

Spotlight on the UNICEF Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Fund

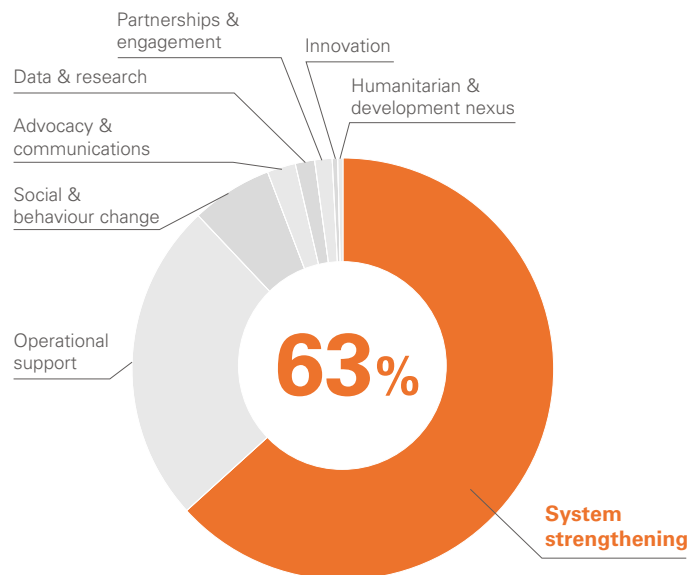
Results achieved in 2022 to ensure every child has access to safe and equitable water, sanitation and hygiene

UNICEF's Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Thematic Fund is a flexible funding pool. It enables us to **strengthen systems** to ensure every child has access to safe and equitable water, sanitation and hygiene.

This offers donors an exciting opportunity to target your funding specifically to WASH outcomes, while also giving UNICEF the flexibility to allocate funds based on where the need is greatest for children, including critically underfunded priorities at the country level, humanitarian response activities, and where funds will have the greatest impact.

Thanks to our generous donors UNICEF's Global WASH Thematic Fund income in 2022 reached \$17.1 million. We are so grateful for your kind support.

Partner Type	Partner	Total (US\$)
Public Sector	Sweden	13,943,112
	Luxembourg	698,925
Private Sector	United States Fund for UNICEF	624,743
	Canadian UNICEF Committee	595,775
	German Committee for UNICEF	493,905
	Korean Committee for UNICEF	269,274
	Spanish Committee for UNICEF	235,662
	Belgian Committee for UNICEF	171,300
	Slovenia Foundation for UNICEF	46,536
	Committee for UNICEF Switzerland and Liechtenstein	27,355
	French Committee for UNICEF	17,408
	Austrian Committee for UNICEF	17,408
Norwegian Committee for UNICEF	13,125	
Grand total		17,154,525



The chart above illustrates how thematic expenses at global, regional and country level were apportioned across eight out of UNICEF's nine implementing strategies for WASH-related programming. This includes thematic expenses for both development and humanitarian-related activities. In 2022, system strengthening was the core focus of our work for WASH, accounting for 63 per cent of all expenses. For more information on expenses, refer to the [2022 Global Annual Results Report for WASH](#).

System strengthening work allows us to both support on the harmful effects when children do not have access to safe WASH, as well as getting to the root causes such as inflexible policies, poor capacity, lack of financing, influencing community behavior and much more.

In this spotlight report, you will see how thematic funds enable this vital system strengthening work for the greatest impact – bringing together your passion with our mission to ensure good water, sanitation and hygiene for every child.

What is thematic funding?

UNICEF has 11 global thematic funds. These are flexible funding pools which support specific cause areas. This enables donors to direct their funding to an area of their choice, while giving UNICEF the flexibility to distribute resources wherever they are needed most. UNICEF distributes more than three quarters of global thematic funds to our country programmes, while also making allocations at the global level and in our seven regions of operation.

The 11 global thematic funds are:

- Health 
- HIV/AIDS 
- Nutrition 
- Education 
- Child Protection 
- Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)** 
- Climate, Energy, Environment, and Disaster Risk Reduction (CEED) 
- Social Policy and Social Protection 
- Gender Equality 
- Mental Health 
- Humanitarian Action 

The challenges



Thematic funding ensures that the spectrum of water, sanitation and hygiene challenges that communities face are addressed at scale through strong systems.

Despite recent progress for water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), many children and communities are still being left behind – especially in rural areas, urban slums, disaster-prone areas, and low-income countries. For too many people, WASH services are not affordable. For others, the services are vulnerable to climate change and can stop functioning if a disaster strikes.

These WASH challenges are not only diverse but can differ from one country to the next. But what unites these diverse challenges is that they are caused or exacerbated by weak systems.



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Lebanon

In Lebanon, almost 2.7 million people are facing challenges in accessing safe and sufficient quantities of water for drinking, domestic use, and safe sanitation. UNICEF is working closely with local authorities to keep piped water networks running to ensure safe water reaches the most vulnerable.



1.42 billion people, including 450 million children, **live in areas of high or extremely high water vulnerability.**



Worldwide, **2.2 billion people still lack access to safely managed drinking water.**



2 billion people do not have a handwashing facility with water and soap at home. Almost half of schools lack a handwashing facility with water and soap, affecting some 818 million school-age children.



1.9 billion people still lack basic sanitation services, while 419 million people practise open defecation.



Over 1,000 children under 5 die every day of diarrhoeal diseases due to lack of appropriate WASH services. In areas of conflict, children are nearly 20 times more likely to die from diarrhoeal disease than from the conflict itself.



All climate impacts are water-related – from drought to flooding to sea-level rise and extreme weather events. This is why UNICEF has a dedicated [climate-resilient WASH approach to programming](#).

A key role of thematic funding – strengthening systems

System strengthening makes change happen at scale, creating a ripple effect across a district, country or region.

1

Every day, children around the world rely on local and national systems to support their access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) at home, in health centres, at school, and more. When these systems are stronger, children's lives are better.

2

When we strengthen these systems – such as supporting government budget allocations for WASH or strengthening national monitoring systems of WASH service delivery – we don't just help one child, we make large-scale changes for every child at the same time.

3

UNICEF can deliver this impact because we are uniquely placed to work with governments to improve WASH systems for children across an entire country.

4

Donors to the WASH Thematic Fund support this work, helping to define and build this most sustainable way for UNICEF to create impact. Thank you so much for your support.

Based on our 75 years of experience working for and with children and women, we have seen **how powerful it can be to address cross-cutting issues by focusing on strengthening systems.**

When we strengthen WASH systems, we don't just respond to the consequences of poor water quality or lack of access to toilets. We get to the root of the issues to remove these structural barriers that put children at risk. Working in collaboration with governments and other influential partners helps us get to these root issues and to achieve long-lasting results at scale.

2

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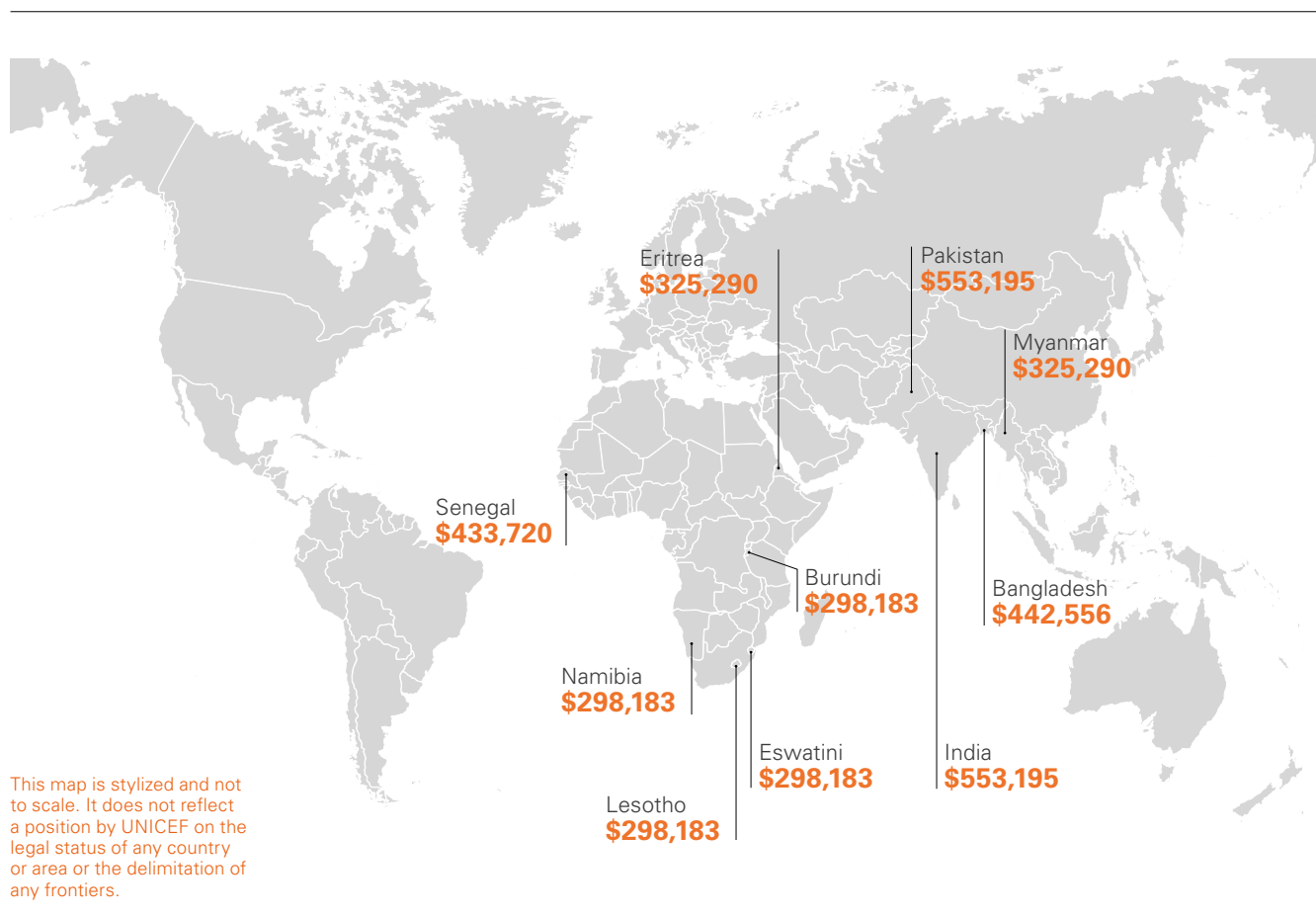
Results achieved in 2022 to ensure every child has access to safe and equitable water, sanitation and hygiene

Supporters of the [Water, Sanitation and Hygiene \(WASH\) Thematic Fund](#) enabled UNICEF to allocate resources to WASH programmes in 69 countries and territories. The map shows the 10 countries which received the highest allocations in 2022. Global thematic funds were allocated to UNICEF countries to support COVID-recovery programmes, climate-resilient WASH, safely managed sanitation, and other system strengthening work. Funds were also allocated to UNICEF's regional and global headquarters, supporting the vital work that allows thematic funding to unlock wide-scale results and impact the world over.

Regional and global programming

Thematic funds don't only support UNICEF's work in countries. They are also used to provide critical support for UNICEF's programming across wider regions and globally. These vital allocations of flexible funding are what enable the WASH Thematic Fund to have an impact far beyond the countries that receive direct allocations.

In 2022, UNICEF allocated over \$1.7 million from the WASH Thematic Fund across all seven of our regional offices: East Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, Eastern and Southern Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, and West and Central Africa. The highest amount (\$357,303) was allocated to West and Central Africa. This region is a particular priority because over half of the 703 million people without basic drinking water live in sub-Saharan Africa. The allocations



to all regional offices enable our regional teams to play a key role in ensuring that country plans and priorities are in support of national, regional and global priorities and in ensuring timely and quality monitoring, data analysis and global reporting.

Resources from the WASH Thematic Fund were also allocated to UNICEF's global headquarters, totaling over \$1.4 million. These funds enable UNICEF's global specialists to analyse the WASH landscape and set our priorities. Our global WASH staff also help to lead the way for vital

commitments, particularly the targets for Sustainable Development Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all by 2030.

Finally, a special allocation of \$300,000 was made to the ongoing efforts around WASH Severity Classification (WSC). The WSC classifies the severity of WASH conditions at the subnational level – creating a severity score by combining quantitative data and qualitative data. This helps to support better decision-making for WASH programmes and policies.

Achieving results for system strengthening

As the world's largest organization for children, UNICEF achieves results for water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) on a massive scale every year. Below are some headline sector-level results, to which thematic funding, as part of an overall portfolio of funding, was a key contributor to the long-term system strengthening work.



Tajikistan

In 2022, a UNICEF-supported national plan on water safety was finalized in Tajikistan. Our system strengthening work for the year was supported with \$274,227 from the WASH Thematic Fund.

Services/Infrastructure

Ensuring WASH infrastructure is strong is a vital component of UNICEF's work. We focus on installing and upgrading WASH facilities, such as toilets and water stations, in communities, schools, and hospitals. We are committed to making all our WASH programmes sustainable, so we install solar panels where possible to power WASH infrastructure.

- › In 2022 UNICEF constructed 1,855 solar water systems serving communities, schools and health centres in 52 countries – the most ever in a single year. We also helped to strengthen the WASH system by expanding technical support services, such as our regional solar hubs, which offer courses, workshops and a helpdesk for staff designing and maintaining solar water systems.

Data

A critical element of WASH system strengthening is data and monitoring. Without being able to adequately understand the current situation it is impossible to plan for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6. Globally, UNICEF plays a critical role, with the World Health Organization, in running the Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (JMP) – that is used to measure global progress. It is also a critical aspect of the UNICEF Strategic Plan with interlinkages across coordination, monitoring and reporting and with a strong focus on sustainability of services.

- › In 2022 four UNICEF country offices reported on how they strengthened national WASH monitoring systems while incorporating sustainability in them.

Supply chains

To support WASH infrastructure, we need to ensure that supply chains are strong, so that all necessary products are readily available to keep facilities running. For instance, UNICEF invests in water treatment technologies, such as water purification tablets, throughout the supply chain to ensure that water is always safe.

- › In 2022 UNICEF supported 27 governments to develop or update national supply chain strategies to address barriers to health, nutrition and WASH commodities.

Social and behavioural change

Social and behavioural change is any work that aims to shift attitudes on key issues. For instance, we help to influence behaviour change on open defecation through media campaigns and direct engagement with affected communities.

- › In 2022, UNICEF helped communities with a total population of 26.2 million people in 50 countries become open defecation free.

Laws and policies

UNICEF works with local authorities and at the highest levels of government to advise on good laws and policies. For instance, we advocate for universal coverage of drinking water supplies and support governments with dedicated plans to achieve this.

- › UNICEF advocacy and support led to the development of major new WASH-related policy instruments in over 30 countries in 2022, including national policies, strategies, standards, road maps and costed plans.

Targets

Thematic funds form a vital cornerstone of our **system strengthening** work, which unlocks the greatest impact for children. But this takes time. That is why resources from the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Thematic Fund are spent over a four-year period, aligning with UNICEF's Strategic Plan (2022-2025). To measure our long-term impact in strengthening inclusive and effective systems for WASH, UNICEF monitors several key indicators, as illustrated on the table below.

Area Description	Baseline (2021)	Progress (2022)	Target for 2025
Services/Infrastructure Number of people reached with basic water, sanitation and hygiene by UNICEF	23.6 million in 2022	26 million	50 million
Supply chains Number of countries with a national supply chain strategy that addresses barriers to access to essential health, nutrition, and WASH commodities	21	26	40
Data Number of countries with national monitoring systems incorporating sustainability in previous two years, with UNICEF support	0	4	20
Laws and policies Number of countries supported by UNICEF to develop major new WASH policies or strategies	40	42	50
Public finance Number of countries that have prepared and implemented a costed and inclusive national WASH financing strategy, with UNICEF support	8	9	25
Climate impact Number of countries that have developed a climate rationale for the impact of climate change and water scarcity on WASH services	11	13	50



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Plurinational State of Bolivia

Bolivia received \$157,224 from the WASH Thematic Fund in 2022 – the highest amount of any country in Latin America and the Caribbean. Nicole and José (pictured) are two young people who were able to participate in the Latin American Sanitation Conference at the invitation of UNICEF Bolivia, providing a vital youth perspective on the issue.

UNICEF'S STRATEGY FOR WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (2016-2030)

UNICEF's work in 2022 was driven by the priorities outlined in our [Strategy for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene](#) (2016-2030). The Strategy is aligned to the timeline of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals – a set of 17 global goals agreed by United Nations Member States to achieve by 2030. In particular, the Strategy aims to address two targets within Sustainable Development Goal 6:



Target 6.1: By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all

Target 6.2: By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations.

The human rights to water and sanitation are at the core of the UNICEF mandate for children. UNICEF's vision for WASH is the realization of the human rights to water and sanitation for all. And the WASH Thematic Fund has a key role to play in achieving this vision – providing a central funding source for our system strengthening work.

By giving UNICEF the flexibility to support work at the country, regional and global levels, thematic funding achieves wide-scale results. And, by supporting work across the four years of our Strategic Plan (2022-2025), thematic funding enables us to address the root causes for children who lack access to water, sanitation and hygiene, and achieve real, long-term results.

Thematic funding around the world

The Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Thematic Fund supported UNICEF's work globally, in seven regions, and in 69 countries and territories in 2022. Here are six examples of UNICEF's work for WASH in countries that received allocations of global thematic funding.



Myanmar

Myanmar was one of UNICEF's top 20 countries for WASH expenses in 2022. It also received the highest allocation from the WASH Thematic Fund of any country in East Asia and the Pacific: \$325,290. One area of focus for UNICEF in Myanmar in 2022 was WASH in schools. In fact, we supported a complete package of WASH facilities in 330 schools and reached an additional 1,115 schools with a hand hygiene and menstrual hygiene package.



Ukraine

UNICEF's long-term presence in countries and our relationships with key partners are vital components of our system strengthening approach. So, when war broke out in Ukraine in 2022, UNICEF was able to leverage our existing relationships with utilities companies to accelerate repairs to war-damaged infrastructure. Our work was supported by an allocation of \$173,488 from the WASH Thematic Fund in 2022. This Fund helped support national water quality monitoring systems.



Burundi

UNICEF's hygiene work encompasses a wide range of work. For instance, we partnered with adolescents and young people to launch Oky – a period tracking app co-created with girls, for girls. In 2022, the app was expanded to several new locations, including Burundi, a country which received \$298,183 from the WASH Thematic Fund.



Iraq

Universities and other academic institutions are important partners for UNICEF to strengthen in-country capacity to support WASH-related research initiatives. In 2022, we worked with postgraduate students from the Iraq University of Technology to conduct social and environmental impact assessments for planned WASH projects. Our work for the year was supported with \$206,017 in flexible funding from the WASH Thematic Fund.



India

Progress at scale can only be made through multifaceted and long-term support to government partners for system strengthening. One example of this is a government-led campaign in India, supported by UNICEF, which has provided over 80 million households with a tap water connection since August 2019. Given the scale of India's population, our work there was supported with a particularly large allocation of \$553,195 from the WASH Thematic Fund, used to support the government to strengthen their national water and sanitation programmes.



Liberia

In Liberia, UNICEF supported the development of national guidelines on menstrual health and hygiene in schools. This work not only supports the health and hygiene of girls, but also supports their school attendance. Our work in Liberia benefited from a \$216,860 allocation from the WASH Thematic Fund in 2022.

A toilet to be proud of...



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Bangladesh

Eti, age 16, stands proudly by her family's improved latrine, which ensures waste can be more safely disposed of through pipes connecting to a pit.

Eti's story in Bangladesh

Whenever Eti, age 16, woke up in the night needing the toilet, she tried to ignore her discomfort until morning. As soon as it was light in her village, Eti asked her mother to accompany her to the pit latrine some distance from their house. She only felt safe when her mother was standing guard outside the toilet, which was barely shielded by flimsy sack cloth fencing.

"Most of the latrines in our village are dirty and unhealthy, installed far away from home," Eti complains. "As a result, everyone my age goes through the same experience as me," Eti says, adding it got even harder when she started menstruating and needed to use the toilet more often.

While Bangladesh has significantly improved access to sanitation, poor-quality toilets continue to pose a threat to the health of millions of children. In rural areas such as Eti's, many latrines are shared, broken or of poor quality. Many lack a water seal, which means faeces are exposed. When floods and cyclones hit, overflowing waste contaminates drinking water and contributes to the spread of diseases. Eti herself has often had to miss school due to diarrhoea and dysentery.

But six months ago, her situation began to improve, when her father, Ziarul, came upon a shop selling latrine supplies. The owner of the shop was one of hundreds of entrepreneurs involved in a UNICEF-supported project to improve sanitation for more than one million Bangladeshi households by 2024. The "Scaling Up Sanitation Market Systems in Bangladesh" programme aims to achieve this by ensuring toilets are available to all children and affordable by their families, however modest their income. One way is through financial subsidies in the form of vouchers worth \$50, which are given to 70,000 of the poorest households to spend on purchasing a twin pit toilet.



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Bangladesh

Eti, age 16, washes her hands at home. Her family also learned about the importance of handwashing with soap and water as part of the UNICEF-supported programme.

As a result, Ziarul was able to upgrade and improve the family's latrine, installing new rings and a new slab that has a water seal. Since then, none of the family have fallen ill and Eti has been able to keep up with her studies.

"Now I don't get sick like before and skip school," Eti says. "I can play with my friends and younger brother. I can also help my mother with the chores."

Given the scale of the sanitation challenge in Bangladesh (less than a third of the population has access to safely managed sanitation) flexible funding is vital to supporting UNICEF's system strengthening response. In 2022, the country benefited from \$442,556 from the WASH Thematic Fund – the third highest amount of any country. But more support will be needed to ensure every child has access to a clean and safe toilet.

"Latrines must be close to home, so that there is no fear or hesitation in going to the latrine, especially during menstruation," Eti concludes.

Making handwashing fun in Laos

Tonhorm's story

In December 2022, around 30 children gathered in a school field in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. Seated on benches, they held in their hands a bunch of curious-looking blue booklets that they were scanning with interest.

Among these children was 12-year-old Tonhorm. With brand-new flip charts and posters in hand, Tonhorm played a leading role among her peers in spreading an important message on the power of handwashing.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of handwashing with soap has become even more evident. The practice proved to be one of the most effective and cheapest methods of protection against the virus as well as other illnesses caused by poor hygiene. However, despite this fact, many people are still unaware about how to correctly wash their hands with soap and the benefits of doing so.

In response, UNICEF organized social and behavioral change activities to promote handwashing. Not only did children learn from the booklets and other materials – there was also music.

The children, led by Tonhorm, gathered together to sing and dance, their voices and movements in tune with the music, which contained lyrics talking about COVID-19 prevention and the seven steps of handwashing. Everyone was encouraged to take part in the activity and by the end of it, the children were a picture of laughter and smiles.

"I cannot wait to share the seven handwashing steps with my siblings," said Tonhorm.



Lao People's Democratic Republic

The children take part in the social and behavioural change session, which provided them with booklets on handwashing.

Lao People's Democratic Republic

The session included music and songs about handwashing to make the messaging more fun.

This activity was part of UNICEF's broader WASH programme in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, which takes a system strengthening approach through various strategies, including social and behavioural change. In 2022, our work in the Lao People's Democratic Republic was supported with \$271,075 from the WASH Thematic Fund.



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for every child