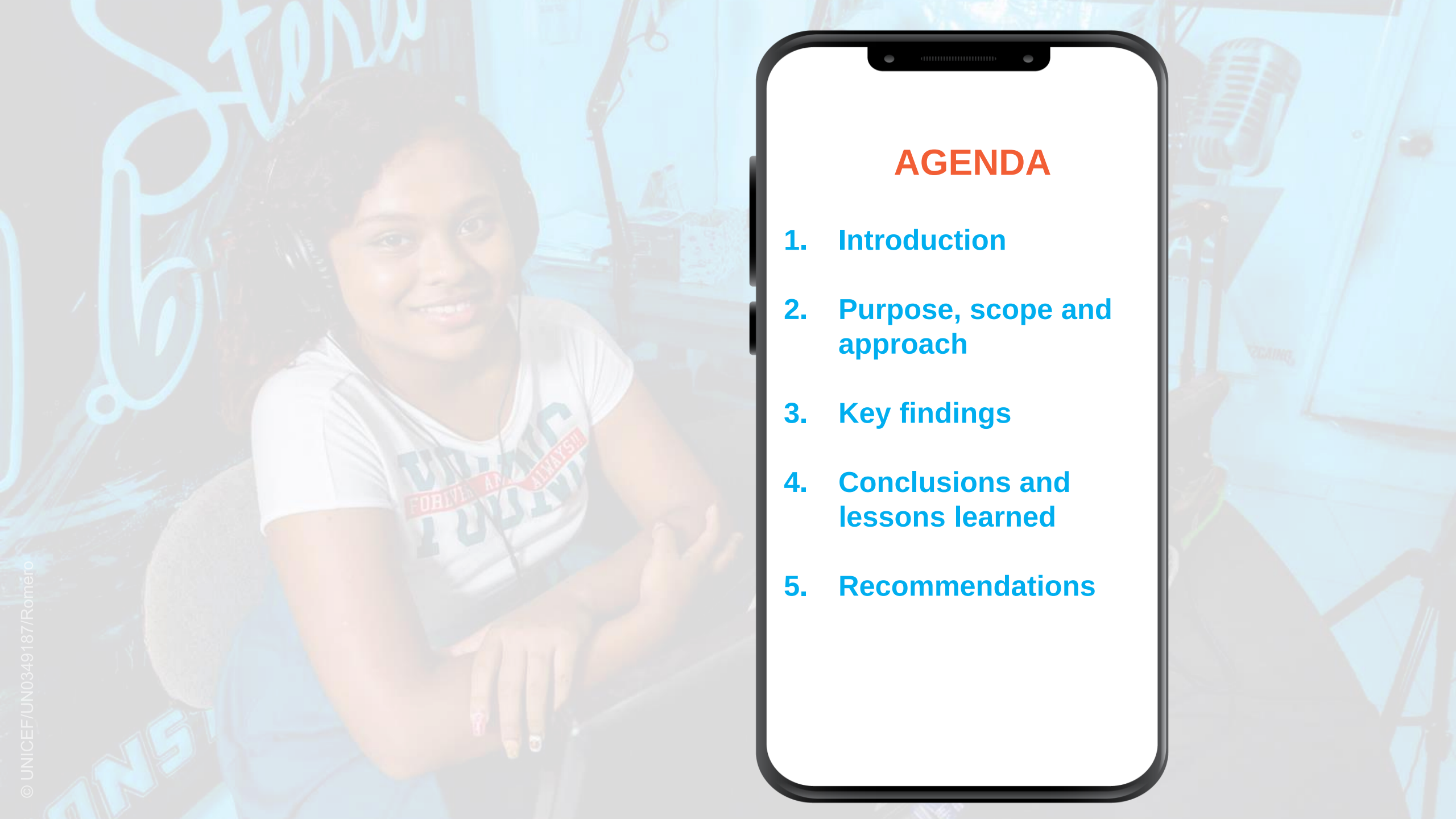




Summative Evaluation of the ECHO-supported Humanitarian WASH Programme in Afghanistan

A background image of a woman with dark hair, wearing a white t-shirt with a graphic that says 'THINK FOREVER AND ALWAYS', sitting in a radio studio. She is wearing headphones and has her hands on a desk. In the background, there is a vintage-style microphone on a stand and some graffiti on the wall.

AGENDA

1. Introduction
2. Purpose, scope and approach
3. Key findings
4. Conclusions and lessons learned
5. Recommendations

Introduction



OBJECT OF THE EVALUATION



WASH component of the ECHO-supported humanitarian programme in Afghanistan



Communicable disease-related mortality and morbidity are mitigated through access to equitable and resilient WASH services.



Provision of access to life saving and resilient WASH services to emergency affected people.



The Programme has embraced two strategic approaches to deliver WASH response activities: 1) rapid lifesaving WASH response, and 2) resilient and durable WASH services.





Purpose, scope and approach

EVALUATION PURPOSE



Assess the ECHO-supported WASH Programme's **overall design, strategies, interventions, and results** to guide WASH programme planning and aid decision-making.



Promote and foster **organizational learning and improvement** by identifying key strengths, gaps, bottlenecks, and satisfaction levels among affected populations, thereby facilitating targeted interventions and programme enhancements.



EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

- 
- »»» **Assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, coverage, sustainability, and intended and unintended results.**
 - »»» **Identify strengths, gaps, and key bottlenecks within implementation.**
 - »»» **Generate evidence on programmatic and operational lessons learned, best practices, and opportunities to enhance organizational learning.**
 - »»» **Assess the integration and synergies between WASH and health, nutrition & education.**
 - »»» **Assess the level of satisfaction among affected populations.**
 - »»» **Examine the management, governance, and resourcing arrangements.**
 - »»» **Assess the quality and overall coherence of internal monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and knowledge management systems.**
 - »»» **Examine the integration of cross-cutting areas (human rights, gender, disability, equity, climate, and environmental and social safeguards).**

EVALUATION SCOPE AND APPROACH



Temporal

- January 2022 – December 2023



Thematic

- All ECHO-supported WASH Programme interventions including water, sanitation, hygiene, WASH supplies and WASH in institutions



Geographic

- National
- Primary data collection covered one province from each of the five regions

Theory-based design
with contribution
analysis

Mixed methods

Participatory
and utility-
focused

Integration of gender,
human rights, equity,
disability, climate, and
ESS

Post-intervention single
group research

DATA AND INFORMATION COLLECTION

	Source	Outcome
	Key informant interviews	76 KIIs at national, provincial and district level (11% women)
	Focus group discussions and group KIIs	21 FGDs (38% women) and 6 group KIIs (100% women)
	Household survey	1,940 (27% women)
	Direct observation	4 schools (1 girls' school), 35 Health care facilities (HCFs), 5 water supply systems (WSS)
	Data, document and literature review	150+ key documents

Key findings



RELEVANCE

- ➡ Programme **design was 'highly relevant'**, aligned with the urgent humanitarian needs of the population, including vulnerable groups.
- ➡ The programme demonstrated **flexibility in adapting its outreach strategies** to engage women and maintain inclusivity, often relying on community-based approaches and localized solutions.
- ➡ However, **challenges were identified in accessing women household members** in multiple locations, and fully integrating the needs of vulnerable populations into programme planning and outreach.
- ➡ Community-level data collection and localized assessments ensured that **resources were directed where needed, but resource constraints prevented interventions from consistently addressing all WASH emergency needs.**
- ➡ Adaptations to programme implementation, such as **integrating health and nutrition messaging to engage women, helped overcome some barriers.**

COHERENCE

- ➡ Successful **synergies happened with health and nutrition sectors**, where WASH messaging was integrated into their outreach. Efforts were made to align activities with education sector activities with mixed results.
- ➡ External coherence was **strengthened by coordination with the WASH Cluster, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and the DfA**, ensuring standards were met and duplication reduced.
- ➡ **Integration at the community level faced numerous challenges** including different prioritization between ministries and funding constraints.
- ➡ **Internal and external synergies contributed to programme results in tackling waterborne diseases and malnutrition and supporting the gender and protection outcomes** particularly during active emergencies.
- ➡ **Complementary funding facilitated reaching the target scope and scale** of the programme's reach.



EFFECTIVENESS

- ➡ **170% of planned number of beneficiaries were reached**, benefitting over 1.1 million people.
- ➡ **Water supply projects benefitted the greatest number of people** (274%; 510,101).
- ➡ However, component-wise achievements varied with **underachievement of sanitation and hygiene promotion**.

Components	Target	Total achieved	% Achieved
Water supply services	186,500	510,101	274%
Sanitation	50,000	35,141	70%
Hygiene promotion	675,000	395,868	59%
WASH in Schools	30-44	52	173%
WASH in HCFs	30-44	27	90%-61%
Total	675,000	1,147,841	170%

EFFECTIVENESS

- ➡ Water supply projects contributed **to increased access to improved water sources**. The projects **effectively mobilized co-funds** to align donor conditions with national policies.
- ➡ **There was a significant support during political transition** amidst heightened demand for basic and WASH services.
- ➡ **Timely and largely effective WASH services** (water trucking, wash supplies distribution, hygiene promotion) were provided in response to natural disasters in Paktika and Herat, addressing affected areas despite several identified challenges.
- ➡ **Most significant contribution was improving access to WASH services in 40 ‘new accessible’ districts** (identified as top 100 hard to reach) in 19 provinces.
- ➡ **The funds strengthened groundwater and surface water monitoring**, enabling tracking of groundwater conditions and water chlorination.
- ➡ **Effective collaboration** with Kabul Polytechnic Institute and **advocacy efforts aimed at strengthening disaster risk reduction (DRR)** and integrated water resource management infrastructure for the future.

COVERAGE



The **ECHO-supported Water Supply Schemes (WSS)** achieved the widest geographic coverage at the **zonal level**, covering all five zones (100%). At the subnational level, WSS coverage varied, **reaching 19 of 34 provinces, 33 of 400 districts, and 46 unique villages**.

Intervention types and Total areas (Coverage)	Total Zones 5 No. & (%)	Total Provinces 34 No. & (%)	Total Districts 400 No. & (%)	Villages covered
Water supply	5 (100%)	19 (56%)	33 (8%)	46
Hygiene activities	4 (80%)	22 (65%)	34 (9%)	70
Sanitation activities	3 (60%)	5 (15%)	8 (2%)	16
WASH supplies distribution	2 (40%)	8 (24%)	27 (7%)	45
WASH in schools	4 (80%)	13 (38%)	24 (6%)	52
WASH in health facilities	3 (60%)	8 (24%)	22 (5.5 %)	32
Note: In total, Afghanistan includes 5 geographic zones, 34 provinces and 400 districts. The total number of villages per district is unknown hence percentage is not given in the last column.				

COVERAGE

- ➡ The coverage of other interventions - such as sanitation, hygiene promotion, water trucking, and ground and surface water monitoring - was uneven but aligned with the country's evolving emergency needs, particularly in areas impacted by two major earthquakes (Paktika in the Central Zone and Herat in the Western Zone), floods, and Acute Water Diarrhea (AWD) outbreaks.
- ➡ The programme effectively targeted vulnerable areas and groups for ensuring inclusivity, with limited identification, accessibility tracking and reporting of all vulnerable groups.
- ➡ A notable achievement was provision of clean drinking water through water trucking in 40 newly accessed and hard-to-reach districts in 19 provinces. These districts faced decades of basic service deprivation due to protracted conflict in the country.



EFFICIENCY

The Programme is assessed as partially cost-efficient.

- The €22 million ECHO WASH Grant funding for 2022-2023 was substantial but insufficient to fully meet the overall country WASH needs, leading to resource allocation pressure and requiring prioritization.

Visible trade-off (cost vs. quality) between NGOs vs. Community Development Councils (CDCs)-led implementation.

- 2022 – NGO-led implementation resulted in relatively perceived higher costs above the estimated planned USD 25 cost per beneficiary (CPB).
- 2023 – CDC-led implementation appeared to reduce costs; however, concerns were raised about the quality of implementation and the use of less durable equipment, potentially affecting long-term cost efficiency.

The cost per beneficiary (CPB) analysis of a few water supply projects revealed some cost escalations above planned cost.

CPB analysis of WASH Supplies and Hygiene Promotion is low to negligible.

- At USD 0.0011 for a single activity of supplies distribution.
- At USD 0.825 for hygiene promotion (reaching affected people with hygiene promotion).

CPB analysis of WASH in Institutions: The cost per beneficiary (CPB) for providing WASH services in ECHO-funded schools and health facilities stands at USD 12.90 and USD 21.40, respectively.

EFFICIENCY



Cost-per beneficiary analysis for various interventions revealed some cost-escalations.

Cost per beneficiary analysis of Water Supply Schemes (WSS)

Activity	Beneficiaries	Budget (AFN)	Planned Max. CPB		Actual CPB		Projects
			Cost (AFN)/ Beneficiary	CPB (USD)	Cost (AFN)/ Beneficiary	CPB (USD)	
Construct Gravity-fed/spring piped system - household connection	770	3,238,971	4206	59.6	4206	59.6	1
Rehabilitate Gravity-fed/spring piped system - public taps	2,240	349,310	156	2.2	156	2.2	2
Rehabilitate dug wells and equip them with hand pumps		84,900	121	1.7			1
Construct deep boreholes with solar powered piped system - public taps	8,750	21,320,694	1740	24.7	2437	34.5	5
Construct deep boreholes with solar powered piped system - household connection	79,930	241,598,475	3023	42.8	3023	42.8	26
Rehabilitate deep boreholes with solar powered piped system - public taps	490	219,710	448	6.4	448	6.4	1
Rehabilitate deep boreholes with solar powered piped system - household connection	12,661	27,533,458	953	13.5	2175	30.8	6
Support people with safe drinking water through water trucking	5,422	2,252,176	415	5.9	415	5.9	4
Total	110,263	296,597,694	2269	32.2	2690	38.1	46

Cost per beneficiary analysis of sanitation activities

Activity	Beneficiaries	Budget (AFN)	Planned Max. CPB		Actual CPB		Projects
			Cost (AFN)/ Beneficiary	CPB (USD)	Cost (AFN)/ Beneficiary	CPB (USD)	
Construct emergency and/or urban communal latrines and/ or with handwashing facilities	14,512	19,530,000	1346	19.1	1346	19.1	3
Construct emergency household latrines	22,882	13,840,400	585	8.3	605	8.6	10
Rehabilitate emergency and/or urban communal latrines and/ or with handwashing facilities	224	4,800,000	265	3.8	21429	303.8	3
Total	37,618	38,170,400	678	9.6	1015	14.4	16

SUSTAINABILITY

-  **The ECHO-supported WASH Programme implemented several sustainability strategies, including operation and maintenance mechanisms, community orientations, and water tariff systems, with moderate to good success.**
 - However, inconsistent community engagement, variations in training quality, and community resistance to water tariffs posed significant challenges.
-  **Household connections improved water access but depended heavily on effective tariff management and community responsibility,** which varied across regions (low to average).
 - Hygiene promotion efforts were only partially effective due to low to moderate varied capacities, high turnover among trained personnel and limited reinforcement of message dissemination.
-  **Through solar operated WSS projects and gravity-fed systems with household connections, the programme had a lasting impact on water supply systems in rural and drought-prone areas.**
 - Yet, declining water tables and limited public financial resources, along with communities' reluctance to pay for ongoing operation and maintenance, threaten sustainability.
 - Implementing partners benefitted with enhancements in their technical and organizational capacities.
-  **Other emergency related interventions provided temporary solutions to address WASH needs and are least sustainable.**

COORDINATION



UNICEF successfully established and leveraged partnerships with a diverse range of stakeholders, contributing significantly to programme implementation and achievement of objectives.

- UNICEF's engagement with MRRD was essential in aligning WASH projects with local needs, particularly in remote areas. However, bureaucratic delays in signing MOUs and financial restrictions with the DfA posed persistent bottlenecks and slowed project implementation.
- Partnerships with INGOs, and local NGOs/CSOs as well as collaboration with CDCs and strong donor relationships further supported these efforts.
- Academic partnerships with Kabul Polytechnic Institute and Delft University of Technology enhanced local expertise in hydrogeology and positioning Afghanistan as knowledge hub on Ground Water Monitoring.



UNICEF's leadership during ECHO-supported WASH response was mostly praised for aligning efforts across diverse stakeholders, including de-facto government entities, NGOs, and CDCs, helping to reduce duplication and optimize resource use. However, coordination with de-facto authorities faced challenges, particularly in advocating for women's involvement in WASH.



As the WASH cluster lead, UNICEF facilitated effective collaboration, particularly in delivering integrated services, despite initial challenges like establishing emergency infrastructure. However, inconsistencies in sub-national coordination and supply management reflected the need for improved planning and more harmonized implementation.

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

-  The programme made significant efforts to address the needs of vulnerable groups such as women and girls and people with disabilities (PwDs). However, **gaps in analysis, design, and implementation of facilities limited UNICEF's ability to ensure equitable outcomes** for all populations, particularly in terms of accessibility for PwDs and adherence to protection standards.
-  **CDCs were essential for operation, but qualitative data raised concerns about mixed effectiveness** in equitable service delivery and limited attention to marginalized groups.
-  Despite the availability of various feedback and complaints mechanisms (FCM), **awareness of available FCMs remains low**, limiting channels to receive the population's feedback more directly.
-  **Efforts to reduce climate change effects** focused primarily on water supply systems with less attention to sanitation. Household survey results showed that communities with water system investments experienced better year-round access to water. However, this result was not universal and qualitative data and observations indicated that beneficiaries had not gained consistent access to water, especially in schools and healthcare facilities.
-  **ESS implementation was 'partially in place'** within the Programme, with policies, standards, and accountability systems established but weak focus on quality assurance. Environmental and social risks were infrequently reported, though community conflicts over water sources and land ownership occurred.



Conclusions and lessons learned

LESSONS

- ✓ **The dual strategy including resilient interventions under the emergency fund, particularly focusing on water supply systems, has been valuable** in mitigating health emergencies in vulnerable communities.
- ✓ **The prepositioning of essential supplies ensured continuity** in response efforts and maintained operational effectiveness despite logistical challenges.
- ✓ **Ensuring clear communication and alignment at the design stage on key definitions from the onset, such as "hard-to-reach" areas, is essential** to avoid discrepancies in addressing the needs of conflict-affected communities.
- ✓ **Coordinating with the DfA is essential for leveraging their support** to ensure smooth planning and execution of the programme activities.
- ✓ **The Programme's efforts in groundwater monitoring related to systematic data collection and sharing, added value** to identification of future priorities.
- ✓ **Programmes must be adaptable to sudden policy changes**, such as the recent dissolution of CDCs, by developing new strategies and leveraging existing community structures.

LESSONS

Good Practices

-  **UNICEF successfully resolved the initial mismatch**, at the original proposal stage between ECHO's restrictions on new construction of household connections and DfA requirements, through **provision of complementary funding and advocacy, balancing emergency needs with provision of newly constructed water supply scheme**.
-  **The outreach to emergency-affected districts**, particularly those with high AWD case load, showcased a proactive public health response.
-  **The 'crisis modifier' enabled flexible fund allocation**, allowing rapid responses during emergencies without the delays of securing new funding.

CONCLUSIONS

- ➡ **The ECHO-supported WASH Programme was highly relevant in addressing the WASH needs of populations** affected by protracted emergencies and weak long-term solutions, despite challenges such as data inconsistencies, evolving operational contexts, and funding gaps.
- ➡ **While strategic alignment with other sectors and partners was evident, integration during implementation faced difficulties**, particularly in relation to education.
- ➡ **The programme made significant progress in improving water access and emergency responses**, but bureaucratic, security, and environmental **constraints affected overall efficiency and coverage**.
- ➡ **Flexible funding, strong partnerships, and community involvement were key enablers** of success, although **high turnover among IPs posed challenges**.
- ➡ The programme also demonstrated **partial effectiveness in addressing equity and disability concerns**, with gaps in data collection and monitoring impacting attention to these areas.

CONCLUSIONS

- ➡ **Sustainability remains a concern due to political, economic, and environmental risks**, with the declining water table and climate impacts posing significant threats. Strong community involvement and partnerships have laid the groundwork for sustainability, but reinforcing technical training, aligning policies, and integrating climate resilience will be critical.
- ➡ Geographic disparities in coverage and coordination challenges highlighted **the need for improved resource allocation and sub-national collaboration**.
- ➡ While the **programme incorporated gender and human rights considerations**, broader **socio-cultural barriers and inconsistent data collection limited its impact on gender inequalities**.
- ➡ Climate change and environmental safeguards were **addressed but require stronger integration and infrastructure resilience** for long-term success.

Recommendations



RECOMMENDATIONS



Recommendation 1: Review and update existing monitoring indicators, databases, data collection, and reporting formats with harmonized and standardized indicators to achieve complete alignment with the WASH Cluster, particularly for emergency response.



Recommendation 2: Strengthen organizational preparedness to better align with the nature of the emergency grants like ECHO, BHA where the project locations are identified based on the donor conditions and emergency situation/type.



Recommendation 3: Deepen the understanding and broaden the scope of knowledge management beyond its singular current focus on ground and surface water monitoring.



Recommendation 4: Enhance coordination by leveraging the strengths of MoPH, MRRD, and MoE to improve community-level outreach, especially through women outreach workers, and prioritize climate-resilient WASH interventions in schools through a phased and coordinated approach.

RECOMMENDATIONS



Recommendation 5: Continue enriching WASH sector programming to align with rapidly changing donor priorities by emphasizing climate change-focused and specific integrated programming to address multi-sectoral deprivations that address both immediate humanitarian and future WASH needs in the country. Map out the climate change-focused activities under each section, as well as opportunities for the integrated programming. Continue enhancing donor proposals with integrated planning strategies, including joint site/project identification, data sharing, monitoring, and reporting.



Recommendation 6: Prioritize advocacy with the HAG and OCHA to compile community level data for a better understanding of WASH needs and deprivations. This will strengthen equity-focused community or village level targeting based on hard-to-reach ranking, key health indicators, composite WASH vulnerabilities index, and other key parameters. Adopt a phased approach to complete community-level WASH needs analysis in districts ranked high on WASH composite vulnerability index. Continue this phased approach based on resource availability.



Recommendation 7: Strengthen community engagement strategies across the WASH sector and other related sectors to enhance the sustainability of WASH interventions and improve gender integration and protection strategies.

RECOMMENDATIONS



Recommendation 8: Strengthen both rural and urban WASH services by providing a comprehensive package that includes all essential components: water supply, sanitation, and hygiene promotion, incorporating context specific SBC approaches.



Recommendation 9: Increase the systematic inclusion of equity, disability, gender and ESS into WASH programming. Continue advocacy to secure exemptions in the short term and demonstrate flexibility or overturn the ban on women working in WASH outreach in the long term.



Recommendation 10: Enhance capacities of IPs and continue coordination with DfA to leverage their input, community level data sharing, and administrative influence in planning and implementation of WASH interventions beyond the emergency context.



Summative Evaluation of the ECHO-Supported Humanitarian
Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH) Programme in
Afghanistan (2022-2023)

ECHO-supported WASH Programme Implementation: 2022- 2023
Evaluation Commissioned By: UNICEF Afghanistan Country Office
Submitted By: The Konterra Group
October 2024



Would like to find out more?

The evaluation report and additional resources are available at:
<https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/reports>

- **Evaluation report**
- **Evaluation annex**
- **Evaluation presentation**
- **Evaluation brief**

THANK YOU!