



unicef cambodia

Formative Evaluation of the Inclusion
and Mainstreaming of Climate
Resilience in UNICEF Cambodia's
WASH Programme

Produced by IOD PARC
August 2022

Introduction

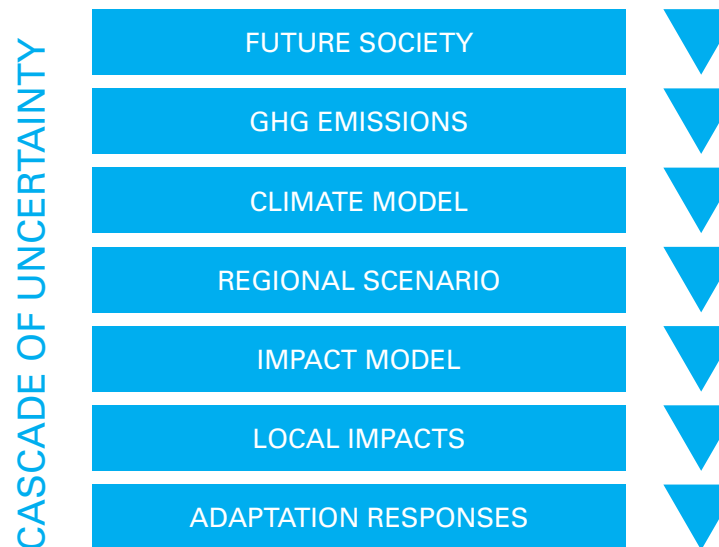
Cambodia is highly susceptible to the impacts of climate change. It is likely that in the coming decades, temperatures will increase and rainfall will become more concentrated, resulting in high-intensity storms. This will place greater stresses on water resources as well as critical water and sanitation infrastructure services.

However, assessing the impacts of climate change at a local level is not straightforward. When climate change projections are combined with demographic changes and scaled down, there are many uncertainties regarding what the resultant impacts on water resources will be (see Cascade of uncertainty graphic, right).

Evaluation purpose and objectives

UNICEF Cambodia commissioned a formative evaluation of efforts to mainstream climate resilience in UNICEF Cambodia's 2019-2023 WASH programming, to aid institutional learning. It is the first formal evaluation of climate resilient WASH services being conducted at the Country Office level within UNICEF, and intended to identify progress made since 2019 and document important lessons that can inform future programme planning.

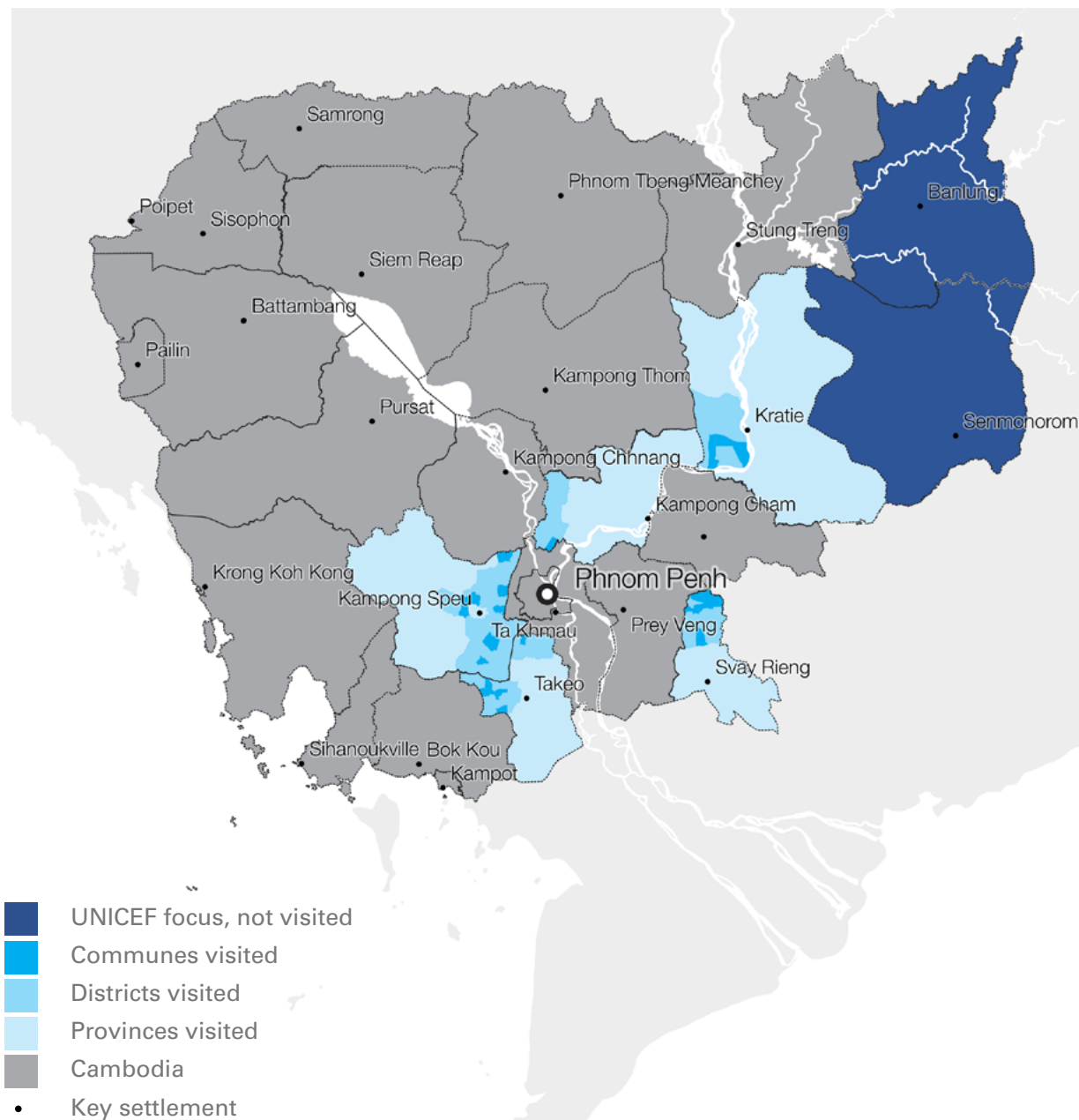
The evaluation applied OECD DAC criteria and considered the recent work and progress of both UNICEF and implementing partners. The evaluation considered both UNICEF's 'upstream' systems strengthening work, as well as 'downstream' service delivery work, and in doing so, identified gaps and obstacles to progress.



Benchmarking

The evaluation also called for the development of a benchmark paper. The purpose of the benchmark paper is to help continuously define what constitutes good climate resilient WASH practice, as a means to improve performance. This benchmark paper was developed in a collaborative manner with the evaluation reference group and wider WASH sector in Cambodia. It has also been aligned to UNICEF's shift framework for climate resilient WASH¹.

¹ UNICEF (2020) UNICEF Guidance Note: How UNICEF Regional and Country Offices can shift to Climate Resilient WASH Programming



Evaluation methodology

The evaluation was conducted by an independent team of consultants from IOD PARC and M-CRIL. It was overseen by a reference group that consisted of representatives from UNICEF, as well as the Ministry of Rural Development and Ministry of Industry, Science, Technology and Innovation.

The evaluation was conducted between July 2021 and June 2022. It included a combination of desk-based work and consultations with government and target populations in five provinces: Svay Rieng, Kampong Speu, Kampong Cham, Takeo and Kratie.

All key components of the programme were visited and included: Climate resilient water supply and sanitation services, Water Safety Planning and augmented water supply systems in schools and health centres.

The OECD DAC criteria listed a set of core evaluation questions, which included the following categories: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, sustainability and scale, with the addition of cross cutting themes: gender, equity and social inclusion.

Key findings and conclusions

Relevance: UNICEF's climate resilient WASH programme is highly relevant to the climate pressures and shocks that remote rural communities and target populations in Cambodia are facing.

UNICEF are well respected by its government partners and go to significant lengths to ensure country programme work is aligned to government policy and strategy.

However, UNICEF's systems strengthening work, which is one component of its climate resilient WASH programme, is still in its infancy and it will take considerable time to strengthen the network of institutions, people and finance. Interlinkages between the component parts of the WASH system need to be strengthened and there should be a strong focus on meaningful decentralisation.

In order to maximise impact, UNICEF should re-consider at what level – national, provincial, district or commune – systems strengthening work is conducted.

Coherence: Overall the WASH programme retains a relatively narrow focus and continues to work with long standing sectors, such as education, health and social protection, as opposed to a broader range of sectors (notably agriculture and energy) that will be impacted by climate change.

In particular the programme should form closer links with the Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology. This is required because there is a real opportunity (and necessity) to engage in some form of water resources management and building resilience to climate change.

Climate change is complex, and there is much uncertainty as to how it will manifest itself at local level. This means it requires continuous and adaptive monitoring of water resources by national institutions.

Effectiveness: The water and sanitation services provided by UNICEF appear to be relevant and constructed to high standards. For example, the water supply services utilise groundwater sources that will provide greater resilience to drought. More extensive pumping tests have also been conducted to ensure yields are sustainable and protocols have been developed and tested. In Kratie province, household and communal latrines are also raised to reduce risks from flooding and extensive support has been given to local sanitation enterprises.

The programme does appear to be bound up in 'projects', which means there is a strong focus on capital investment and building new water and sanitation services. This does mean there needs to be a stronger focus on post construction support from local authorities and associated recurrent costs.

Sustainability: The climate resilient WASH programme still needs to overcome many obstacles in order to be mainstreamed and achieve sustainability.

Persistent problems, particularly for public WASH facilities, include limited external support from local government authorities when breakdowns occur, challenges in recurrent finance, inadequacies in coordination and limited monitoring of service levels.

At times, particularly in discussions with the wider reference group, there is also an apparent misconception that climate resilience can be achieved separately from these pressing issues that undermine sustainability. This misconception needs to be addressed and these underlying challenges need to be addressed head-on.

Cross Cutting: The climate resilient WASH programme targets vulnerable populations and places high importance on serving these groups.

However, to be more meaningful it is necessary to monitor the resultant benefits that marginalised groups have received. Baseline and endline monitoring is required, for example, to confirm how access to safe, adequate and affordable water supplies has been achieved.



Photo credit: IOD PARC field teams

Lessons Learnt: Considerations to strengthen climate resilient WASH programming

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- Assessing the risks of climate change is complex work
 - WASH programmes must consider how water resources are changing
 - Engage in monitoring (measuring) and managing water resources
 - Know that climate resilience and sustainability are inter-linked
 - Recognize that adaptive and iterative approaches are required
 - Plan where systems strengthening can maximise impact
 - Ensure interventions are relevant and effective to the local context
 - Form collaborative partnerships with other sectors
 - Renewable energy sources in the right context
 - Focus on greenhouse gas emissions across the sanitation chain
 - Document and share learning experiences
 - Benchmarking is one way to ensure continuous progress

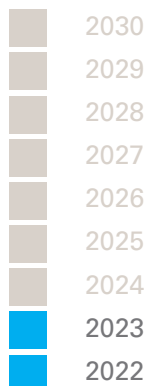


Hover over lessons
to reveal detail



Photo credit: IOD PARC field teams

SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS



(All for UNICEF Cambodia)

Advocacy to encourage the adoption of the benchmark paper

The benchmark paper needs to be shared and promoted with the wider WASH sector, rather than expecting its automatic adoption.

It is aligned to UNICEF's shift framework, but WASH organisations will need to review and determine what principles they can adopt, based on their current and future programming.

Review approaches to systems strengthening work

This is needed because systems strengthening work needs to lead to the decentralization of resources to build local level resilience.

Establish a formal working agreement with MoWRAM

Before water resources can be effectively monitored and managed it is essential to engage with the lead institution.

Support MISTI and MRD to improve regulatory agreements with service providers

In undertaking analysis of climate resilience, it is necessary to document what levels of service people are receiving.

Explore the challenges of limited recurrent finance and external support

More is needed to address these persistent obstacles to sustainability.

Conduct more systematic learning-based adaptation

An extensive body of learning needs to be developed in the coming years so climate resilient WASH practices adapt and improve.

Set out a vision for how the WASH sector can collaborate to achieve systematic resilience

Many rural communities in Cambodia are dependent on rainfed agriculture, which makes them particularly vulnerable to climate change shocks.



Photo credit: IOD PARC field teams

MEDIUM-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

2030
2029
2028
2027
2026
2025
2024
2023
2022

Ensure adequate collaboration and coordination. (Cambodia WASH sector actors)

UNICEF is a leading WASH player and can fulfil a leading role in ensuring compliance and coordination with government climate resilient WASH policy and strategy.

Contribute to water resources assessments and management. (UNICEF Cambodia and MoWRAM)

Once changes to water resources are known and understood real adaptive changes to strengthen resilience can be made.

Ensure high quality infrastructure. (UNICEF Cambodia)

This is required so all climate resilient WASH infrastructure is relevant to the local context and build effectively.

Decentralization of governance to improve the effectiveness of resilience planning. (UNICEF Cambodia, local/ provincial government)

For public WASH services to be sustainable and communities to be resilient, local authorities must provide effective external support continuously.

Provincial government as de-facto authorities and regulators (UNICEF Cambodia, provincial government)

Local level resilience will never be achieved, unless local authorities have adequate resources and finances to fulfil their mandates. It will take time to encourage the decentralization of resources.

Increase budget allocations. (UNICEF Cambodia and MoEF)

This is necessary if WASH services are to be sustainable and resilient. Budgets also need to distinguish between capital investment and recurrent costs, and who shares these costs.

Conduct monitoring of service levels. (MRD and MISTI)

This is required so government entities can ensure service levels match user expectations in the coming decades.