



# The Bangladesh Experience with the Water, Sanitation & Hygiene Bottleneck Analysis Tool (WASH BAT): Guidance for Future Users

## SUMMARY

IN 2018, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB), UNICEF and other sector partners implemented a Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Bottleneck Analysis Tool (WASH BAT) in order to identify key factors or 'bottlenecks' that prevent the delivery of sustainable WASH services and attaining the SDG WASH targets. The WASH BAT exercises were carried out at a national and decentralized level (8 Divisions) and helped to identify regional disparities and bottlenecks as well as national challenges common to all regions. The outcome of this analysis has helped the GoB and its partners in developing costed plans for tackling the bottlenecks and preparing their national five-year plan for the sector, as well as supporting the development of UNICEF's five-year WASH plan. The objective of this document is two-fold: first, to present the WASH BAT method and key results in Bangladesh; and second, to share lessons of the WASH BAT process, how the tool works and what it can achieve when rolled-out effectively.

Two of the main lessons that came through clearly during the implementation of the tool was that for the process to be successful, there needs to be: i) Political commitment at the highest level for the WASH BAT exercise, as it is an intense process and requires high level participation of the different Government institutions and the involvement of key sector stakeholders; and ii) a reliable and recent baseline data set to understand the WASH situation in the country and enable the effective planning of priority actions as well as establishing a reference for the monitoring and evaluation process. Few countries have rolled-out the WASH BAT to the level achieved in Bangladesh; hence the experience of Bangladesh provides an opportunity for the country to share their experiences and lessons with others who might be considering implementation of the WASH BAT.

## Introduction

Bangladesh has made considerable progress towards achieving its goal of universal access to drinking water and sanitation services. According to the 2017 UNICEF/WHO Joint Monitoring

Program (JMP), only 1% of the population still practices open defecation whilst 64% are using improved sanitation facilities (basic and limited) and 99% of the population have access to an

improved source of drinking water. Yet, some key challenges remain for the WASH sector in Bangladesh in order to meet the SDG targets: namely the safety (quality) and sustainability of water supply and sanitation services, and more specifically hygiene services. The data suggests that less than half of the population (43%) has access to safely managed water services<sup>1</sup> (accessible on premises, available when needed and free from microbial and arsenic contaminants) and less than 36%<sup>2</sup> of the rural population use safely managed sanitation services (one latrine per household and excreta safely treated, stored and transported). Additionally, although figures for access to hygiene services are unavailable, it seems that less than half of the population has access to basic hygiene services. Another issue was the detection of substantial microbial contamination from the water source at point of use in both urban and rural populations in Bangladesh as the percentage of households nationwide *with E.coli* in their water source stands at 40% (MICS 2019).

Hygiene services in communities, schools and health facilities were also seen to have weaknesses: although knowledge about the importance of handwashing is high, practice remains poor as only 26% wash hands after defecation, 1% before preparing food and 4% before feeding a child<sup>3</sup>. Menstrual health for adolescent girls also remains a challenge as 1 in 4 girls reported missing school during menstruation, leading to 20% of lost school days. Furthermore, in hospitals and health care centres the WASH situation is often inadequate; handwashing stations with available soap near toilets was scant for both staff and patients as only 41% of rural and 46% of urban health facilities had handwashing stations with soap available for patients, and 51% in rural and 61% in urban health centres for nurses. Infections such as Sepsis, often due to unhygienic conditions and poor hygienic behaviours are responsible for 23%

<sup>1</sup>Household members with an improved drinking water source located on premises, free of *E. coli*, available when needed and <=50ppb *Arsenic*

of neonatal mortality in Bangladesh, improved WASH conditions could prevent this<sup>4</sup>.

Access to WASH services also differs substantially according to habitat; population living in hard to reach places such as urban slums, wetlands, coastal areas or hilly terrains will suffer in terms of access, sufficiency and reliability. Gender, age and socio-economic status will also impact access.

Another risk, specific to Bangladesh is the impact of climate change. Availability of sufficient drinking water for the populations has been put in jeopardy as some of the ground water reserves have dried up and others have suffered from arsenic contamination or salinity. Furthermore, extreme weather events have destroyed WASH facilities, requiring increasingly the need to look at building disaster resilient facilities.

Finally, the WASH sector in Bangladesh has also suffered from the divergent approaches in terms of WASH sector strategies and WASH-related policies. Definitions of access to water and sanitation services need to be revised and streamlined in the sector policy documents to lay the emphasis on the SDG definitions of safely managed water and sanitation services.

The scope of the WASH BAT exercise in Bangladesh was determined by the issues and bottlenecks cited above. **The aim was to analyse the complex interplay between the different division-level institutional structures and their internal processes and how this impacts the government's capacity to effectively support access to the sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene services in Bangladesh.** The identification of bottlenecks may help the government and its partners identify the gaps in service delivery and understand why these gaps exist as to develop adequate solutions.

<sup>2</sup> MICS 2019

<sup>3,4</sup> NHBS 2014

## Description of Intervention

The agenda of the Bangladesh WASH BAT, which took place from April to November 2018, was jointly identified by the GoB and UNICEF to include the following six thematic areas:

1. Rural water and hygiene
2. Urban water and hygiene
3. Rural sanitation and hygiene
4. Urban sanitation and hygiene
5. WASH in Schools (WinS)
6. WASH in Health Care facilities (WinHCF)

These themes were rolled out in each of the eight divisions in Bangladesh: Barishal, Chattogram, Dhaka, Khulna, Mymensingh, Rajshahi, Rangpur and Sylhet. The specific objective of the WASH BAT exercise in Bangladesh are listed in Box 1.

### BOX 1. BANGLADESH WASH BAT OBJECTIVES

- To identify key challenges, solutions and priorities and develop a costed action plan to update the last 2 years (2019/2020) of the 2015-2020 WASH plan, in line with the SDG's
- Identify key challenges, solutions and priorities and develop a costed action plan to inform the new (2020-2025) WASH plan in line with the SDG's
- Identify WASH bottlenecks and key priorities for schools and Health Care Facilities
- Analyse key sector stakeholders and institutions and their mandates as to promote 'collaborative behaviours' to support the WASH sector development
- Identify WASH sector policy recommendations based on priority actions
- Endorsement by the GoB of the WASH BAT division results, recommendations and the costed plan of action
- Provide country level information for the SACOSAN/SWA process

The WASH BAT process started with a number of sensitisation meetings of all national level stakeholders from the WASH, Education, Health, Planning and Finance sectors to present the results of key WASH sector issues in Bangladesh, to ensure buy-in from all stakeholders and gain political commitment at the highest levels. This was followed by a two-day training of Master WASH BAT facilitators who were selected from the Ministry of Planning, the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, different WASH, Education and Health sector actors, from local government, NGO's, the private sector and academia. The training was focused on providing those sector experts with tools and processes on the WASH BAT methodology, facilitation skills, use of WASH BAT documents and how to facilitate a stakeholder analysis. This resulted in a pool of trained WASH BAT experts who could then lead and facilitate the different WASH BAT workshops in each division.

**Figure 1: Bangladesh and its eight divisions**

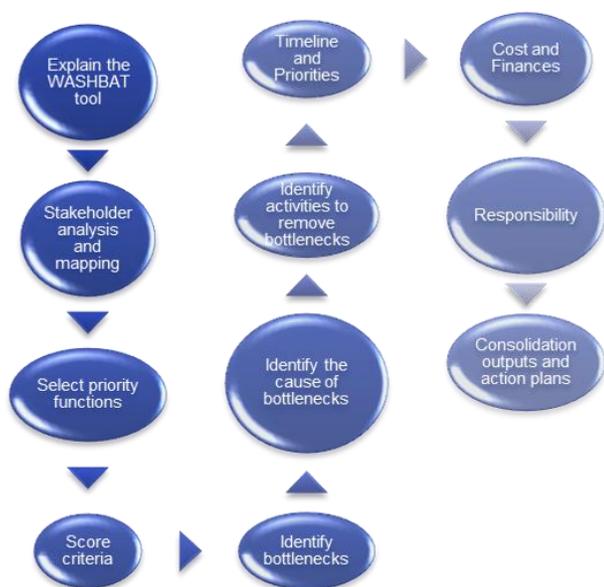


Regional level WASH BAT workshops targeted the regional level public administration staff, such as the Division Commissioner (Administrative Head), to ensure the participation of the right level

of participants and guarantee the quality and robustness of the sector inputs. This also created a greater sense of ownership of the process and the results at regional level. Engaging the relevant ministries at the decentralized level has further proven critical to ensure that the workshop outcomes are translated into policy action at the local level. Additionally, key actors who ensured the inclusion of WASH BAT workshop results into policy level action were identified as regional NGOs, private sector representatives and academia.

- Identifying bottlenecks that restrict sector progress
- Proposing sequenced activities for the removal of bottlenecks
- Estimating resource requirements and costs of bottlenecks removal
- Proposing priorities for the use of additional funds, and
- Link bottleneck removal to sector and broader development objectives

**Figure 2: Bottleneck analysis steps**



Each divisional workshop ran for three days, followed by a one day feedback and debriefing session and finalizing the documents recording the WASH BAT process, lessons learned and the specific challenges for the WASH sector in each division. The three-day workshop proceeded through a step by step approach (Figure 2) to assist the participants in:

- Assessing key enabling factors to be developed for the WASH sector based on a comprehensive set of predefined criteria

The WASH BAT analysis was linked to previously developed sector processes such as the Sector Wide Approach (SWA), looking at policy and strategy, institutional arrangements, financing and budgeting, planning, M&E and learning and capacity development. It also ensured that the monitoring platform: Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking Water (GLAAS) was consulted to ensure that sector improvements proposed in the WASH BAT were in line with the same systematic approach.

## Summary of the Workshop Findings

The following section provides the major challenges and bottlenecks which were found to be common to all sub-sectors in all divisions as well as recommended priority actions for each topic.

### Sustainable Services Delivery

The absence of functional Operation and Maintenance strategies at regional level was a recurrent bottleneck identified during the WASH BAT process. The need for demonstrating scalable models of service delivery as well as encouraging private sector engagement were discussed. The development of comprehensive operation and maintenance strategies was seen as a priority action.

## Planning, Monitoring & Review

The absence of integrated needs-based plans appropriate to the specific context was a common bottleneck in the thematic groups and divisions. A key recommended priority activity was the development of area-wide needs-based plans that captures the specific and diverse needs of the vulnerable population in the urban slums, saline, arsenic, flood prone and other hard to reach areas and vulnerable populations in terms of gender, disabilities, climate vulnerability and socio-economic status. The development of harmonized indicators aligned with the SDG indicators was also frequently proposed.

## Sector Policy and Strategy

The weak alignment of key sector documents with emerging issues and the SDGs was a common bottleneck. Review and updating of the key sector documents such as the *National Water and Sanitation Policy (1998)*, the *Sector Development Plan (FY 2011 and 2025)* and the development of a National O&M strategy were identified as key activities.

## Capacity Development

The prioritized actions from the WASH Bottleneck Analysis reflects the need to address the current situation in which WASH institutions have limited capacity especially in terms of human resources to fulfil their sector roles and responsibilities for sustainable service delivery at scale. Other institutional capacity gaps include the weak functionality of some of the support structures, absence of harmonized and currently used tools

especially for community mobilization and hygiene education and training.

## Budget & Expenditure

The consultations revealed that financial flows and commitments are unpredictable, there is no separated and ring-fenced budget for WASH at division level and other governmental tiers. Activities related to developing accountability and tracking mechanisms were proposed.

## Communication

The stakeholder consultations indicated that some of the critical bottlenecks are related to the absence of mechanisms and functional structures at the divisional level to facilitate communication between policy makers and technocrats; national and sub-national divisions; between sectors such as health, WASH and education and at the community level.

## Cross cutting issues

Proposed priority actions to address gender, disabilities inclusion and climate change adaptation issues were integrated into the priority actions of the various sector building blocks rather than as separate issues.

## Key lessons learnt and recommendations

The WASH BAT exercise allowed for the highlighting of 3 key areas for improvement in terms of providing equitable access to WASH services to the people of Bangladesh. These are outlined in Table 1.

## Guidance

Use of the WASH BAT in regional workshops has enabled the GoB, UNICEF and the partners involved in the process in the identification of the bottlenecks that have hampered the achievement of certain WASH objectives as outlined in the SDG's. At the national level, it has foremost emphasized the need to have a comprehensive strategy for WASH in Bangladesh that leads the sector and includes access to WASH services for all Bangladeshis, including those in hard to reach areas or those living with disabilities. At the divisional level the exercise has helped to pinpoint regional similitudes and disparities and region-specific bottlenecks. A costed action plan listing the priority activities to be undertaken at each

division was developed to support the national 5-year plan in achieving universal access to WASH services in both rural and urban communities. This costed plan has become an essential advocacy tool with the Ministry of Finance and the cabinet in charge of allocating resources.

The WASH BAT exercise in Bangladesh has much to offer in terms of lessons and recommendations as it was among the first countries globally where the WASH BAT exercise was conducted at scale, at the subnational level. For those countries that are embarking on their own WASH BAT exercise, the following information may prove useful in organizing and implementing the WASH BAT.

**Table 1: Key areas of the WASH sector for improvement in Bangladesh**

Area	Specific changes proposed
<b>The enabling environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a need to enhance the compliance and implementation of sectoral policies at national and division levels</li> <li>• Guidelines for O&amp;M of WASH facilities need to be developed and executed.</li> <li>• The planning and budgeting for WASH in schools and health centres is weak and capacity for carrying out these tasks needs to be nurtured.</li> <li>• Communication between national and division level institutions is weak as is their communication with the communities they serve.</li> <li>• Engagement of the private sector in WASH service delivery needs to be boosted</li> <li>• A regulatory framework for the WASH sector needs to be developed as well as an accountability charter for water quality testing</li> </ul>
<b>Service delivery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate and low-cost water and sanitation technologies for the Haor, Tea Gardens and saline coastal areas as well as other hard to reach areas needs to be developed</li> <li>• WASH services in Education, Health and Nutritional institutions are inadequate and need to be revised</li> <li>• Access to WASH services for people with disabilities remains poor and needs further attention</li> </ul>
<b>Behaviour change communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Menstrual Hygiene knowledge is weak as are menstrual, personal and water hygiene practices</li> <li>• Adoption of alternative technologies for water supply and water treatment are slow as is the uptake and use of improved sanitation facilities</li> <li>• Hygiene practices of caregivers in HCF's need to be improved</li> </ul>

**1. Political commitment:** For the WASH BAT process to succeed, it needs to be endorsed and supported at the highest political level. Without it, the relevant national and international stakeholders will not follow. ***It is therefore essential to gain this commitment at a national level, as was done in Bangladesh with the unfailing support from the Minister of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives.***

**2. Ensuring widespread stakeholder commitment to the WASH BAT process:** The number of professionals involved in a national WASH BAT process are numerous and diverse. In Bangladesh, participants emanated from the Local Government Division, Finance, the Department of Public Health and Engineering, the Directorate of Primary Education as well as Secondary and Higher Education, the Directorates of General Health Services, Family Planning, Water and Sewerage Authorities (WASAs), City Corporations/Municipalities, Academic institutions, NGO's, UNICEF, to name but a few. The challenge with this number and variety of participants is to keep them focused on the specific objectives of the WASH BAT process, this can be complex when each entity has its own agenda. It is for this reason that initial contact with these stakeholders and the sensitization process about the WASH BAT exercise is essential: to gain their understanding and commitment to the process. ***To ensure this, it is important that each entity nominates a senior to mid-level representative, who will represent their government or agency's entity and has the authority to make decisions and endorse the outcomes of the WASH BAT process.*** For overall strategic and management oversight a WASH BAT advisory group was formed under the leadership of the Secretary for the Local Government Division in Bangladesh. The advisory group was comprised of the most senior WASH technocrats and policy makers representing all the sectors involved, this ensured that WASH BAT results could be endorsed rapidly and lead to action.

**3. Careful identification of facilitators and rapporteurs:** To ensure that there is equity in terms of representatives of the different stakeholders, it is important to make sure that facilitators and workshop rapporteurs are representatives of all stakeholders involved: government level both regional and national, academic, NGO's and WASH-related institutions. ***Sharing this responsibility equitably between the different stakeholders will ensure that the process will be respected by all participants as no one division or entity will lead the process. It will also ensure that capacity to lead the WASH BAT process is built at all levels, allowing for future regional level WASH BAT exercises to take place without the need for central level support.***

**4. Availability of a robust and recent baseline data set is essential to launch a WASH BAT.** In order to launch a national or regional level WASH BAT, it is essential to be able to depend on robust WASH data that clearly demonstrates which sector-specific areas are still lagging behind in terms of access to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene services for rural and urban communities. Bangladesh had access to the JMP report from 2017 which provided the WASH BAT teams with detailed information on areas that needed attention, such as hygiene services and access for vulnerable people. ***A detailed baseline data set is essential before embarking on a WASH BAT exercise, not only to understand what challenges remain in order to provide adequate WASH services, but also, the data set serves as a necessary M&E tool to ensure that the WASH BAT priority actions plan effectively responds to these challenges.*** One of the lessons from the regions in Bangladesh was that the regional data and briefing notes should be prepared before conducting the WASH BAT workshops as presentation of this data should be one of the first activities of the workshop. Presenting this data helps set the stage and allows for the bottleneck analysis to commence.

**5. Financial Commitment at National and Regional level is essential.** The costed priority action plans will become great tools to gain financial commitment at the government level as well as a means to lobby sector partners and donors. Yet, an initial commitment at national and regional level will be essential to ensure that the action plans can effectively be rolled-out. This commitment can be gaged in terms of the government's willingness to invest in the launch of the WASH BAT process.

The WASH BAT intervention itself is time-intensive and therefore costly (3 full days of residential workshop outside of the work station) ***Given that a large group of senior level Government officials, development partners and resource staff are spending 3 full days outside of their respective workstations, a high level of commitment is crucial for success.*** In terms of cost, the unit cost per divisional workshop was around USD 35,000, training of facilitators and rapporteurs and other activities as part of the preparatory process was approximately USD 20,000. The cost of conducting the national workshop amounted to about USD 60,000. The WASH BAT Bangladesh exercise was sponsored by FCDO, SIDA and UNICEF regular resources.

**6. Ensure that all key partners involved in WASH services delivery are invited to the WASH BAT process and encourage gender balance in representation whenever possible.** One of the lessons of the WASH BAT experience in Bangladesh was that not all the appropriate people had been invited to participate in the workshops. During the process, it was remarked that representatives from several Local Government Institutions (LGIs) and the private sector were missing whilst they play a key role in WASH services delivery. Gender balance amongst workshop participants was observed to be poor, for future workshops of this type increased female participation will be promoted, allowing for a more diverse outlook of the bottleneck analysis.

**7. The WASH BAT workshop offers a unique opportunity to bring all relevant stakeholders into one room for several days, focusing on how the country and/or region can achieve sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.**

It is important to ensure that the WASH BAT process is scheduled at the most appropriate time. This may be:

- a) With respect to the political cycle or Five-year planning cycle, ensuring continuity of the stakeholders and civil servants to implement the Action Plan resulting from the WASH BAT, or
- b) Taking advantage of windows of opportunity, such as providing input in the reformulation of a national strategy. Findings suggest that WASH BATs are most successful when feeding into such a national process, such as the Joint Sector Review, or feeding into a new major WASH programme.

### Key challenges and what can be improved in future WASH BAT exercises:

- The gender balance at the divisional WASH BATs, as well as at the National Consultation event, was poor. Average female representation was below 30% at the WASH BAT workshops, few women were facilitators or rapporteurs. Although, the importance of increased female participation was mentioned by several speakers this was not implemented at the events.
- Engaging Government participant for a 3-day exercise was complex. Most workshops were conducted at the divisional headquarters level. It was hence very difficult to keep divisional level participants engaged and focused for the full duration of the workshop due to competing commitments. At a later stage in the process, workshops were moved to a location outside the city, allowing participants, and specifically

the GoB participants, to focus solely on the workshop. A recommendation would be to shorten the workshops to 2.5 days instead of 3, allowing participants to remain focused for the duration of the workshop.

- There was limited LGI and private sector representation at the workshops, it is important to engage representatives from LGIs and include more private sector representatives in the workshop.
- Youth participation was low, particularly in the plenary sessions. Only 1 speaker was below the age of 35. However, in the group sessions, youth participation increased, with representatives often taking active parts in the discussions.
- Climate change criteria were not well defined. There is a need to include better definitions in future tool kits.
- The WASH BAT online tool was not practically useable during the workshop itself, either because of poor internet connection or because it was distracting to the participants, who were focusing too much on the tool itself. The paper-based method currently promotes better engagement. An 'offline function' in the tool is available, enabling offline use and later synchronization once online, but it has not been widely used.
- During some of the workshops there were problems with the software, such as the loss of data, slow navigation and delayed saving function were encountered. Some participants had difficulties in following the logic of the tool if the workshop had previously used a different flow to arrive at the activities.
- The reporting criteria were difficult to adapt, with the final report template not producing a good overview. The template produced included a lot of sections not relevant for the country report, and as a result the template

was not used. The need to simplify online report generation was identified.

- Many participants perceived the cost and timeline modules as less useful than other modules, as they were not necessarily the right individuals to give realistic costs and scheduling of activities and sub-activities. This led to unrealistic, and unusable estimates. There is a need to review these modules during the development of future tools and guidelines, as participants targeted to provide knowledgeable sector specific inputs into the other modules are not always familiar with costing and timelines.

## Conclusion

The comprehensive WASH BAT exercises conducted across Bangladesh has led to the completion of several key activities that were identified as bottlenecks for the adequate delivery of WASH services to communities in Bangladesh.

The information generated, thanks to the WASH BAT process, contributed to the development of several key policy and strategy papers such as:

- The Bangladesh Country Position Paper, which was presented at the high-level Ministers meeting for the Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) Partnership.
- The development of the National WASH in Health Care Facility Strategy and Framework for Action.
- The review of the Water Supply and Sanitation Strategy, Revision of National Water Supply and Sanitation Policy 1998, Sector Development Plan 2011-2025 and development of National Water Supply and Sanitation Operation and Maintenance Strategy.

These papers will now be disseminated at the national and divisional levels through the LGD of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural

Development and Cooperatives who will in turn liaise with the Government Institution for Planning and Financing to ensure that the priority action plans are financed and implemented.

The WASH BAT exercise has helped the DGHS to identify bottlenecks and corrective actions for WASH related issues in the Health sector and prepare costed plans of action aligned with the Governments 8<sup>th</sup> five-year plan.

MoLGRD&C and DPHE used the WASH BAT report as a basis to provide feedback to the General Economic Division (GED) of the Planning Commission during the 8<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (FYP) preparation process and development of UNICEFs WASH Program Strategy Note 2022-2025.

The National WASH in Health Care Facility Strategy and Framework for Action has been informed by the WASH BAT outcomes. It was developed with technical and financial support from UNICEF.

The development of national standards and implementation guidelines for WASH in HCFs based on the WASH BAT outcome/findings is in progress.

Costed plans of action for IRF Faecal Sludge Management are being developed for City Corporations, Municipalities and rural areas based on one of the WASH BAT recommendations. Advocacy with MoLGRD&C to prepare a costed plan of action for all strategies is ongoing.

National O&M strategies/guidelines are being developed with technical and financial support from UNICEF. This was one of the recommendations of the WASH BAT.

Based on the successful advocacy with the Ministry of LGRD&C, the finance minister was able to commit to an increase of at least 5% to the national WASH budget allocated for Hand

Hygiene for All, and general hygiene including proper menstrual hygiene management, during the SWA /UNICEF hosted regional finance ministers meeting in December 2020.

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All reports available on <https://www.washbat.org> – see countries implemented

<https://www.washbat.org/map/> and materials for implementation

<https://www.washbat.org/resources/>

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## About the Series

UNICEF's water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) country teams work inclusively with governments, civil society partners and donors, to improve WASH services for children and adolescents, and the families and caregivers who support them. UNICEF works in over 100 countries worldwide to improve water and sanitation services, as well as basic hygiene practices. This publication is part of the UNICEF WASH Learning Series, designed to contribute to knowledge of good practice across UNICEF's WASH programming. In this series:

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