

Isra, age 7, looks after her sisters Mozdelifa (age 2) and Heba (3) at a UNICEF-supported child-friendly at an IDP Camp in North Darfur, Sudan.

Isra is the main care provider for her younger sisters since they fled a violent attack on her village.

UNICEF, with support from UK Aid, has provided safe, clean water and sanitation for tens of thousands of people in Darfur.

countries described a disruption in water, hygiene and sanitation services in refugee or displacement camps.¹⁵ The most vulnerable children – such as children living in informal settlements, displacement camps, poor urban neighbourhoods, and rural areas are especially at risk. Children living in extremely fragile contexts are on average more than eight times worse off across WASH indicators, and they fare just as badly in health, nutrition and education indicators.¹⁶

COVID-19 provides a unique opportunity to reframe the narrative on WASH by reiterating and promoting its critical role in addressing evolving and emerging challenges in FCAS. These include increases in violent conflicts, protracted crises and forced displacement, as well as climate change and endemic and chronic disease outbreaks – all of which affect children’s most basic rights.¹⁷

This report highlights the critical importance to move beyond a sole focus on delivery of WASH services in disease outbreaks and health-related humanitarian emergencies, towards a systems building, integrated and sustainable approach, that will increase the resilience and capacity of FCAS to prevent and mitigate future crises and shocks. It does so by using country case studies to emphasise the importance of WASH and to share success and lessons from UK Aid-funded, and UNICEF-led WASH programmes around the world.

Specifically, the first case study focuses on the war in Yemen and demonstrates the positive

impact of a humanitarian–development (“double nexus”) delivery approach to WASH interventions in protracted conflicts. It showcases a model that depends on flexible and predictable funding and which aims at strengthening health facilities to improve people’s access to WASH, while tackling acute needs in emergency situations, for example outbreaks of infectious disease.

The second case study examines a community-based WASH programme in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo), with a focus on accelerating access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene in rural areas prone to Ebola, through the engagement and mobilisation of communities and local leaders towards healthy schools and villages.

Finally, the third case study considers a climate-resilient WASH programme in Myanmar, one of the countries most affected by climate change. The programme supports the installation of solar powered water systems in rural settings to provide communities with more resilient systems that can withstand extreme weather events.

The report then examines the opportunities afforded by COVID-19 and the new Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) to leverage global mobilisation and action in defeating the pandemic. It also considers how the former Department for International Development’s (DFID) strong track record and legacy on WASH and global health can help the UK Government to tackle the water crisis in FCAS.