emergency responses in low- and middle-income countries*, 2017. The report states: “A lack of complementarity and collaboration makes it more costly to provide WASH services, reduces the effectiveness of targeting and sustainability, and ultimately increases the vulnerability of poor and marginalised people to disease and missed socio-economic opportunities.”

resolved, according to the report, by a coordinated effort by WASH professionals, donors and secretariats for WASH partnership and coordination structures (particularly the WASH cluster at the global, regional and country levels, and the Sanitation and Water for All partnership). In its 2013 Humanitarian WASH Annual Report, UNICEF called for “financial and political commitments from governments for strengthening national humanitarian WASH coordination, preparedness and response to narrow the gap between development and humanitarian WASH”.<sup>q</sup> At the operational level, the WASH section in Headquarters is currently collaborating with EMOPS to develop a simple, Excel-based financial, economic and environmental return on investment calculation model to help programme managers make informed choices when deciding on the most appropriate WASH options, taking longer-term cost and benefit considerations into account.

Over the present decade, the humanitarian community has gathered experiences and lessons learnt in urban and peri-urban settings (from the typhoons in the Philippines, the earthquake in Haiti, urban violence in Kenya, etc.). Traditionally, UNICEF’s focus has been on rural areas, but recent events around the world have compelled the organization to respond to crises in settings where it has limited experience in interventions. The new WASH Strategy for 2016-2030 signals increased engagement in small towns, urban settings and informal settlements. It commits the organization to gaining more capacity in urban WASH through internal staff training, external partnerships and innovative approaches.

UNICEF has recently expanded its experience in cash/voucher-based interventions to scale and speed up humanitarian WASH interventions in urban settlements, such as in Somalia, Lebanon (for Syrian refugees) and the Philippines.<sup>60</sup> As more of such interventions are going to be tested and implemented, as encouraged by the current UNICEF Global WASH Strategy,<sup>61</sup> evidence of results and operational guidance on where and how to more appropriately intervene continues to be needed.<sup>r</sup> This is also in line with the Grand Bargain and the Global WASH Cluster technical working group paper on cash and market-based programming, both also published in 2016. Other humanitarian agencies have gained more experience or documented their experience better than UNICEF, which again offers opportunities for collaboration and cross-learning.

The finding on the lack of sufficient, granular data on costs and results (especially at the outcome level) echoes the finding from a broader literature review in 2017,<sup>62</sup> which concluded: “While some cost information was available, the quality was not sufficient to assess cost-effectiveness”. This suggests that the issue goes beyond UNICEF. UNICEF’s corporate financial and result monitoring and reporting systems have evolved considerably in the past 10 years, and are undergoing continuous advancements, with improved systems and tools to be rolled out for the new Strategic Plan period 2018-2021. Nevertheless, there are particular challenges in humanitarian settings: the use of a parallel monitoring and reporting system and

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<sup>q</sup> In the same report, the organization stated that “through advocacy and partnerships in the broader WASH sector, UNICEF continued throughout 2013 to work on bridging the gap between humanitarian and development WASH service provision to ensure sustainability and resilience of systems and communities.”

<sup>r</sup> The Strategy states: “UNICEF will actively support cash and market-based WASH solutions in humanitarian situations. While cash is not a substitute for essential WASH services – which must be restarted with urgency in humanitarian response – cash and market-based solutions have an even greater impact in combination with services.” In the Grand Bargain document, aid organizations and donors committed to: “(1) Increase the routine use of cash alongside other tools, including in-kind assistance, service delivery (such as health and nutrition) and vouchers. Employ markers to measure increase and outcomes [...] (3) Build an evidence base to assess the costs, benefits, impacts, and risks of cash (including on protection) relative to in-kind assistance, service delivery interventions and vouchers, and combinations thereof. (4) Collaborate, share information and develop standards and guidelines for cash programming [...] (6) Aim to increase use of cash programming beyond current low levels, where appropriate.”

of few priority indicators, often different from those used in development programming; the lighter reporting formats and requirements; the multiplicity of implementing partners; the increased reliance on these partners, with less control and access to the field and to information. This is not only an impediment to cost-efficiency analysis, but also more generally to informed management decisions and organizational learning.

In the past few years, the weak evaluation coverage of UNICEF WASH humanitarian action in general, and in comparison to UNICEF WASH programming in development settings in particular, has been highlighted in several formal and informal meetings and reports within UNICEF.<sup>63</sup> It has also been raised in the WASH sector more generally, in recent Global WASH Cluster meetings as well as two literature reviews published in 2016 and 2017 by Tuft University.<sup>63</sup> Both UNICEF and the Global WASH Cluster have recently reaffirmed the need to base their operations on more (robust) evidence, and reiterated their commitment to contribute to filling knowledge gaps.<sup>64</sup> To this end, the Evaluation Office and the WASH section in UNICEF Headquarters collaborated to commission this evaluation review and synthesis. The WASH section in UNICEF Headquarters, in collaboration with the Global WASH Cluster, also conducted in 2017 a 'Humanitarian WASH Action Review' in the North East of Nigeria (Level 3 emergency declared in the region in August 2016), a real-time action learning exercise with the view to learn from and improve the ongoing response. The need for more evaluations of humanitarian responses is not specific to WASH: it has also been raised in a broader review of evaluations of humanitarian action published by the UNICEF Evaluation Office in 2017.<sup>†</sup>

With improved monitoring and reporting systems, and increased priority given to evaluation and evidence generation, UNICEF will be in a position to learn more from its considerable and ever growing experience to inform the timeliness and quality of its response to future emergencies. Yet, expanding the evidence base on WASH in emergency programming and filling knowledge gaps will have limited impact if mechanisms to ensure its dissemination and utilization are not in place. Ensuring this feedback loop is a critical issue and a challenge, not only but particularly in the humanitarian sector. Specific constraints include:

- Heavy workload and high staff turnover during individual emergency responses, hindering the learning process and the transmission of lessons learnt between staff and response phases.
- Changes in staff and teams involved in the response of successive emergencies, limiting the learning process at the individual level and making the re-integration/re-investment of individual experience, skills and lessons learnt into the next emergency response difficult.
- The corporate process of the management response to evaluations, aiming to ensure that appropriate improvements and corrective measures are taken by decision makers and programme implementers, may be less relevant and useful in the case of evaluation of humanitarian action. Subsequent crises will not necessarily occur in the

<sup>63</sup> For instance: UNICEF *Humanitarian WASH Annual Report 2013*, which stated "It is important to highlight the following challenges for 2014 and beyond: Documentation and sharing of quality humanitarian WASH interventions, innovations, new technology, research, and best practices."

([www.unicef.org/wash/files/Humanitarian\\_WASH\\_Annual\\_Report\\_Draft\\_9\\_9.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/wash/files/Humanitarian_WASH_Annual_Report_Draft_9_9.pdf)); several meetings held between the UNICEF Evaluation Office and WASH Section in New York Headquarters in 2016 and 2017, which led to the Evaluation Office commissioning this evaluation review and synthesis; and the UNICEF Global WASH Network and Partner Meeting that took place in June 2017 at UNICEF Headquarters.

<sup>†</sup> "UNICEF has gathered a considerable body of evidence on its humanitarian action (76 evaluations since 2010). Its Evaluation Policy states that evaluations of humanitarian action will 'usually be undertaken'. Yet despite a set of corporate triggers, coverage remains unsystematic and patchy – particularly of Level 1 emergencies." UNICEF Evaluation Office, *Towards Improved Emergency Responses: Synthesis of UNICEF Evaluations of Humanitarian Action 2010-2016*, 2017, [www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index\\_100819.html](http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_100819.html)

same country and therefore recommendations targeted at the country office may not influence UNICEF's humanitarian performance globally and in the next emergency in another country. Regional office and Headquarters staff may or may not systematically take evaluation or other sources of evidence into account in a formal process to inform their policies, strategies and guidance to country offices – and to contribute to global WASH progress. Also, they have limited influence on the response design and implementation at the country level.

Therefore there is a need to consider other opportunities, means and processes at the corporate level to support more systematic and strategic learning from one emergency to the next ones, and to induce global, structural and sustainable improvements in UNICEF's humanitarian assistance overall.

## Chapter 7: Recommendations

The recommendations proposed below flow directly from the conclusions of the evaluation review. They also take into consideration the broader context outlined in the previous section. As this report draws from country-level evaluations to formulate global-level findings, the majority of recommendations target UNICEF Headquarters and WASH sections in UNICEF regional offices. However, given UNICEF's decentralized accountability structure and the relative autonomy of country offices in programme design, management and evaluation, the findings and recommendations should also be disseminated to country-level WASH teams.

### 7.1 On evidence generation and utilization

An important finding of this evaluation synthesis is that WASH in emergencies, which makes up half of UNICEF's expenditure on WASH,<sup>65</sup> has been under-documented and under-evaluated, and that there are significant knowledge gaps in critical topics and recent areas of development. Four recommendations are proposed below to address this situation. The primary target audience for these recommendations is the UNICEF WASH section at Headquarters and regional office level.

#### **1. Improve the overall evaluation coverage of the UNICEF WASH response (and coordination) in emergencies**

This evaluation review revealed the scarcity of evidence on the WASH-specific programmatic response in evaluations of Level 2 and Level 3 emergencies. In several instances, it has limited the evidence base on some topics and the ability to formulate strong conclusions. From a programmatic point of view, the lack of evaluation evidence constrains the ability of UNICEF programme staff and their partners, including national government and cluster members, to learn from past experiences and improve the quality of the response to future emergencies. It is, however, unrealistic to expect that all future humanitarian evaluations commissioned by UNICEF will include an analysis of the programmatic performance of each sector in addition to operational aspects. The following options are therefore recommended:

- A. Whenever possible, incorporate stronger programmatic, sectoral content into evaluations of humanitarian action, including on WASH. This should be done particularly in the case of Level 2 and Level 3 emergencies.
- B. Alternatively, encourage a specific assessment, post-action review, or evaluation of the WASH response, where the scope and complexity of the WASH response or the potential for learning warrants such investment. It should examine the timeliness, coverage and quality of UNICEF's WASH response as well as its contribution as cluster coordinator, as per the CCCs, sector good practices, or other appropriate standards/benchmarks.

Where a more rapid feedback loop is needed, a real-time action review conducted during the first weeks or months of an emergency response, as was done in early 2017 in Nigeria, may be an appropriate evaluative approach to feed back into improvements in the emergency response as well as regional and global learning.

- C. Provide guidance and support to country office humanitarian WASH teams at an early stage of the response to ease engagement in evaluation: defining evaluation criteria and selecting questions to improve harmonization and comparability among evaluations; selecting monitoring and evaluation indicators at both output and outcome levels, and collecting baseline data survey; maintaining archives and preserving the institutional memory throughout the emergency period; offering templates and good examples for terms of reference and reports; and making available long-term agreements with professional humanitarian WASH evaluators. This could be done in collaboration with the UNICEF Evaluation Office and EMOPS.

**2. Develop the evidence base, technical guidance and staff capacities on programming areas of increasing relevance/occurrence, in particular: WASH response in urban settings, public health emergencies and cash/voucher-based approaches for WASH**

An increasing number of emergencies are occurring in urban settings, especially protracted crises, which has stretched UNICEF outside of its traditional intervention area (rural areas and small towns). The Ebola and Zika virus outbreaks that have occurred in the past few years have raised public health emergencies to the top of the agenda of the global WASH community. There is a need for UNICEF country, regional and Headquarters offices to collaborate with the Global WASH Cluster and other relevant partners on several evidence generation and capacity-building activities in these areas of programming.

Aid agencies are publishing a growing number of studies, evaluations and guidance documents on the use of vouchers and cash transfers both in humanitarian and development programming. The Grand Bargain has recommended the expansion of these tools. However, their applications in WASH in emergency interventions and evidence of positive effects on WASH outcomes remain few and they have not been well studied. Since multi-purpose cash programming approaches are gaining interest in the humanitarian sector, there is an urgent need to generate more evidence and increase staff capacities in this field.

- A. Expand and analyse the evidence base and lessons learnt on WASH responses in urban settings and WASH in public health emergencies.
- B. Gather existing documentation and evaluation evidence on cash/voucher-based approaches for WASH, and analyse them in a systematic manner for key lessons and to identify knowledge gaps. This analysis would notably investigate the contexts and preconditions in which this type of programming (including its variants and local adaptations) is most relevant and cost-effective. If need be, support the design of a few quality interventions using different variants in different contexts, and compare/evaluate their cost-effectiveness and impacts using robust methods, and fill current knowledge gaps.
- C. Incorporate evidence, lessons learnt and practical tips into existing or future humanitarian and WASH in emergency guidance and staff training initiatives. This could necessitate that UNICEF also defines its position and develops more detailed, dedicated guidance and training on how to prepare and implement these types of interventions.

**3. Assess the added value and challenges or risks associated with the RRM arrangement for WASH and how it articulates with the other components of the response**

The evidence base on RRM needs to be further expanded, with a comparative perspective including business as usual and other alternative approaches. From a WASH point of view, the following actions are recommended:

- A. Collaborate with WFP, WHO, OCHA, the Global WASH Cluster and other relevant partners to commission an independent, comparative analysis of RRM performance that builds on EMOPS's stock-taking report. The assessment should look at the added value and challenges or risks in terms of: 1) timeliness and quality of the WASH-specific response; 2) complementarity with other sectors and stakeholders; and 3) linkages with non-supply oriented interventions and with the transition to a more comprehensive package of intervention and to the post-emergency phase.
- B. Integrate lessons from this assessment and practical tips into existing or future humanitarian and WASH in emergency guidance and professional training initiatives. In particular:
  - a. Continue efforts to improve continuity and linkages between development and humanitarian work and vice versa – in terms of professional staff, donor agencies, funding type and duration, intervention strategies, technical guidance, etc.
  - b. Bridge silos between the various components of the response (WASH, health, protection, nutrition, education etc.) by introducing new procedures and incentives for improved joint fundraising, response design and planning, collaborative ways of working, sequencing of field activities, and joint monitoring-reporting-learning systems and practices.

#### 4. Institutionalize learning and evidence utilization

Ideas are proposed below:

- A. Support the development of a centralized, thematic, annotated bibliography or online repository of existing resources for WASH staff in emergencies. This would serve as a concrete medium and end product for the learning process, as well as an open community of practice. It could constitute a basic resource for staff and a continuously updated repository of evidence (including from scientific research and the academic community), lessons, guidelines, tools and practical tips, validated by experience and evaluations (including for needs assessments, response in urban settings and AAP), to guide the response to various types of future emergencies. It could follow the same overall structure as the SPHERE standards and complement them. It would gather state-of-the-art knowledge in one place so it is available to all; consolidate experience from multiple organizations and professionals; stimulate expert debates; and bridge the knowledge gap between staff in different locations, between successive crises, and between the field and global levels.<sup>u</sup> To this end, it should not be restricted to UNICEF ownership and audience, but owned and managed by the Global WASH Cluster and the Interagency WASH Group. Its development and periodic update should be done in a collaborative manner, institutionalized and sustainably funded.

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<sup>u</sup> Such an initiative would also respond to a recommendation from the recent literature review (International Initiative for Impact Evaluation 3ie, *Short-term WASH interventions in emergency responses in low- and middle-income countries*, 2017): "Numerous best practice and guidance documents are available from United Nations agencies, donors and responding organisations, but often contradict each other. An analysis to identify inconsistencies and consolidate what is considered best practice and what is evidence-based is needed to align activities across the sector."

Alternatively, revamp the UNICEF Emergency Handbook 2005, now outdated, adapt it to WASH and make it a practical guidance for staff, available in both print and online formats for easy reference and periodic updates.

- B. Further extend, strengthen and roll-out the global WASH in emergency training led by UNICEF, the Global WASH Cluster and UNHCR, as a way to develop a critical mass of professionals either active or immediately deployable, having the right type/level of skills and experience. The training should continue to be updated regularly. This process should be based on a more formal and systematic identification and analysis of what has been learnt from emergency responses in past years, and be based on and immediately follow the update of the above proposed bibliography or repository.
- C. Develop other ways to institutionalize or incentivize learning and evidence utilization at the country, regional and Headquarters levels, within existing corporate planning, monitoring and evaluation processes.

## 7.2 For WASH responses

While this synthesis has identified gaps in evaluative coverage of WASH in emergencies, sufficient evidence allows recommendations around specific areas where UNICEF could take immediate steps. The UNICEF WASH sections in country offices are the primary target audience for these recommendations. They should receive appropriate support from Headquarters and regional offices.

### 5. Improve, strategize and systematize emergency preparedness, prioritizing higher risk countries

Knowledge, attitudes and practices of staff regarding emergency preparedness and simplified emergency procedures are pivotal in mounting timely and responsive operations. This evaluation synthesis and other sources of evidence show that physical preparedness (e.g. pre-positioning of supplies) alone is not sufficient for a strong response – and not always essential. Rather, where skills, partnerships and systems were in place and/or staff acted decisively and used simplified processes, the response tended to be faster and more effective. Therefore, country offices should take the following actions:

- A. Replicate good practices from experienced country offices to ensure all country offices are adequately prepared, including in terms of capacities and systems. Priority support and resources should be given to countries with moderate and high emergency risk levels (related to natural and manmade hazards as well as to public health emergencies such as cholera, Ebola and Zika) as per the country office annual risk assessments and in line with the UNICEF Procedure on Enterprise Risk Management. Some good practices are identified in this report, including: capacity-building of existing national and international staff on WASH emergency preparedness and response; contingency PCAs and standby long-term agreements, emergency clauses, or other relevant partnership mechanisms to be triggered if/when an emergency occurs; and investment in data systems (monitoring and evaluation indicators, risk surveillance, GIS and mapping etc.).
- B. Include documented good practices in the above proposed bibliography or repository and in the WASH in emergency training module. Trainees could continue to exchange ideas, resources and experiences virtually, within or outside the proposed online community of practice.

- C. Make emergency simulations/drills part of periodic training in country offices or WASH sections to ensure staff know what emergency procedures, resources and tools are available (including the Level 2 and Level 3 SSOPs and the above mentioned bibliography or repository) and how to use them to their full potential.

**6. Continue efforts to deliver better on the AAP operational framework, and involve affected populations more actively at each stage of the response including in C4D and O&M**

Poor WASH conditions, especially in terms of access to water supplies, sanitation facilities and hygiene materials, typically affect the whole household or even an entire community in a very concrete manner. In most cases, WASH needs are easily identified and expressed (except those related to sanitation and menstrual hygiene, in certain communities), and thus WASH has an advantage over other sectors such as nutrition or child protection. There is therefore an opportunity and a need to involve the affected population more directly in quantifying and qualifying their own WASH needs, or even leading the needs assessment process under professional supervision, whenever possible.

In terms of measuring results and reporting back to affected populations, WASH interventions typically result in some visible outputs: supplies, infrastructure, behaviours and cleanliness, not only within households but also in the public space. These are easily observable by beneficiaries themselves without sophisticated materials and methods. Involvement in the initial needs assessment phase would enable them to confirm outputs and measure progress themselves. This involvement of the affected population would support UNICEF's commitment to the AAP agenda and boost local-level ownership and sustainability.

In order for UNICEF WASH to position itself as a role model in humanitarian action, the following actions are suggested:

- A. Systematize participatory needs assessments at the start of an emergency response, using guidance and tools that would be provided in the above recommended bibliography or repository and updated in the WASH in emergency training module.
- B. More systematically accompany supply distribution and service provision activities with a clear community mobilization and awareness-raising (C4D) strategy. Involve aid beneficiaries in the design and implementation of the response throughout the duration of the response. A sufficient budget should be planned in donor proposals and ring-fenced. Technical guidance and/or resource documents should be included in the recommended bibliography/repository and updated in the WASH in emergency training module.
- C. Integrate infrastructure O&M arrangements in the response design from the start, based on consultations with the concerned populations and responsible authorities, as it is often impossible to predict how long such infrastructure will have to last, and it is always better to plan for the worst-case scenario. Technical guidance and/or resource documents should be included in the recommended bibliography/repository and updated in the WASH in emergency training module.
- D. Consistently establish and maintain community feedback mechanisms, with appropriate information and communication channels from and to them. The 2015-2016 UNICEF WASH guidance on 'accountability for sustainability' constitutes a source of various and useful examples that can be applied or adapted to emergency contexts. Other useful guidance and/or resource documents should be included in the

recommended bibliography/repository and updated in the WASH in emergency training module.

- E. Consistently collect, share and use disaggregated output- and outcome-level data, including from feedback mechanisms.
- F. In collaboration with sector stakeholders, carry on discussions and improvement efforts around the conclusions and recommendations from the UNICEF/ODI report on 'Making humanitarian and development WASH work better together'.

**7. Learn from available experience/evidence/guidance and collaborate with other agencies when intervening in urban settings, in public health emergencies, and when engaging in and cash transfers/vouchers**

The challenges of the WASH response in urban settings, particularly in protracted crises, the current knowledge gaps on cash/voucher-based programming, and WASH programming in public health emergencies have been highlighted above. It is recommended that Headquarters and regional offices gather more evidence and provide appropriate guidance and training to humanitarian WASH staff. At the country office level, it is recommended to:

- A. Base any response on evidence and learning and utilize in-house and external experience to its full extent.
- B. Collaborate or directly partner with other organizations that have the relevant experience, clear comparative advantages, or a potential for synergies and complementarities.

## Annex 1: Key findings by evaluation criteria<sup>v</sup>

Figure 8: Summary of key findings by evaluation criteria

Legend: Bullet points follow a traffic light system: **green** for overall positive finding; **red** for overall negative finding; **yellow** for mixed finding.

### Relevance/Appropriateness

- Formal needs assessments have not been consistently used for planning.
- Interventions were usually appropriate to the circumstances.
- There is (limited) evidence that UNICEF WASH emergency programmes have been challenged by urban settings.
- While humanitarian WASH appears to have aimed for equitable services, there were challenges such as access or poor data that prevented fully equitable coverage.
- Risks for women and girls from inappropriate WASH services were often, but not always, reflected when planning the response. Data availability and data quality were a main constraint in this.
- Evaluations hardly addressed humanitarian principles or the UNICEF Core Commitments for Children (CCCs) in Humanitarian Action.
- Where the CCCs were referenced, evaluations found mixed use of these standards, and in one case suggest that their strict sector division may have contributed to a response remaining in 'silos'.

### Effectiveness

- Evaluations find that WASH responses have generally been of good quality.
- UNICEF WASH responses are generally reported as have achieved their quantitative targets, within access and funding limitations, with only few exceptions in the reviewed documentation.
- The overall responsiveness of WASH as a sector is referred to repeatedly.
- Preparedness measures were in place prior to some emergencies, and lacking in others.
- In some emergencies, supplies had been pre-positioned, but other preconditions and arrangements for implementation were lacking (capacities, systems).
- Evaluations of large-scale emergencies have found preparedness to be insufficient for the scale of the (later) emergency – Syria, South Sudan, Philippines and the Ebola epidemic.

### Sustainability/Connectedness

- On accountability to affected populations (AAP), positive and negative examples are in balance.
- WASH sections have arguably produced proactive approaches to involving beneficiaries in the response.
- Many evaluations found that WASH interventions had a positive effect on social norms and/or individual behaviour when a communication and sensitization component was included.

<sup>v</sup> In 1991, the OECD-DAC defined key criteria for the evaluation of development assistance: relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and impact, as well as the value criterion of efficiency. OECD/DAC, *Principles for evaluation of development assistance*, 1991, <http://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/2755284.pdf>, accessed 20 July 2017. In 1999, it adapted these for the evaluation of humanitarian assistance in complex emergencies, adding coverage and coherence, appropriateness as an alternative/complement to relevance, and connectedness as an alternative/complement to sustainability. It also proposed two new criteria: Coordination and protection. OECD/DAC, *Guidance for evaluating humanitarian assistance in complex emergencies*, 1999, <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/2667294.pdf>, accessed 20 July 2017.

- Some deficits have been noted in relation to community involvement and design of communication strategies.
- Establishing sustainable operation and maintenance (O&M) has worked in some instances, and less well in others.
- The most productive examples where WASH contributed to resilience were those where the effect on social norms and individual behaviours was strongest.

### Coherence

- WASH interventions fit well within wider response plans.
- UNICEF's presence in affected countries prior to emergencies has ensured that national ownership of the WASH response is promoted.
- National capacity where possible has been built and maintained. This may, however, affect the response in situations where the government is party to a conflict – as in the CAR, South Sudan and Syria.
- Many evaluations that examined the level of integration between WASH and other sectors referred to 'silos' in the response.
- True inter-sectoral work is reported when a Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) has been used.
- Use of new financing models and cash and voucher programmes are still few, although promising for WASH.
- A mixed picture prevails on results measurement and reporting in WASH. It was better in some emergencies than in others.
- The application of the Humanitarian Performance Monitoring (HPM) approach has remaining challenges, especially when not well contextualized.

### Coordination

- WASH cluster leadership was generally assessed as strong and proactive, with examples of outstanding performance, including in Haiti in 2010.
- Transition from cluster to national coordination is well supported, with evidence from several countries, notably the WESCOORD structures in Kenya.

### Efficiency

- While in some emergencies the timeliness of the WASH response was outstanding, either by itself or as part of the overall UNICEF response, in others it was not fast enough.
- Common factors for good timeliness, in addition to preparedness, are presence as well as effective management of the response.
- RRM's aided timely responses.
- Factors that hinder timeliness are inadequate funding, lack of partner capacity, lack of access, and internal processes.
- Little evidence exists on cost-effectiveness or efficiency in WASH.
- The reviewed evidence base provides two examples where evaluations have documented per capita cost, a basic prerequisite for comparing cost across responses. These estimates, however, are remarkably different.
- There is some qualitative evidence of high-cost interventions that evaluators suggested could have been more cost-effective, and a few references to the cost of not intervening.
- When the intensity of C4D activities has been reduced due to budget constraints, the effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the results have been more limited –long term behaviour change requires the more frequent repetition of an intervention.
- The supply and logistics function received mixed reviews; while in some emergencies it excelled in supplying WASH items, in others it was reported to be a delaying factor.

## Annex 2: List of documents included in this synthesis

### Evaluations of UNICEF’s WASH response in emergencies

UNICEF evaluation reports can be accessed at [www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/](http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/)

Year	Region	Country	Title	Quality rating (GEROS)	Sector	Emergency Type
2010	MENA	Iraq	Evaluation of Emergency Water Supply to un-served/underserved/ Vulnerable Areas in Baghdad and the IDPs	Mostly Satisfactory	WASH	Protracted/Complex
2010	MENA	Iraq	Evaluation of Water Quality Control and Surveillance in Iraq (Phase Two) 2007-2009	Highly Satisfactory	WASH	Protracted/Complex
2010	ESA	Kenya	Evaluation and Review of WESCOORD Structures	Unsatisfactory	WASH	Slow onset
2011	LAC	Haiti	Independent Review of UNICEF's Operational Response to the January 2010 Earthquake in Haiti	Confident to Act	Multiple	Sudden onset
2012	ESA	Somalia	IASC Real-Time Evaluation of the Horn of Africa Drought in Somalia	Highly Satisfactory	Multiple	Protracted/Complex
2012	WCA	Liberia	Evaluation of WASH Interventions in Urban Slums of Monrovia and Buchanan 2011-2012	Mostly Satisfactory	WASH	Protracted/Complex
2012	MENA	Sudan	Evaluation of UNICEF Assisted Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Programme In Sudan (2002-2010)	Highly Satisfactory	WASH	Protracted/Complex
2012	WCA	Sahel	Real-Time Independent Assessment of UNICEF 's Response to the Sahel Food and Nutrition Crisis	Outstanding, Best Practice	Multiple	Slow onset
2013	WCA	Liberia	Evaluation of ECHO-Funded Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (Urban WASH- II) Project in Monrovia, Liberia	Mostly Satisfactory	WASH	Protracted/Complex
2013	WCA	Liberia	Final Evaluation of ECHO-Supported “Emergency Multi-Sectoral Interventions in Four Liberian Counties Affected by the Influx of Ivorian Refugees” (Phase II)	Mostly Satisfactory	WASH	Protracted/Complex
2013	SA	Pakistan	Evaluation for Rural Sanitation in Flood-affected Districts	Highly Satisfactory	WASH	Sudden onset
2013	MENA	Palestine	WASH Programme Evaluation	Mostly Satisfactory	WASH	Protracted/Complex
2013	WCA	DRC	External Evaluation of the Rapid Response to Population Movements (RRMP) Programme in the DRC	Highly Satisfactory	Multiple	Protracted/Complex
2013	WCA	Mali	Real Time Evaluation of UNICEF’s Response to the Mali Crisis	Highly Satisfactory	Multiple	Slow onset
2014	ESA	Somalia	Evaluation of the Regional Supply Hub Mechanism as a Strategy for Wash Emergency Response in Somalia	Mostly Satisfactory	WASH	Protracted/Complex

<b>2014</b>	ESA	Rwanda	End of Project Evaluation for Emergency Preparedness for the Influx of Refugees into Rwanda	Mostly Satisfactory	Multiple	Sudden onset
<b>2014</b>	EAP	Philippines	Real Time Evaluation of UNICEF's Humanitarian Response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines	Highly Satisfactory	Multiple	Sudden onset
<b>2015</b>	ESA	South Sudan	Interagency Humanitarian Evaluation in South Sudan	Satisfactory	Multiple	Protracted/Complex
<b>2015</b>	LAC	Haiti	Evaluation du Projet d'Appui au Programme National de Lutte contre le Choléra	Mostly Satisfactory	Multiple	Slow onset
<b>2015</b>	MENA	Jordan	Evaluation of Emergency Education Response for Syrian Refugee Children and Host Communities in Jordan	Highly Satisfactory	Multiple	Protracted/Complex
<b>2015</b>	MENA	Syria Region	Evaluation of UNICEF' s Humanitarian Response to the Syria Crisis	Satisfactory	Multiple	Protracted/Complex
<b>2016</b>	LAC	Haiti	Evaluation à mi-parcours du projet « Eau, assainissement et hygiène pour les enfants du département de l'Artibonite» (2013-2019), Haïti	Fair	WASH	Slow onset
<b>2016</b>	SA	Nepal	Final Evaluation Report, Evaluation of UNICEF' s Response and Recovery Efforts to the Gorkha Earthquake in Nepal	Satisfactory	Multiple	Sudden onset
<b>2016</b>	WCA	CAR	Evaluation of the UNICEF Response to the Crisis in the Central African Republic	Satisfactory	Multiple	Protracted/Complex
<b>2017</b>	WCA	Nigeria+	Independent Assessment of the UNICEF Response to the Nigeria+ Crisis		Multiple	Protracted/Complex
<b>2017</b>	WCA	Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone	Evaluation of the UNICEF Response to the Ebola Outbreak in West Africa 2014-2015	Satisfactory	Multiple	Slow onset

## Other documents

1. American Institutes for Research, *Humanitarian Cash Transfers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Evidence from UNICEF's ARCC II Programme*, 2017.
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15. UNICEF, *Nepal L2 Earthquake Emergency Response After Action Review: One Month in*, 2015.
16. UNICEF, *Review of Humanitarian Performance Monitoring Approach: Formative Assessment*, 2016.
17. UNICEF, *Strategy for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene 2016-2030*, 2016.
18. UNICEF, *Synthesis of UNICEF Evaluations of Humanitarian Action 2010 to 2016*, 2017.
19. UNICEF, *UNICEF's Experiences with Cash Transfer Programmes in the MENA REGION*, Chapeau document and case studies, 2017.
20. UNICEF, Learning Report in preparation of the 'Coverage and Quality of UNICEF Humanitarian Response in Complex High-Threat Environments' evaluation, July 2017.
21. UNICEF Office of Emergency Programmes, *Synthesis of Lessons on UNICEF Response to the Haiti Earthquake*, 2010.
22. UNICEF Office of Emergency Programmes, *Rapid Response Mechanisms: Past, Present, Future*, 2017.
23. UNICEF Office of Emergency Programmes, *RRM Mechanism: Past, Present, Future (Rapid Response Mechanism Knowledge Management Initiative: A Collection of RRM Country Profiles and Key Informant Interviews)*, May 2017.
24. UNICEF, *UNICEF Study on Linking Development and Humanitarian Programming*, 2016.
25. Vine Management Consulting, *Integrated Programming in UNICEF Humanitarian Action*, 2014.
26. Global WASH Cluster, *Global Water Sanitation and Hygiene Cluster Strategic Plan 2016-2020*, 2016.

## Annex 3: Simplified analytical framework

Criteria of specific relevance to the UNICEF Global WASH Strategy 2016-2030 are highlighted in blue

<b>Relevance</b>	<b>Other factors</b>
Alignment with humanitarian needs/findings from joint assessments	Organizational risk and risks to women and children
Appropriateness of intervention design/actions	Risk identification
Equity considerations integrated	Risk management in delivery
Alignment with national priorities/policies (where appropriate)	Factors (internal)
Gender/protection issues integrated	Management/staffing-related
Alignment with the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCCs)	Preparedness
Effectiveness	Comparative advantage
Performance of humanitarian interventions in terms of their own intended objectives	Administrative
<a href="#">Effects on social norms and individual behaviour</a>	Finance-related and funding limitations
<b>Efficiency</b>	Supply and logistics
Timeliness (swiftness of response including transition from regular to emergency operations)	Regional offices
Cost, if and where available	Activation/surge, SSOPs
<b>Connectedness</b>	
<a href="#">Complementarity with development programmes – integration of transition/resilience strategies</a>	
<a href="#">Working inter-sectorally</a>	
<a href="#">Working with new financing/cash/voucher instruments</a>	
Regional inter-linkages (where applicable)	
<b>Coherence</b>	
Coherence with the actions of other partners operating in the context/cluster leadership	
Coherence with joint response plans	
Internal planning and coordination	
<b>Enabling environment</b>	
<a href="#">Efforts to strengthen national (state, society, private) systems</a>	
Efforts to support sub-national levels of governance and community structures	
<a href="#">Support to transition from cluster to national coordination</a>	
<b>Partnerships – United Nations system; national partners; implementing partners</b>	
Choice and selection of partners (rationales, inclusion/exclusion, balance of partners)	
Use of partnership agreements in emergencies	
<b>Accountability, including monitoring and reporting and accountability to affected populations (AAP)</b>	
Results measuring and reporting systems	
<a href="#">Implementation of AAP commitments</a>	
<b>Coherence with International Humanitarian principles</b>	
Humanity	
Impartiality	
Neutrality	
Independence	

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, *Synthesis of UNICEF Evaluations of Humanitarian Action 2010 to 2016*, 2017, [www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index\\_100819.html](http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_100819.html)
- <sup>2</sup> [www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/dacriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm](http://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/dacriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm), accessed 15 July 2017.
- <sup>3</sup> [www.alnap.org/what-we-do/evaluation](http://www.alnap.org/what-we-do/evaluation), accessed 15 July 2017.
- <sup>4</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, *Synthesis of UNICEF Evaluations of Humanitarian Action 2010 to 2016*, 2017.
- <sup>5</sup> The UNICEF Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS), details can be found at [www.unicef.org/evaluation/index\\_GEROS.html](http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/index_GEROS.html), accessed 15 July 2017.
- <sup>6</sup> [www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/dacriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm](http://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/dacriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm), accessed 15 July 2017.
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- <sup>12</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, *Strategy for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene 2016-2030*, 2016, [www.unicef.org/wash/3942\\_91538.html](http://www.unicef.org/wash/3942_91538.html), accessed 15 December 2017.
- <sup>13</sup> United Nations Children's Fund Office of Emergency Programmes, *Synthesis of Lessons on UNICEF Response to the Haiti Earthquake*, 2010.
- <sup>14</sup> Anecdotal evidence from internal staff interviews
- <sup>15</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, *Synthesis of UNICEF Evaluations of Humanitarian Action 2010 to 2016*, 2017.
- <sup>16</sup> United Nations Evaluation Group, *Reflecting Humanitarian Principles in Evaluation*, 2016, [www.unevaluation.org/document/download/2537](http://www.unevaluation.org/document/download/2537), accessed 15 December 2017.
- <sup>17</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, *Synthesis of UNICEF Evaluations of Humanitarian Action 2010 to 2016*, 2017.
- <sup>18</sup> Global Protection Cluster, *Water, Sanitation and Hygiene*, 2015, <http://gbvaor.net/?get=005328|2015/03/WASH-and-GBV.pdf>, accessed 15 December 2017.
- <sup>19</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, *Synthesis of UNICEF Evaluations of Humanitarian Action 2010 to 2016*, 2017.
- <sup>20</sup> Maskall, Ken, *Strengthening National Humanitarian WASH Coordination: Ethiopia, Haiti, Mali, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone*, Report Series, 2015.
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- <sup>22</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, *Synthesis of UNICEF Evaluations of Humanitarian Action 2010 to 2016*, 2017
- <sup>23</sup> United Nations Children's Fund Office of Emergency Programmes, *Synthesis of Lessons on UNICEF Response to the Haiti Earthquake*, 2010.
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