Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

More than 2.2 billion people live without the benefits of safe water at home.

**WASH and Children**
Globally, nearly 2 billion people lack access to basic sanitation services, and 785 million people lack access to safe drinking water. The absence of these rudimentary necessities is not only inconvenient — it is lethal.

On average, children under five years of age are 20 times more likely to die from diarrheal diseases associated with poor WASH than from violence in conflicts. WASH-related deaths from diseases, such as cholera and diarrhea, can be prevented by increasing access to safe water and sanitation facilities and strengthening programming in schools and health centers.

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by a lack of access to safe water, hygiene and sanitation. Scaling up woman- and girl-friendly facilities in communities and expanding menstrual health and hygiene programming also supports efforts to promote gender equality.

**UNICEF and WASH**
UNICEF efforts focus on the strengthening of water systems to reach the poorest and most vulnerable populations, leaving no one behind. UNICEF’s multi-faceted approach to achieve water and sanitation goals includes national targets in the areas of water supply sustainability and safety, open defecation reduction, hand-washing behavior change, menstrual health and hygiene, WASH in schools and health centers, and emergency WASH.

UNICEF works directly with governments, community-based organizations and families to ensure access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation services in homes, health centers, and schools. In 2019, only 69 percent of schools had access to basic drinking water services and 57 percent to hygiene services, which left 818 million children without basic hygiene services at school. Improving sanitation and hygiene in schools is imperative to increasing attendance rates.
More than 700 children die every day – about one every two minutes – from diseases like diarrhea that are linked to unsafe drinking water, poor sanitation, or poor hygiene.

As the lead agency for the WASH emergency cluster system, UNICEF led and provided WASH support during humanitarian responses in 64 countries in 2019. UNICEF’s emergency response program enabled 39.1 million people to gain or regain access to water supplies; 9.3 million people access to sanitation services; 2.8 million children to have access to WASH services and programs in schools and learning spaces; and 1 million girls and women to receive menstrual health and hygiene services.

2019 UNICEF WASH Snapshot

In 2019:

- UNICEF helped 18.3 million additional people gain access to safe drinking-water and 15.5 million additional people gain access to basic sanitation services.
- Across all program countries, UNICEF support helped a total of 22,267 communities gain open defecation-free status.
- UNICEF supported community-based hand-washing promotion programs in 90 countries.
- UNICEF’s emergency WASH response enabled 39.1 million people to gain or regain access to water supplies, and 9.3 million people to gain access to sanitation services.
- UNICEF provided direct support for menstrual health and hygiene services to 20,495 schools in 49 countries.
- UNICEF support provided 3,341 health care facilities in 52 countries with new water, sanitation and hygiene services.

Community health workers have taught Amnata child health-related interventions, including hand washing and other good hygiene practices.