



7 practical systems strengthening lessons for sustainable and inclusive WASH

Lessons and recommendations from WaterAid's SusWASH Programme in Cambodia, Ethiopia, Pakistan and Uganda

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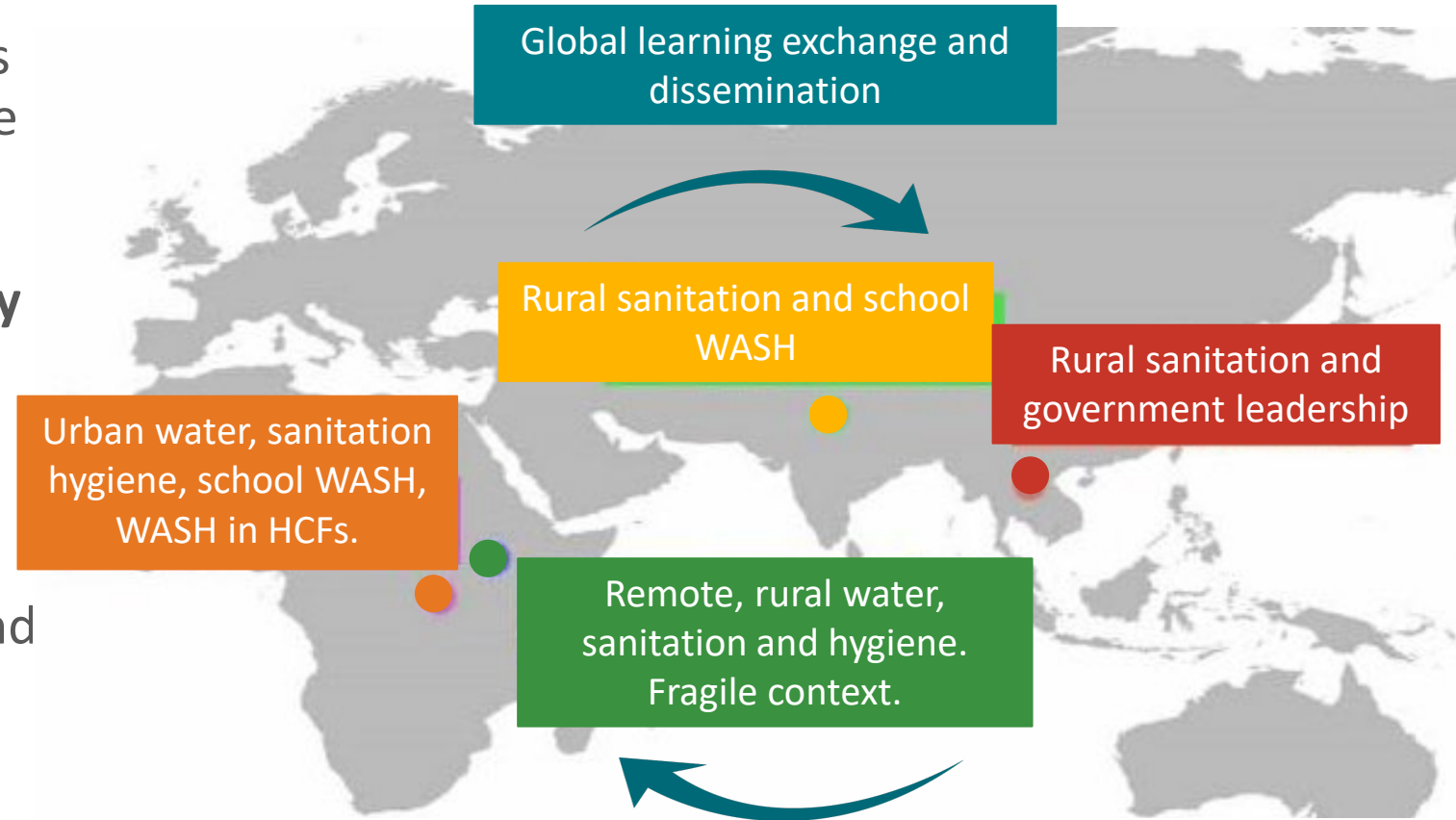
Achieving SDG6 in a Changing Climate



#WaWF23

The SusWASH Programme

- **Aim:** to improve living conditions and advance the fulfilment of the SDGs by tackling critical **institutional** and **behavioural** blockages to **WASH sustainability** and **inclusion**
- **Countries:** Cambodia, Ethiopia, Uganda and Pakistan
- **Level:** Local (district), national and global
- **Timeframe:** April 2017 – June 2022
- **Donor:** H&M Foundation



The WASH system

Actors

Factors

Interactions



Key lessons from strengthening WASH systems in four countries

1. Identify entry points
2. Be clear about your role and objectives
3. Work with partners and alliances
4. Invest in country learning
5. Understand what is changing and why
6. Embrace flexibility and adaptability
7. Rethink ways of working



Access the brief at: <https://washmatters.wateraid.org/publications/seven-practical-lessons-for-wash-systems-strengthening-from-the-suswash-programme>

Lesson 1: Identify entry points

Lessons:

- Conduct thorough analysis.
- Define the improvements to which you intend to contribute.
- Understand and align with the priorities and interests of key actors.

Implications:

- Participatory analysis takes time, requires human and financial resources, and a willingness to revisit objectives.
- Donors and implementing agencies must be mindful of undertaking one-off service level assessments (and other data collection) without government buy-in.



**Woreda level context analysis workshop.
Gololcha, East Bale, Oromia, Ethiopia.**

Lesson 5: Understand what is changing and why

Lessons:

- The long-term indicator of a stronger system is sustained improvement in services.
- We need to think about complex pathways of systems change, rather than a linear process of cause and effect.
- Local stakeholders will know what metrics are relevant in their context.

Implications:

- Think about our *contribution* to change through collective action rather than *attribution*.
- Accept the possibility of failure: outcomes may be beyond our control.
- Become comfortable with qualitative measures of progress.



Local stakeholders assess the strength of the WASH system from a gender perspective in Kampong Chhnang Province, Cambodia

Lesson 6: Embrace flexibility and adaptability

Lessons:

- Strengthening WASH systems requires agility to respond to system complexity and dynamism.
- NGOs should not necessarily lead change; support leadership by willing and able actors.
- Commitment and vision of key individuals can shape sector momentum.

Implications:

- Develop relations with multiple institutions for programme resilience to change in leadership, policy or funding.
- Regularly review, learn from, respond and adapt to change.



Zahida Jakhro conducts a hygiene session in the village of Bapro Jakhro, Province Sindh, Pakistan.

Lesson 7: Rethink ways of working

Lessons:

- Learning and adaptation, long-term engagement and extensive local partnerships require new skills and capacity.

Implications:

- Invest in up-skilling internal and partner staff.
- Targets for number of people directly reached by improved services might need to be more conservative.
- Accept that successful systems strengthening programmes will require greater expenditure on organizational and partner staff.



Lalam Suzan and Christopher Tumwine, Kamwokya WASH Community Action Team members, conduct house to house WASH awareness-raising. Kampala City, Uganda

Access the full policy and practice brief, and learning products from the SusWASH Programme at: <https://washmatters.wateraid.org/suswash>

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