



INVESTMENT CASE

FOR WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE IN ERITREA



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Why invest in water, sanitation and hygiene in Eritrea?

The State of Eritrea recognizes that access to clean water and adequate sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities is a fundamental human right. Addressing inequalities in access to these services is key to ensuring that people – especially children – can achieve their full human potential. Investing in WASH in Eritrea will make a significant contribution to social and economic development and reduce preventable child deaths and undernutrition; help girls and boys achieve their right to education; reduce the burden (particularly on women and girls) of fetching water; and provide privacy and safety from the gender-based violence often associated with inadequate access to water and sanitation.

Poor sanitation and hygiene behaviours lock the poor into a vicious cycle of poor health, environmental degradation, malnutrition, reduced productivity and loss of income. The lack of privacy and dignity directly impact on the health and well-being of women and adolescent girls and especially the poorest, most marginalized and vulnerable segments of the population. Poor-quality WASH services are a significant cause of diarrhoea and many other preventable illnesses and deaths, the burden of which falls heavily on children under 5 years of age. Extensive evidence demonstrates that investing in WASH leads to reduced child mortality and morbidity, and undernutrition and improved socio-economic status for the poorest population groups. Therefore, financing a combination of WASH interventions provides significant health and other benefits.

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At present, about 30 per cent of Eritreans lack access to improved sanitation and open defecation is practised widely. Significant disparities persist between urban and rural water and sanitation services, which means that communities living in hard-to-reach rural areas typically achieve limited progress towards WASH goals. Less than half of Eritrea's rural population has access to improved sanitation, and more than 20 per cent lack access to an improved source of drinking water. Rapidly increasing migration to urban areas is straining the capacity of existing facilities and the burgeoning needs of the urban poor require attention. Despite the demonstrated positive health impact of improved hygiene practices – especially handwashing with water and soap at critical times – progress in Eritrea has been slow. In addition, the country still places low priority on WASH in schools, despite its many benefits for children. Targeted sanitation interventions are therefore needed in Eritrea to address the current lack of progress if Eritrea is to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Eritrean women and girls are disproportionately affected by lack of access to clean water and basic sanitation. Consequently, they spend a considerable time each day queuing for public toilets, seeking secluded spots to defecate and fetching drinking water, all of which put them at risk of sexual and other violence. Women and girls are also twice as likely as men to fetch water – time spent that could be put to more productive use. For example, girls could attend school and complete their education instead. Bringing water close to households is therefore essential to address the inequitable burden of water collection borne by women and girls and to protect their privacy, safety and dignity, as well as facilitate the practice of handwashing.

However, climate change affects the sustainability of WASH outcomes worldwide and changes in precipitation patterns lead to water stress and scarcity. In Eritrea, this is exacerbated by increased demand due to population growth and migration.

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WASH in Eritrea today¹

Diarrhoea is one of the three leading causes of under-five mortality in Eritrea, according to the country's health management information system. Data from the 2010 Eritrea Population and Health Survey reveal that diarrhoea prevalence is highest (11 per cent) among children living in households that lack an improved source of drinking water. Other contributing factors are related to deprivation of appropriate sanitation and hygiene facilities within communities, schools and health facilities.

The 2010 Eritrea Population and Health Survey showed that sanitation coverage improved by 11.3 per cent, but that open defecation was practised nationally by an average of 70.7 per cent of the population, reaching 90.2 per cent in rural areas. Sanitation efforts since 2010 have yielded positive results: as of December 2018, 994 (30 per cent of all villages) villages had been declared open defecation-free. This means that the proportion of rural populations practising open defecation declined from 90 per cent to 70 per cent, which shows the potential for progress.

According to the 2010 Eritrea Population and Health Survey, just under half (49.9 per cent) of the rural population had access to improved water supply compared to 72.9 per cent of the urban population (57.9 per cent nationwide). Thirty-four per cent of Eritrean households (76 per cent urban and 11 per cent rural) had a water source on their premises. Twenty-six per cent of urban households depended on water trucks to deliver water. More than a third of households in rural areas had access to public wells (protected 13 per cent and unprotected 22 per cent) and 23 per cent used surface water. However, by 2018 the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates that 56.5 per cent of the rural population were using an improved source of drinking water, which is a significant improvement over 2010.

Data on WASH in institutions from 2010 indicated that half of all health facilities had access to an improved water source and 90 per cent had toilets available for patients.² Although reliable data on the status of WASH facilities in schools is not available, the Ministry of Education stated in 2012 that half of all schools provide drinking water (from both improved and unimproved sources) and that latrine facilities exist in 67 per cent of schools.³ UNICEF found that as of 2018, about 57 per cent of schools had a water source. Further assessment is needed for both schools and health facilities in relation to the condition, functionality, disaggregation and accessibility of latrines.

The enabling environment for WASH in Eritrea needs to be significantly strengthened to sustain an expansion of service provision sufficient to meet the needs of the population. This includes a need to harmonize existing policies and develop new ones to fill identified policy gaps. There is also an urgent need to improve both horizontal and vertical coordination across service providers to clearly identify roles and responsibilities. Improving the capacity of all WASH-related institutions is also critical to realizing the Sustainable Development Goals. Priority actions include conducting a WASH-capacity needs assessment and developing a comprehensive, long-term plan to strengthen WASH-related capacity at all levels. In addition, monitoring, feedback, evaluation and accountability mechanisms need to be institutionalized to improve oversight of the delivery of WASH-related services.

1 See literature review in 'Eritrea OneWASH Strategy and Investment Plan 2019–2030'.

2 Ministry of Health, 'Nationwide Assessment on Availability of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Facilities in Health Care Facilities', 2012, Eritrea.

3 Ministry of Education, 'School Water, Sanitation & Hygiene: Profile assessment report', 2012, Anseba Region.

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Proposed solutions for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6⁴

The Government of Eritrea, with support from UNICEF, has developed the 2019–2030 OneWASH Strategy and Investment Plan to achieve universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation. The plan’s strategic objectives reflect key Sustainable Development Goal 6 targets:

- No one practises open defecation
- Everyone has safe water, sanitation and hygiene at home
- All schools and health centres have sustainable WASH facilities
- Inequalities in access are progressively eliminated.

The OneWASH Strategy and Investment Plan reflects several strategic shifts from the Millennium Development Goals and is based on guiding principles⁵ that build on and reinforce one another – described as the ‘five best buys’ – to ensure the delivery of WASH-related services and infrastructure for the benefit of all Eritrean citizens by 2030. This can be achieved by:

- (1) Focusing on evidence, data generation and scenario-based planning, with special attention to mapping current water resources and likely trends in climate change and urbanization as the basis for developing sustainable water and sanitation systems for today’s population and generations to come.
- (2) Improving the WASH-enabling environment within the context of the Water and Sanitation for All platform, while strengthening the evidence- and data-based policy framework, investing in capacity-building at all levels and improving monitoring and accountability systems.

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⁴ See ‘Eritrea OneWASH Strategy and Investment Plan 2019-2030’ for further information.

⁵ Principles include: the human rights-based approach to programming, accountability; equity; inter-sectorality; the humanitarian/development/peace nexus; social norm transformation; sustainability; properly monitored implementation; and effective operational modalities.

- (3) Establishing sustainable, integrated WASH services as part of regional cooperation, with specific attention to 'leaving no one behind'.
- (4) Strengthening policies, expanding technical capacity and improving system responsiveness to ensure the country's preparedness for and adequate response to WASH-related emergencies.
- (5) Improving sustainable and equitable financing of WASH-related targets, including mobilizing the resources required to strengthen Eritrea's institutions.

Eritrea's overall WASH goals are:

- By 2030, all people living in Eritrea will have sustainable and equitable access to sufficient, safe and affordable drinking water.
- By 2030, all people living in Eritrea will have access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene facilities – with a special focus on the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations – and open defecation will be eliminated.

Eritrea will achieve these goals by implementing three pillars of the OneWASH Strategic Framework:

Pillar 1: Strengthening the enabling environment

This pillar focuses on evidence/data generation and scenario-based forecasting that incorporates climate change, urbanization and economic development; developing and harmonizing WASH-related policies; building capacity across all levels of the WASH system (based on the planned capacity needs assessment); establishing effective monitoring and accountability systems; and mobilizing resources for the WASH sector.

Pillar 2: Regional (zoba-level) WASH planning and implementation

Building on the improved enabling environment resulting from Pillar 1 interventions, Pillar 2 focuses on zoba-level planning; the use of innovative technologies; mobilizing resources for sustainable and equitable financing; and implementation of efficient and effective water resource management and oversight systems. Zoba-level WASH planning and implementation is one of the core strategic pillars of the government's decentralization policy, which designates these regional-level administrations as lead agencies for implementation of all development projects, including WASH. This involves planning, implementation and monitoring of development programmes and calls for a decentralized arrangement involving sub-zoba and kebab (village) administrations, as well as requiring that development processes be initiated at grass roots with strong community engagement in identifying and prioritizing needs and defining solutions and action plans.

Pillar 3: WASH service delivery (supply and demand)

In support of the rapid improvement of public health outcomes and access to WASH achieved by progressive implementation of Pillars 1 and 2, this pillar focuses on improving WASH delivery through integrated management and improved coordination at the local and zoba levels; maintaining and repairing WASH-related infrastructure; increasing the availability of supplies and equipment through public-private partnerships (on the basis of the WASH inventory assessment); and building local capacity. Pillar 3 will also involve improving WASH facilities and practices at schools and health care facilities. Central to the realization of the OneWASH Strategy will be WASH-related behaviour-change and awareness-raising campaigns, which are essential at both the local and national levels. Strategies employed will encourage community ownership and mobilization around WASH through innovation and best practice, including female functional literacy strategies; communication for development strategies; and positive-deviance programmes that encourage communities to learn from one another about solutions to local WASH-related issues, using existing resources.

By 2030, all people living in Eritrea will have sustainable and equitable access to sufficient, safe and affordable drinking water.

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Funding sources and cost

Financial oversight and accountability for OneWASH rest with an Inter-Ministerial Working Committee, and primary funding sources include the Government of Eritrea, donors, grants and loans, equity from utilities and community contributions. Mobilizing these resources will require improving the efficiency and effectiveness of current investments, identifying innovative financing approaches and addressing current challenges. It is therefore crucial that the Inter-Ministerial Working Committee begins developing policies and strategies for financing OneWASH, including mechanisms to leverage additional sector resources within the framework of the '3 Ts' (taxes, tariffs and transfers).

A total budget of US\$674,357,000⁶ is required to implement OneWASH. The breakdown of estimated costs is depicted below.⁷

Figure 1: Estimated costs (US\$) of OneWASH's programme areas

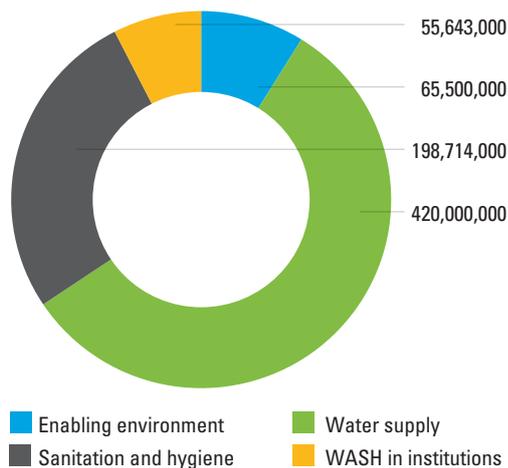


Figure 2: Estimated costs (US\$) of OneWASH's urban and rural objectives

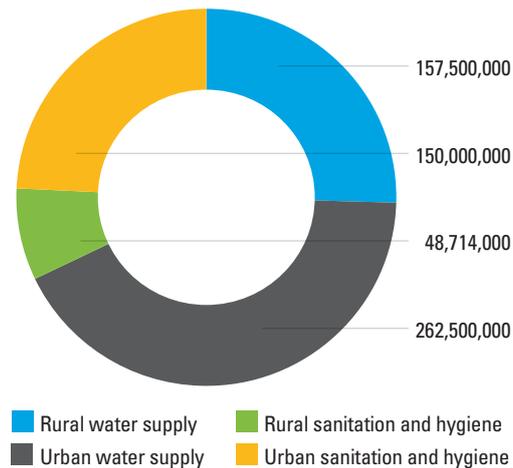
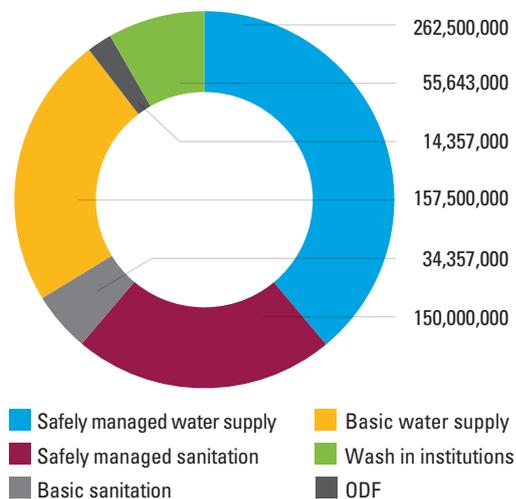


Figure 3: Estimated costs (US\$) of OneWASH per SDG 6 category



6 Estimated cost to be confirmed by the government and updated after developing detailed zoba-level costed plans.

7 Estimated costs for each programme area (water supply, sanitation and hygiene; WASH in institutions; and rural and urban WASH) are presented in Chapter 7 of the OneWASH Strategy and Investment Plan.

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Partnerships and collaboration

The OneWASH Coordination Unit will be supported by UNICEF to coordinate implementation of the strategy.

The Inter-Ministerial Working Committee, comprised of senior-level personnel, was established to coordinate and oversee the process of achieving Eritrea's WASH goals as part of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The working committee's core mandate is to oversee implementation of the OneWASH Strategy. It is responsible for inter-sectoral coordination and strategic leadership during preparation of the OneWASH Strategy and Investment Plan and will provide technical oversight and governance during implementation and related capacity-building activities.

Under the Inter-Ministerial Working Committee, the OneWASH Coordination Unit will be supported by UNICEF to coordinate implementation of the strategy. The unit will consist of between 12 and 15 members, nominated by their respective departments and ministries, with gender-balanced representation.

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Background and additional information

- Eritrea OneWASH Strategy and Investment Plan 2019–2030
- Roadmap to End Open Defecation in Eritrea by 2022
- Eritrea Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Bottleneck Analysis Report

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