

Safe water, sanitation and hygiene lead to brighter futures: Every Child Deserves a Healthy Start.

Dear WASH Colleagues, Friends, and Partners,

As we welcome the New Year, it is a time for reflection, gratitude, and renewed commitments to the causes that matter most. At UNICEF, our mission to ensure every child has access to safe water, dignified sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) remains at the forefront of our efforts. This New Year, we reaffirm our dedication to this cause and invite you to join us in making a difference.

Over the past year, UNICEF's WASH programme has made significant strides in improving the lives of millions of children and their families. We have worked tirelessly in both humanitarian and development contexts to provide safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, and promote hygiene practices in some of the most vulnerable communities and fragile contexts around the world. Our efforts are not only improving health outcomes for women and children but have also empowered communities to take charge of their own development.

From 2020 to 2024, significant progress has been made to strengthen resilience of the WASH sector to ensure access to services that remains also during crises at home, in schools and health care facilities. Over this period, we supported climate-resilient water services to over 23 million people and 17 million with climate-resilient sanitation.

Our dual approach to strengthening national WASH systems and improving sustainability in service delivery in both humanitarian and development contexts, operating in more than 100 countries, is a testament of UNICEF continuing being at the frontlines to deliver results at scale in some of the world's most off-track countries.

Climate Resilient WASH Shift in Action

Our commitment to resilient WASH systems is more critical than ever. As climate change exacerbates water scarcity, increases the frequency of extreme weather events, and threatens the sustainability of water and sanitation infrastructure, we are implementing climate-resilient WASH solutions. The support to Climate Resilient WASH ranges from capacity support to understand and manage risks to the sector from climate change, supporting the articulation of climate into national WASH policies and plans to concrete installation of multi community solar-powered water systems, identification of resilient ground water resources, adapting sanitation solutions, to global advocacy on climate resilient WASH.

The [WASH climate resilient shift](#) has accelerated with guidance and technical assistance to more than 35 countries in the areas of climate finance, WASH governance/systems strengthening climate science, CR WASH assessments and solutions.

The Climate Resilient Sanitation Coalition, consisting of international organisations, research institutions and practitioners co-led by UNICEF, is working collectively to improve prioritisation, capacity and investment in climate resilient sanitation. Currently Coalition members represent almost 35 organisations implementing climate resilient sanitation (CRS) programs in almost 80 countries. In

2024 the Coalition co-developed with GCF and launched at COP29, the new [GCF Guidance on Climate Resilient Sanitation](#) which will support country programming on both adaptation and mitigation aspects of climate programming.

At the end on 2024 UNICEF became an [Accredited Entity for the Green Climate Fund](#) which opens up new possibilities to work with partner governments and the WASH sector to leverage much-needed climate cofinancing to ensure climate resilient WASH services building on the climate resilient WASH framework outlined in the Climate Shift.

The Global WASH team led the partnership effort to develop a [sector definition for climate resilient WASH](#) as a contribution to the Global Goal on Adaptation and through the **Align to Accelerate Initiative** via the WHO/UNICEF JMP/GLAAS process we are co-leading the development of a core set of indicators and common monitoring and review framework for climate resilient WASH systems. This will help the sector to streamline its programming and monitoring of Climate Resilient WASH interventions.

Looking Ahead

As we step into the New Year, we need to embrace the ongoing challenges that continue to affect children and their families globally. From the escalating conflicts and climate inflicted disasters to public health emergencies, each crisis impacting communities, particularly children. Above all water security risks are becoming both more profound and multifaceted. Our collective efforts have never been more important. Together, we will face these challenges and continue our mission to improve the lives of children around the world. For the coming year our focus will be on:

1. **Heads of State Initiatives:** Continue to drive political commitment for equitable access to safe and sustainable WASH by co-leading on the Heads of State Initiatives with the Sanitation and Water for All partnership and partners.
2. **Leveraging Climate Finance:** Continue to capacitate our WASH workforce on climate finance and CR WASH programmes to establish a pipeline of viable WASH programmes for a variety of climate finance instruments.
3. **WASH in Emergencies and related Public Health Emergencies:** Respond to public health emergencies by expanding the roll out of the [Infection, Prevention and Control strategy](#) and respond to growing fragility and conflict as required through the operationalization of [WASH for Peace guidance](#) and [tools](#).
4. **Promoting Stronger WASH Systems Strengthening and measurement:** Through our continued collaboration with WHO on the alignment of sectoral measurements/priorities for [WASH systems strengthening](#), provide guidance to the sector on the measurement and programming for sustainable WASH results.
5. **Expand WASH in HCFs globally:** Continue to expand our work on WASH in HCFs, and co-lead with WHO the global leadership network on HCF, formally monitor and report results on the UNGA Resolution on WASH, energy and waste in HCFs, working closer with the health system to reach multisectoral results.
6. **Global Thought leadership:** In collaboration with our partners continue to generate cutting edge knowledge and evidence as well as normative guidance and learning to the sector in emerging areas including climate resilient WASH, Public Health Emergencies and WASH, and the broader resilience agenda for informed decisions and co-learning.

We look forward to working alongside you in the year ahead, for every child!

Wishing you a Happy New Year filled with kindness, dedication, and the spirit of working together.

Warm regards,

Cecilia Scharp
Global Director WASH
New York, January 8, 2025