

Step 3

Defining WASH contributions to peace – enabling environment, vertical social cohesion, horizontal social cohesion, and individual capacities for peace

This section describes and illustrates how WASH conflict-sensitive and peacebuilding interventions can contribute to building and sustaining peace by **strengthening an enabling environment** for child rights-based and positive peace, **vertical and horizontal social cohesion and individual capacities for peace**, in line with UNICEF's overall approach to build and sustain peace.¹² *Programming Tool 4 – Peacebuilding WASH Programming Tool* provides examples of interventions for each area of contribution. WASH contributions to peace need to consider the gendered dimensions of peacebuilding. This includes the importance of enhancing efforts to address the power structures, dynamics, roles and relations between women/girls and men/boys – for more details on integrating gender responsiveness to deliver 'triple and mutually reinforcing dividends' of WASH, gender, and peace outcomes *see Programming Tool 5 – Guide to integrating a gender lens into WASH for Peace Programming*

3.1. WASH contributions to an enabling environment for child rights-based and positive peace

The UNICEF Peacebuilding Framework illustrates organization-wide efforts to fostering an enabling environment for child rights-based and positive peace by supporting the adoption of age-, gender-, and conflict-sensitive and pro-peace norms, policies and practices among key stakeholders (duty-bearers and rights-holders) globally and in FCCs. This is a central tenet of UNICEF's commitment to build and sustain peace, and reflects efforts at global, national and community levels. UNICEF's support to WASH child rights-based interventions present an opportunity and a platform for influencing community and

societal norms, and behaviours at community level. UNICEF also plays an essential advocacy and leadership role in the WASH sector, helping to shape international and national norms, policies and practices so they are conducive to peace. The below broad ToC illustrates:

Generic ToC

WASH contributing to an enabling environment for child-centered and positive peace

IF meaningful participation of children and women in WASH for peace initiatives is increased, more flexible finance for peacebuilding WASH is available, more conducive WASH for peace partnerships are established, and pro-peace social and behavior change is adopted, globally and in FCCs

THEN an enabling environment for child-centered and positive peace will be fostered

BECAUSE

- The impacts of fragility and conflict on children, young people and women will be reduced and their agency and ability to build and sustain peace through their engagement in WASH will be increased
- Key WASH stakeholders (duty bearers and right holders) globally and in FCCs will adopt age-, gender-, and conflict-sensitive and pro-peace norms, policies, and practices

Examples of WASH interventions to strengthen an enabling environment for child rights-based and positive peace include evidence-based **advocacy** to ensure WASH policies are conflict-sensitive and leverage opportunities to address root causes of conflict and supporting **pro-peace social and behaviour change (SBC)**¹³ through WASH for Peace interventions – for example, by conducting context-specific analysis to identify factors that sustain harmful norms and practices that undermine peace and perpetuate conflict, as well as potential drivers of positive change, and using the findings to target WASH SBC strategies and actions – the below illustrate how:



¹² For more details on UNICEF's overall peacebuilding approach see Key Concepts section of this Guidance Introduction.

¹³ <https://www.sbcguidance.org/>

RESOURCE BOX



Pro-peace social and behaviour change

Pro-peace social and behaviour change (SBC)

is a core UNICEF strategy that focuses not only on individual change, but also on influencing the environment to make it easier for 'changed' behaviours to be practiced. SBC also focuses on tackling the structural barriers that underpin inequity, exclusion, marginalization – all critical conflict drivers and barriers to the realization of children's rights. UNICEF's [Social and Behaviour Change \(SBC\) Guidance](#) identifies **social cohesion as a key social transformation outcome** and the links between social and individual behaviour change that can be adapted to integrate relevant aspects of SBC to 'WASH for Peace' interventions. SBC approaches and tools can enhance the enabling environment for child rights-based and positive peace by supporting the adoption of age-, gender- and conflict-sensitive and pro-peace norms, policies and practices among key WASH stakeholders (duty-bearers and rights-holders) globally and in FCCs, so the impact of fragility and conflict on children, young people and women's access to WASH is reduced and their agency and ability to build and sustain peace through their engagement if WASH initiatives is increased.

For more detail on SBC strategies and actions see <https://www.sbcguidance.org/do> more and for more information on how SBC supports UNICEF peacebuilding approach see UNICEF's [Peacebuilding Framework](#)



WASH for Peace advocacy can complement pro-peace SBC efforts on the ground to reduce fragility and prevent conflict by providing an environment that is conducive to individual and community change. Moreover, the influencing must extend not only to external stakeholders but also to key internal stakeholders to build commitment and capacity to fulfil the ambition in the Strategic Plan to leverage WASH investments to build and sustain peace in FCCs (*See this Guide's Programming Tool 7 'WASH for Peace Internal and External Advocacy Strategy Canvas'*). 'Messages' and 'asks' are core components of effective advocacy – messages convey the key political, social or moral point that is being conveyed to your audience, while an 'ask' is the 'call for action' to the target audience (*See this Guide's Programming Tool 8 – Sample WASH for Peace Messages for key messages relating to key 'WASH for Peace' themes*). Below is an example of 'WASH for Peace' advocacy with key messages, evidence and 'asks' taken from UNICEF's ['Water Under Fire'](#) initiative:¹⁴

¹⁴ UNICEF, 'Water under fire: The role of water in conflicts around the world', 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/stories/water-under-fire>; <https://www.unicef.org/reports/emergencies-development-peace-in-fragile-and-conflict-affected-contexts-2019>

Key message and evidence:

The right to safe drinking water and sanitation is rooted in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, United Nations resolutions and the Geneva conventions. It is a right that is as critical to the survival of children as food, medical care and protection from attack. Every child has the right to water and sanitation. And yet globally, in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, 420 million children lack basic sanitation and 210 million children lack access to safe drinking water.

Key asks:

To improve children's access to clean drinking water, and to save lives in conflicts and crises, UNICEF calls for three major changes:

- **Stop attacks on water and sanitation infrastructure and personnel.** Deliberate and indiscriminate attacks on water and sanitation – and the power supplies required for them to function – can be a violation of international humanitarian law. So, too, is the intentional denial of services.
- **Build a water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector capable of consistently providing high-quality water and sanitation services in emergencies.** The WASH sector needs to build technical, operational and personnel capacity to address increasingly complex and protracted crises.
- **Link life-saving humanitarian responses to the development of sustainable water and sanitation systems for all.** This requires systems to be built that can ensure the right to safe water and sanitation and prevent outbreaks of disease. And it demands that humanitarian and development organizations collaborate from the start to establish systems that will remain resilient.

3.2. WASH contributions to vertical social cohesion

Two aspects of WASH programming were identified by a WASH peacebuilding evaluative review as conducive to delivering vertical social cohesion contributions – increasing participation in decision-making processes at different levels as well as the support to accountability mechanisms.¹⁵ However, in order to leverage WASH services to strengthen state–society relations, a two-pronged approach is needed: (1) supporting the development and growth of local and national civil society (*demand*); and (2) building government knowledge and capacity on water and sanitation issues, particularly regarding the rights and responsibilities of different stakeholders, management issues and strategies, and technical information (*supply*).¹⁶ Below is a suggested and generic ToC:¹⁷

A critical aspect of vertical social cohesion is the perception of UNICEF’s support to national and local governments when it comes to the delivery of WASH services. Especially in humanitarian settings, the perception among participating communities can be that UNICEF is the service provider, thus undermining government legitimacy and credibility. Ideally UNICEF and its partners should *support* the government and be perceived to act in such a supporting role, so as not to undermine efforts to build citizens’ trust in the capacity of government to provide WASH services.¹⁸ This can be complemented through efforts to improve institutional accountability to ensure that greater visibility of government as a service provider contributes meaningfully to more accountable and responsive services, as part of a broader conflict-sensitive and peacebuilding WASH system strengthening approach (see section 4.2. below, ‘Strengthening WASH sector governance’).

3.3. WASH contributions to horizontal social cohesion

There are also important horizontal social cohesion dimensions to WASH’s contribution to peace particularly where WASH services and access to water become a contested and divisive issue – for example creating divisions within communities about water fees and treatment, and conflicts along water systems that cut through areas with ethnically diverse communities. The collaborative management of WASH services and water resources to strengthen social cohesion are well-established programmatic entry points for UNICEF and partners. Below is an example of a generic ToC to support WASH contributing to horizontal social cohesion and community resilience:¹⁹

Using community-based structures to manage and maintain water facilities is common practice in the WASH sector, but this has primarily focused on enhancing the sustainability of WASH infrastructure, rather than developing social cohesion. Such structures can improve a community’s capacity to create cohesive mechanisms among its diverse groups to ensure equitable access, address negative impacts of conflict, and resolve tensions and disputes around WASH service provision.²⁰ A case study from South Kordofan illustrates how.

Generic ToC

WASH contributing to vertical social cohesion

IF WASH services are planned, delivered and monitored in an equitable, participatory, responsive and relevant way, with attention to conflict sensitivity

THEN resilience capacities will be built at multiple levels

This is **BECAUSE**: quality functioning of the WASH sector, and its plan and use of resources, will enhance the capacities of institutions by:

- Helping WASH authorities develop equity-oriented and evidence-based planning frameworks for water resources
- Building trust and legitimacy in WASH sector institutions
- Enhancing the understanding of local resource pressures, providing a means to prevent water-related conflicts
- Developing government’s knowledge of water and sanitation issues, particularly around rights and responsibilities

WASH contributing to horizontal social cohesion

IF WASH services are targeted at the community level through processes and platforms that enable inclusive and participatory planning and monitoring

THEN community conflict resilience capacities will be enhanced

This is **BECAUSE**: WASH services can:

- Help communities build stronger and more cohesive structures that enable them to address WASH-related conflict drivers
- Enhance resilience through strengthened local mechanisms for water management and sanitary practices
- Encourage collaborative water development projects that facilitate communication between divided groups.

15 Peacebuilding, Social Cohesion, Violence Prevention and Conflict Sensitivity’, Interpeace Advisory Team (IPAT) for UNICEF, Thematic WASH and Peacebuilding Case Study: Review of UNICEF’s Approach to 2020.

16 UNICEF, ‘The Contribution of Social Services to Peacebuilding and Resilience: Evolving Theory and Practice’, 2015, http://www.erinmccandless.net/uploads/3/1/5/5/31558725/the_contribution_of_social_services_to_peacebuilding_and_resilience_-_unicef_study_final.pdf; p. 41.

17 Ibid, p. 38.

18 Interpeace Advisory Team (IPAT) for UNICEF, Thematic WASH and Peacebuilding Case Study: Review of UNICEF’s Approach to Peacebuilding, Social Cohesion, Violence Prevention and Conflict Sensitivity’, 2020.

19 UNICEF, ‘The Contribution of Social Services to Peacebuilding and Resilience: Evolving Theory and Practice’, 2015, http://www.erinmccandless.net/uploads/3/1/5/5/31558725/the_contribution_of_social_services_to_peacebuilding_and_resilience_-_unicef_study_final.pdf; p. 38.

20 UNICEF, ‘Conflict Sensitivity and Peacebuilding Programming Guide’, 2016, <https://www.unicef.org/media/96576/file/Programming-Guide-Conflict-Sensitivity-and-Peacebuilding.pdf>;



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Integrated host and refugee/internally displaced (IDP) communities' WASH programming has been deployed by many UNICEF country offices in collaboration with sector partners and national counterparts, and often programmes articulate explicit peacebuilding results relating to horizontal (host–refugee interactions) social cohesion being promoted through participatory planning, strengthened accountability, and the sharing of sustainable and quality WASH services and water resources. Horizontal social cohesion is central to the success of strategies to include displaced communities in national WASH systems – the case study of a UNICEF–UNHCR jointly implemented programme in East Africa illustrates:

CASE STUDY



Peacebuilding through Sector mobilization and comprehensive response in Sudan – Kadugli and Reif Shargi localities, South Kordofan

For years, nomad communities and the settled communities of Kadugli and Reif Shargi had a mutual agreement on the use of water sources. However, in 2021, a clash between nomads and settlers clashed over damage to the water source led to the death of a settler man. In retaliation the settled communities banned the use of water facilities by all nomad communities. As the tensions rose between nomad and host communities, the local authorities and WASH sector partners intervened. A joint mapping of areas conducive to settler–nomad interaction (i.e. shared ethnicity) and potential water sources with good yields was implemented. The rehabilitation of 26 hand pumps was quickly implemented including designated pumps for nomad communities' use, leading to a decrease in tensions. WASH committees in these communities conduct regular operation and maintenance, and they also intervene when there is any disagreement or conflict at the water points. **The co-existence and sharing of resources strengthened horizontal social cohesion among different groups.**



Integrated host–refugee water utilities to strengthen horizontal social cohesion in East Africa

The KfW Regional Water and Sanitation Program for Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons, and Host Communities in East Africa (R-WASH) is financed by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and will be implemented in close cooperation with UNICEF and UNHCR in Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda from 2022 to 2027. The project is focused on the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes region, which is currently home to 4.6 million refugees and asylum seekers, most (over 4 million) from South Sudan, Somalia, Sudan and Burundi. Another 8.1 million people are internally displaced in the region due to conflict and natural disasters. The lack of adequate water and sanitation has caused conflicts between host communities and refugees/IDPs in several areas. The R-WASH ambition is to contribute to, improve and/or provide more sustainable, inclusive and integrated water and sanitation services for refugees, internally displaced persons and host communities, as well as increased social cohesion, ultimately contributing to promoting peaceful coexistence for the target groups. Conflict resolution workshops and regular dialogues between both hosting and refugee communities are planned in **Ethiopia**. In **Somalia** Water Management Committees will participate in a training package that has conflict resolution units to enable them to solve water points' conflicts. In **Sudan**, activities will aim to strengthen community-based conflict and dispute resolution mechanisms and institutional capacities for conflict prevention, peacebuilding and mediation. In **Uganda**, strengthened data management for equitable planning and WASH service provision will aim to mitigate conflict risks and a climate resilience lens will be integrated. The **R-WASH programme will be integrating a robust and innovative impact evaluation to measure contributions to social cohesion.**



3.4. WASH contributions to individual capacities for peace:

For social cohesion enhancing approaches to work, it is important to strengthen and support key stakeholders' individual capacities for peace. Strengthening the peacebuilding competencies and conflict management capacity of key stakeholders engaged in WASH service delivery or in the management of water resources can mitigate conflicts arising from such investments. It can also strengthen the resilience of individuals to better cope with the negative impacts of conflict. Include supporting training and mentoring of key individuals to engage in technical WASH tasks (i.e. solar energy, soap production, latrine construction, waste management, etc.) that lead to employment in WASH investments and service delivery but also

in conflict management/problem solving to resolve WASH-related disputes. This approach suggests that a contribution to peace can be made through the personal transformation of a critical mass of individuals,²¹ and this can be integrated into their engagement with WASH services. The generic ToC below illustrates this contribution:

However, a focus on developing individual capacities for peace needs to be **balanced with broader efforts to tackle root and structural causes** of conflict through more explicit and deliberate ToCs and programming where the strengthening of capacities can become a precondition and an enabler for broader peaceful change. Often capacity development interventions focus on the means (i.e. strengthened peacebuilding competencies), neglecting the underlying causes of conflict such as inequity and exclusion.²² For example, the case study below illustrates how addressing poverty and exclusion were integrated into a successful youth programme in Lebanon to complement capacity development and trust building.

A specific focus on **adolescents and youth** to develop peacebuilding competencies and skills in support of conflict-sensitive and peacebuilding WASH can add value to the proposed entry point. Adolescents and young people experience conflict and perform distinct roles in conflict and peace – programmes and interventions **that build their peacebuilding competencies** can help to address specific conflict drivers associated with adolescents/youth and/or address intergenerational conflict that impedes their meaningful and constructive engagement in WASH for Peace initiatives – see **UNICEF's Adolescents as Peacebuilders Toolkit** and the generic ToC below, which can be adapted to capture this contribution.

The following case study illustrates current efforts by UNICEF to engage young people as agents of peaceful change through their participation in WASH interventions.

Generic ToC

A proposed ToC to apply an individual-level change approach:

- **IF** WASH services help alleviate the negative impact of violent conflict on women and men, boys and girls, and build their distinct capacities to address the underlying causes and dynamics of violent conflict,
- **THEN** women and men, girls and boys, will be able to contribute to social cohesion and more resilient, peaceful societies.
- This is **BECAUSE** WASH service delivery can build transformative, adaptive and absorptive capacities to address the psychosocial root causes and impacts of violent conflict and create inclusive and transformative social relationships in the home and the community.

Overarching Theory of Change – Adolescents and youth engagement in 'WASH for peace':

- **IF** adolescent girls and boys, and young women and men living in conflict and humanitarian situations develop competencies for peacebuilding through their engagement in WASH programmes;
- **THEN** they will be better able to cope with the challenges (e.g. conflict impacts on WASH rights) they face, influence those around them in a positive way and be drivers of peace within the communities and societies in which they live;
- This is **BECAUSE** the contextually relevant knowledge, attitudes and skills that adolescent girls and boys, and young women and men gain through their engagement in WASH programmes that build their PB competencies will increase their resilience and enable them to identify and address conflict (impacts and interactions with WASH) in their communities.

21 UNICEF, 'Adolescents as Peacebuilders Toolkit: For program planning and evaluation with the Peacebuilding Competency Framework', 2016, Prepared by Taylor O'Connor for the Adolescent Development and Participation Section' <https://www.unicef.org/media/59166/file>

22 Church, C. and Rogers, M. M., Designing for Results: Integrating Monitoring and Evaluation in Conflict Transformation Programs; Search for Common Ground, 2006, <https://documents.sfcg.org/Documents/manualpart1.pdf>; p. 31

UNICEF's Water Security for All initiative and catalytic funds to build peace through youth engagement in WASH



The world's water crisis is one of the greatest risks to society. And climate change, urbanization and increasing competition for water are only exacerbating water insecurity with each passing year. For children, water insecurity is putting their lives at risk today, and putting their futures at risk tomorrow. To address this, UNICEF has set an ambitious goal to reach 450 million children and their families (1.42 billion people) living in areas of high or extremely high water vulnerability with resilient solutions by 2025. And by 2030, for all children to have access to a safe and affordable water supply and to live in water secure communities. One key focus will be to work with communities and key stakeholders so that **equitable management of water resources and WASH services contribute to increased social cohesion, political stability and peace**. Moreover, the initiative aims to activate young people as champions and agents of change to leverage their potential as advocates and agents of change for the sustainable use and management of water, protection of the environment, and brokers of peacebuilding and conflict prevention in their schools, homes and communities. To this end, UNICEF is funding four catalytic and pilot initiatives in the Central Africa Republic, Lebanon, Myanmar and Papua New Guinea where participatory and youth focus conflict analyses have been implemented and where activities are underway to generate evidence and learning to inform scale-up. For example, in **Myanmar** 24 youth were engaged in the assessment and identification of conflict drivers and in the design of action plans for interventions to de-escalate tensions and build social capital in communities. The youth are also mobilized and willing to establish a water management committee to oversee the operation and maintenance of the water supply system, including setting up a revolving fund to ensure sustainability of the water supply system. In **Papua New Guinea** selected youths will be trained on peacebuilding and will lead community consultation with the support of implementing partners. In the **Central Africa Republic**, community groups including women, young people and children affected by violence associated with conflicts have been identified on the ground with support from the Child Protection Programme. Their capacity will be strengthened to participate in the rehabilitation, construction and management of WASH assets as well as in social cohesion strengthening.

The 'Water as Catalyst for Peace' initiative is funded through UNICEF'S Executive Director's 7 percent set aside pool of regular resources allocated annually to support innovative and critical investments to accelerate results for children – this signals a commitment by the organization to pursue and scale up conflict-sensitive and peacebuilding WASH programmes.

