



Happy New Year 2024 – building resilience for children by accelerating our WASH, Climate and Environment collaboration

Dear WASH and Climate Champions, Colleagues, Friends, and Partners,

We hope that you have had a good and prosperous start of the new year 2024 with your loved ones. I wanted to take this opportunity to sincerely thank each one of you for your tremendous engagement and dedication in jointly achieving results for children globally in 2023.

We are coming from a year with unprecedented overlapping crises, with increased conflicts and violence, cholera outbreaks, floods, droughts, and earthquakes, to mention some, all directly impacting on children, pushing back on the development gains we have achieved together.

As an organization, we have committed to strive to make all our investments in WASH climate resilient. This means supporting countries to develop infrastructure and systems that can cope with multiple shocks and stressors and deliver services that will remain or bounce back after a disaster strikes to ensure the health, education, livelihood, and economic development of children and their families. We have evidence that investing in resilient WASH will significantly outweigh the cost of repairs or reconstruction after a disaster event.

We outlined our vision on a paradigm shift for strengthening WASH Sector Resilience and manage risks during a breakfast meeting at Stockholm World Water Week.

And 2024 will be the year when we see this work accelerate together with colleagues in regions and countries. We will also continue to analyze conflict sensitivity and support peacebuilding for community cohesion in WASH programming to manage risks to lasting services.

We do have reasons for hope, based on gains made in 2023 highlighted below.

- 1. Prioritizing Climate Resilient water and sanitation:** UNICEF, together with partners, worked hard before and during COP28 for the [inclusion of climate resilient water and sanitation into the work programme on the Global Goal on Adaptation \(GGA\)](#) which was approved at COP28. The work programme also includes promoting the use of adaptive social protection measures for all and makes references to other social services and intergenerational equity for youth and children for the first time. During 2024 we will work with partners to come up with a proposal for indicators for measuring progress on climate resilient services to support the continued development of the GGA. At country level, we will keep accelerating climate resilient WASH services at local level and keep influencing National climate policies and plans to include climate resilient water and sanitation programming and support countries to develop proposals to access climate financing. 2023 saw the [Sanitation Game Plan 2022-2030](#) move forward in Zambia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Kenya, Ethiopia, Cambodia amongst other countries with more countries planned for in 2024 with a focus on climate resilience.
- 2. Promoting Systems Strengthening for stronger WASH Systems:** Underpinning UNICEF's work is the critical advancement of stronger WASH systems to ensure resilient and sustainable services. During 2024, the work to strengthen systems should continue where WASH finance, national

monitoring, regulation and climate resilience are central and in line with the implementation of Goal Area 4 aiming to ensure “*Every child, including adolescents, has access to safe and equitable water, sanitation and hygiene services and supplies, and lives in a safe and sustainable climate and environment*” as envisioned in [UNICEF’s Strategic Plan \(SP\) 2022 – 2025](#). Access to national and global data and evidence for policy decision remains scarce but are critical for all our investments. Capacity development and strengthening of national statistics offices are important building on the [JMP](#) and [GLASS monitoring framework](#).

3. **Sustainability and Climate Change Action:** WASH, Climate, Energy, Environment and DRR are housed together within under Goal Area 4. 2024 will see the rollout and implementation of [UNICEF newly adopted Sustainability and Climate Action Plan \(SCAP\)](#). This will include the achievement of ‘foundational elements’, a package designed for UNICEF country offices to effectively engage on sustainability and climate programming and advocacy. At least 50 countries will have ‘mainstreamed’ sustainability and climate action within the UNICEF work in-country with an anchored focus on WASH.
4. **Continuing critical areas of WASH:** On December 18, the UN General Assembly Resolution on [Sustainable, safe and universal water, sanitation, hygiene, waste and electricity in health care facilities](#) was adopted. This important moment represents, for the first time, whole-of-government support for the improvement of WASH and waste management in healthcare facilities and connects to the aligned agenda of electrification of healthcare facilities. Following the adoption of this Resolution, UNICEF echoes our strong commitment to this agenda. In partnership with WHO and other partners, we continue to drive global leadership on this issue. This includes the creation of a Global Framework for Action, which operationalizes the objectives of this Resolution. A central grant serves as an excellent opportunity to support countries as they seek to respond to the Resolution. A new acceleration framework for WASH in schools will assist countries to advance access to inclusive WASH facilities and promote hand-hygiene and menstrual hygiene health.
5. **Humanitarian response:** From our 2023 results, we can see that we continued to respond to the unprecedented scale and scope of humanitarian crises, coordinating the overall response as lead agency of the global WASH cluster, both through direct relief, and by strengthening WASH systems with increased investment in more resilient and solar powered services. In 2023, UNICEF WASH team supported humanitarian response in Ukraine, State of Palestine, Turkey and Syria earthquake, Afghanistan, Sudan, DRC, Mozambique, Horn of Africa, the Sahel, and many others.

2023 marked the mid-point towards the realization of SDG 6, we look forward to working together more closely than ever with you to realize the human right to water and sanitation. Acceleration can only be achieved through strong partnerships and collaboration, and we are deeply grateful to you all - an extraordinary network of partners, that share the same commitment and vision as UNICEF that every child realizes their human right to safe water, dignified sanitation and the right to grow up in a safe and sustainable climate and environment.

Let’s turn 2024 to a prosperous year for all, together.

Cecilia Scharp
Director WASH and CEED
New York, January 8, 2024